

**Virginia State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind and Vision Impaired  
Quarterly Meeting Agenda  
February 9, 2024, 9:30 am – 1:00 pm  
DBVI Main Conference Room**

Zoom Link:

<https://dsavirginia.zoomgov.com/j/1618505899?pwd=ZGI5T1FQT0ZHSGx3RElpTWlDbjhrdz09>

Password: 582374

Or Telephone:

+1 646 828 7666 US (New York)

Meeting ID: 161 850 5899 Passcode: 582374

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9:30 am **Member Networking – OPTIONAL**

10:00 am **Welcome and Call to Order**

1. Adoption of Agenda – *Action Item*
2. Approval of December 2023 Meeting Minutes – *Action Item*

10:10 a.m. **Public Comment**

10:20 a.m. **Commissioner’s Report** – *Dr. Rick Mitchell*  
Updates to Agency Report

10:30 a.m. **Deputy Commissioner’s Report** – *Pam Cato*  
Updates to Agency Report

10:40 a.m. **VR Program Update** – *Megan Hall*  
Updates to Agency Report

10:50 a.m. **Old and New Business** – *Milford Stern*

1. **Introduction of New SRC Members**
2. **Governor’s Budget**
3. **NCSRC/CSAVR/NCSAB Opportunity**
4. **Review Draft Combined State Plan** – *Action Item*
5. **Upcoming Events**

12:00 p.m. **Break / Pick Up Lunch**

SRC Agenda – February 9, 2024

12:10 p.m. **Program Directors Round Table**

12:30 p.m. **New Member Orientation, Part 1**

1:00 p.m. **Adjourn**

Department for Blind and Vision Impaired  
State Rehabilitation Council  
Agency VR Report  
February 9, 2024

**Deputy Commissioner’s Report – Pam Cato**

**Regional Office Updates**

Bristol	Fully Staffed
Fairfax	Fully Staffed
Norfolk	Recruiting for a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Education Specialist, and a Rehabilitation Technology Specialist
Richmond	Recruiting for a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Roanoke	Recruiting for a Rehabilitation Teacher
Staunton	Fully Staffed
Headquarters	Fully Staffed
Business Relations Unit	Recruiting for a Business Relations Specialist, Norfolk
VRCBVI	Recruiting for a Orientation & Mobility Specialist

**State Plan Goals:**

DBVI, with assistance from the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), developed six goals and priorities for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Supported Employment (SE) programs for this state plan cycle. The six goals are listed below and updates are included in this report.

1. Engage and collaborate with WIOA core partners to coordinate business service efforts to include the blind and visually impaired labor market.
2. Provide comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services to students with disabilities, youth in transition, and adults resulting in the attainment of industry recognized credentials to obtain competitive integrated employment.
3. Conduct outreach efforts to Local Education Agencies and other Community Partners to assist in increasing the number of students with disabilities participating in and benefiting from DBVI offered Pre-Employment Transition programs.

4. Continue to expand the utilization of Supported Employment and Customized Employment services for adults and youth to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
5. Achieving agency annual performance goals and establishing base lines for the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance in section 116(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.
6. Increase collaboration with the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services to provide comprehensive wrap around services to address the needs of individuals who have dual diagnoses.

### **State Goal Updates:**

1. In January, the DBVI Business Relations team hosted a session of Career Connections with special guest David Leonard. Mr. Leonard is the Business Solutions Coordinator for the Virginia Works Capital Region. Mr. Leonard discussed the various services that Virginia Works has available, how to inquire and apply for assistance with a job search, resume development, interviewing preparation, etc.
2. In February, DBVI will be offering an advanced credential attainment opportunity for those students with disabilities who attend the Cyber Warriors Splunk session over the Summer of 2023. The students will build upon the knowledge of Splunk (the exploration of *information* caves and the mining of data. Splunk helps you explore things that aren't easy to get to otherwise, like [log data and messages](#) and [machine data](#).) At the conclusion of the classroom learning experience, the students will practice for and sit for the advanced Splunk industry recognized credential.
3. DBVI is excited to share that we have been able to hire an additional Pre-Employment Transition Specialist, Ms. Becky Keller, whose main job duties will be developing materials and conducting outreach to schools and community partners across the Commonwealth in an effort to "spread the word" about DBVI's student programs and how to connect with the Vocational Rehabilitation Program. In her first few months, Becky has emerged herself in all things Pre-ETS by attending programs that have already occurred during the first month of 2024, making arrangements and signing up to attend two resource fairs, one in Richmond and one in Appomattox, and has begun working with the DBVI Education Services department to leverage the

contacts, resources and expertise of the team surrounding collaborating with local education agencies and the VA Department of Education.

4. Historically, DBVI has had a challenge in providing supported employment services to youth with disabilities due to the fact that most students that we work with go on to a post-secondary training opportunity rather than entering the workforce immediately after High School Graduation. This program year, DBVI has had the opportunity to support a youth with a disability who chose to enter the workforce quickly after high school. The use of the resources has allowed the youth to have a job coach on site to assist in learning the position, purchased assistive technology related to completing the tasks of the job, and transportation assistance while the student is getting acclimated to the job during the first month of employment.

5. DBVI is well on the way to achieving the agencies performance goals for the current program year. One indicator of this is that DBVI has achieved meeting 12.5% of the 15% mandated amount that has been set aside for services offered specifically to students with disabilities. This is a healthy indicator that the programs being offered are allowing the student participants to engage in a variety of activities focused on career exploration, workplace readiness, workbased learning opportunities, receiving information regarding post-secondary training opportunities and safely exploring the use of self advocacy to be confident in asking for what they need.

6. DBVI is excited to be partnering with the VA Department of Aging and Rehabilitative services to have 3 adult career seekers participate in advanced training in Cyber Security through a Cyber Security Simulation opportunity. **This 140-hour Simulator** provides a simulated work environment built upon real-world scenarios gleaned from challenges facing today's information technology professionals in Fortune 500 companies. The simulator provides a safe environment for participants to learn through experience and challenge, and by nature is **better than employer-based internships**. Sessions are held synchronously with *interns* working together on teams in real-time and reporting progress to their manager and director. The real-world scenarios in the Work Simulator are consistent and relevant, engaging teams with contemporary tasks and challenges which exceed the risk tolerance of most workplace environments. Interns emerge from the simulator with:

- Resume-worthy job experience
- Real-world industry insights

- In-demand technical and professional skills
- The foundation of a professional network
- Mentorship from IT professionals

## **Business Relations Unit Updates- Cindy Roberts and Team**

### **Recruitment Update:**

Interviews for the open Business Relations Specialist position for the DBVI Norfolk Region will occur during the first week of February. DBVI is excited that 4 candidates with multiple years of experience in working in similar capacities will take part in the panel interviews. We hope to have an update on a successful recruitment process during this meeting.

### **Other News:**

The Business Relations Unit has remained busy and has hit the ground running during the first month of 2024. During January, the team has set up 4 work based learning experiences for both adults and students with disabilities. These experiences allow individuals to be on site, learn the functions of jobs related to their vocational goals, receive support from DBVI and the employer throughout the experience, and provide the much needed experience to include on their resume to assist them in being able to competitively apply for positions in their chosen careers.

The Unit is also continuing to meet with each Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to review the entirety of the caseload of career seekers they work with to determine the needs of those who are actively seeking employment as well as those who are completing training or other services and will be actively seeking employment soon.

## **VRCBVI- Brooke Rogers**

### **Programming Update:**

- The 2024 Learning Independence Feeling Empowered (LIFE) program recruitment is in full swing. This year, VRCBVI worked hard to start recruitment for the program earlier

than ever with an application closing date of April 1, 2024. It is anticipated that this accelerated application period will allow VRCBVI to share admissions to the program earlier in the year to help families better plan their summer activities. An application review team is scheduled to meet during the second week of April 2024 to look at applications. The LIFE program is a highly anticipated event for students who are blind, vision impaired, or Deafblind and focuses on honing skills of blindness that lead to increased independence, an introduction to employment, and an opportunity for students from around the Commonwealth to network and get to know one another. DBVI is looking forward to another successful and fun year!

### **Other News:**

The Virginia Rehabilitation for the Blind and Vision Impaired and the Business Relations Unit have met to collaborate on an event titled “Elevate your Career”. This program will be similar to a program that was held prior to COVID that was very successful in helping career seekers go to work. The program will take place at one session in April and one session in May. In April, career seekers will hone skills such as developing a professional elevator speech, resume development and updates, creating a personal brand, and will have professional headshots taken to assist in their career search. In May, individuals will work with DBVI staff to prepare video/audio resumes that can be reviewed by business partners participating in the hiring event, will feature meet and greets between business partners and career seekers with availability to meet privately one on one should a business partner have interest in conducting an interview on site.

### **Adult Training Program:**

Adult students have returned to VRCBVI following the winter break. Students have continued to experience and learn skills of blindness related to being independent and ready for employment. Although there are several vacancies, the VRCBVI staff have worked together to ensure a continuity and continued quality of the training program. The current semester at VRCBVI will end in June when the arrival of students begins for the Summer.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Program Report – Megan Hall and Deborah Collard**

As discussed at previous SRC meetings, DBVI has transitioned to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Common Performance Measures (CPM). These measures replace the Standards and Indicators report that was previously shared with the SRC. The six core WIOA programs are all required to now report on the CPMs. The six core partners in WIOA include:

- Adult Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Youth Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Dislocated Worker Formula Program (WIOA title I)
- Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (WIOA title II)
- Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service (WIOA title III)
- Vocational Rehabilitation program (WIOA title IV)

### **Current Common Performance Measures:**

Under section 116(b)(2)(A) of WIOA, there are six primary indicators of performance:

A. Employment Rate – 2nd Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit);

B. Employment Rate – 4th Quarter After Exit: The percentage of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit from the program (for title I Youth, the indicator is the percentage of participants in education or training activities, or in unsubsidized employment during the fourth quarter after exit);

C. Median Earnings – 2nd Quarter After Exit: The median earnings of participants who are in unsubsidized employment during the second quarter after exit from the program;

D. Credential Attainment: The percentage of those participants enrolled in an education or training program (excluding those in on-the-job training (OJT) and customized training) who attain a recognized postsecondary credential or a secondary school diploma, or its recognized equivalent, during participation in or within one year after exit from the program. A participant who has attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent is included in the percentage of participants who have attained a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent only if the participant also is



employed or is enrolled in an education or training program leading to a recognized postsecondary credential within one year after exit from the program;

E. Measurable Skill Gains: The percentage of program participants who, during a program year, are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized postsecondary credential or employment and who are achieving measurable skill gains, defined as documented academic, technical, occupational, or other forms of progress, towards such a credential or employment. Depending on the type of education or training program, documented progress is defined as one of the following:

- a) Documented achievement of at least one educational functioning level of a participant who is receiving instruction below the postsecondary education level;
- b) Documented attainment of a secondary school diploma or its recognized equivalent;
- c) Secondary or postsecondary transcript or report card for a sufficient number of credit hours that shows a participant is meeting the State unit's academic standards<sup>2</sup>;
- d) Satisfactory or better progress report, towards established milestones, such as completion of OJT or completion of one year of an apprenticeship program or similar milestones, from an employer or training provider who is providing training; or
- e) Successful passage of an exam that is required for a particular occupation or progress in attaining technical or occupational skills as evidenced by trade-related benchmarks such as knowledge-based exams.

F. Effectiveness in Serving Employers: WIOA sec. 116(b)(2)(A)(i)(VI) requires the Departments (DOE and DOL) to establish a primary indicator of performance for effectiveness in serving employers. The Departments are piloting three approaches designed to gauge three critical workforce needs of the business community.

Approach 1 – Retention with the same employer – addresses the programs' efforts to provide employers with skilled workers;

Approach 2 – Repeat Business Customers – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide quality engagement and services to employers and sectors and establish productive relationships with employers and sectors over extended periods of time; and

Approach 3 – Employer Penetration Rate – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

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<sup>2</sup> Within each State there is an administrative unit that provides authorization to postsecondary institutions within the State. States differ in the requirements to which they hold postsecondary institutions responsible for satisfactory progress. Progress for WIOA purposes must comply with any applicable State standards. Likewise, every State has a State educational agency that establishes education standards for secondary education within the State, which would apply for purposes of determining if a participant is meeting the State’s academic standards.

#### WIOA Employer Engagement Common Performance Measure (CPM)

DBVI reports with WIOA core partners on the joint CPM of Effectiveness in Serving Employers as described below:

1. Effectiveness in Serving Employers (States select two of three measures) – Virginia has selected employer retention and employer penetration as described below:
  - Retention with the same employer – addresses the programs’ efforts to provide employers with skilled workers; and
  - Employer Penetration Rate - addresses the programs' efforts to provide quality engagement and services to all employers and sectors within a State and local economy.

Since this indicator is a new approach for measuring performance under WIOA’s six core programs, DOE and RSA have implemented a pilot program during which States must select two of the three approaches. DOE and RSA will evaluate State experiences with the various approaches and plan to identify a standardized indicator to be implemented in the future.

All state VR agencies nationwide continue working with RSA on reporting of WIOA Common Performance Measures (CPM) and utilizing RSA 911 data along with performance data dashboards developed by RSA to demonstrate VR program performance. Based on current information, DBVI is able to report on several measures as shown in the table below.

**CPM                      PY19                      PY20                      PY21                      PY22 Q4**

Employment rate 2 <sup>nd</sup> Q after exit	37.6% DBVI 54.4% VA*	39.9% DBVI 51.6% VA*	39%	22%
Employment rate 4 <sup>th</sup> Q after exit	27.7% DBVI 52.2% VA*	30.2% DBVI 47.5% VA*	33%	20.3%
Median Earnings 2 <sup>nd</sup> Q after exit	\$4445 DBVI \$3127 VA*	\$5540 DBVI \$3238 VA*	\$4878	TBD
Credential Attainment Rate	16.7% DBVI	61.8% DBVI 43.3% VA*	49%	63%
Measureable Skill Gains (MSG) Rate	82.6% DBVI 85.65 VA*	85.5% DBVI 88.9% VA*	85%	93.4%
Number of DBVI Participants Earning an MSG**	247	243	244	TBD
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Employer Retention Rate	62% VA*	70% DBVI TBD VA	69%	TBD
Employer Penetration - DBVI	266 services 132 businesses	190 services 84 businesses	190 services 117 businesses	TBD

\*Reported for the state of Virginia, this includes Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) VR data combined with DBVI VR data.

\*\*Not a WIOA CPM, but considered a primary indicator of performance by RSA.

As part of the implementation of the WIOA CPMs and to assist state VR agencies with determining how the RSA 911 data elements are used and how the CPMs are calculated, RSA has developed a set of five dashboards or graphics that illustrate key data elements. One of the dashboards outlines Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) outcomes. In PY22 Q4 there were 38 CIE outcomes achieved. DBVI continues to have a wide variety of occupations and strong median wages represented in CIE outcomes. The top ten careers by Standard Occupation Classification (SOC) categories, median hourly wage, and median weekly hours are listed in the table below.

**Top 10 SOC Titles within Employment Outcomes of the Quarter**

No.	SOC Title	Number of Participants	Median Hourly Earnings
1	Customer Service Representatives	4	\$12.75
2	Social and Human Service Assistants	3	\$17.00
3	Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners	3	\$12.00
4	Randolph-Sheppard vending facility operator	2	\$32.84
5	Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers	2	\$31.59
6	Mental Health Counselors	2	\$31.24
7	Maintenance and Repair Workers, General	2	\$19.50
8	Special Education Teachers, All Other	2	\$17.58
9	Paralegals and Legal Assistants	2	\$16.47
10	Producers and Directors	2	\$13.50
<i>Percentage of all outcomes in the quarter represented in the top 10</i>		46%	

Another WIOA performance area where DBVI continues to be consistent and robust is in the provision of the required pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS). For PY2023 Q1, DBVI reported 112 students receiving pre-ETS, including the following number of services provided: 82 job exploration counseling services (17%), 117 work based learning experiences (24%), 109 counseling and enrollment opportunities services (22%), 90 work readiness training experiences (18%), and 90 instructions in self advocacy services (18%). The total Pre-ETS services provided in the quarter were 488.

Additionally, through the national Rehab Data Workgroup, RSA has shared several “Other Measures that Matter” with the RSA quarterly Dashboards. These measures are provided to enhance the VR agencies’ understanding of the use of the new data elements collected and the implementation of WIOA. For FPY23 DBVI can share Other Measures that Matters #4: The

Provision of VR Services DBVI had 1,216 total VR participants of which 923 participants received services representing 79.5 % of participants receiving VR services.

DBVI can also share Other Measures that Matters #5: Percent of Participants Enrolled in Education/Training Program Leading to a Recognized Credential/Employment. For FPY23 Q1, DBVI had 923 total VR participants of which 183 participants were eligible to earn a measurable skill gain (MSG) representing 20% of participants eligible to earn an MSG.

### **Pre-Employment Transition Services and Career Pathways – Tish Harris**

Pre-Employment Transition programs are in full swing! On February 2<sup>nd</sup>-4<sup>th</sup>, 10 students, their parents and DBVI staff will meet at Massanutten for Career Exploration in Sports and Recreation. Students will engage in sessions presented by Massanutten's HR department, will hear from current Massanutten employees regarding their career paths and how they ended up working at the resort, will learn from adaptive ski professionals how sports are adapted for people of all abilities, the safety and liability concerns that are necessary when running a program with physical activity, etc. The students will get to try their hand at adaptive skiing so that they can understand the participants needs and instruction when providing an adaptive sport or recreation experience. Students will be tasked with locating 3 (or more) additional professionals to learn about why they have chosen a career path in recreation.

The next program that will be offered is a virtual program led by David Denotaris and Eileen Rivera-Ley called Careers in Social Media and Marketing. Many of our students come to vocational rehabilitation with a dream goal of becoming a You Tube sensation or a Tik Tok influencer without an understanding of the work involved and the limited opportunities to make that dream job a reality. Careers in Social Media and Marketing will allow the students the chance to learn about the good and the bad of social media, how to leverage social media in their career search, how to effectively market themselves and their personal brand, and truly understand the availability of careers on social media. This program will run from the end of February through the end of March meeting once each week.

DBVI has a brand new student program that will run from April through July focusing on the "Entrepreneurial Mindset". What do you think it would be like to be your own boss? What do you think you need to get your own business up and running? These questions and more will be answered for those students who are creative, have an entrepreneurial mindset, and are willing to put forth the effort to succeed in the competitive market of self employment.

## VR Consumer Satisfaction Evaluation Program - Deborah Collard

The VR consumer satisfaction evaluation program for FPY2023 continues with outreach to eligible individuals with VR cases closed July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024. During the current cycle of the evaluation program several changes have been continued to improve response rate and enhance the feedback received. These improvements include the hiring of a customer service representative to follow up with individuals served and the use of both paper and electronic surveys as well as the opportunity to have the customer service representative assist them with filling out the survey.

Responses to the VR consumer satisfaction evaluation continue to be shared with the Director of VR and Workforce for consultation, training planning, resolution of potential issues, and continuous program improvement. Data review and analysis will continue to take place to provide quarterly updates to the SRC and as needed. Total response information for the past program year is under review and analysis and will be available for SRC review during the next meeting to be held in May 2024.

**VR Customer Satisfaction PRELIMINARY results to date; through May 2022.** The information in Tables 1 and 2 below, includes data from FPY2022 evaluation responses. The FPY2022 evaluation program was open through the third calendar quarter of 2022.

**Table 1. Overall Satisfaction scores FFY2016 through FPY2022**

<b>Year</b>	<b>All</b>	<b>Rehabilitated</b>	<b>Other than Rehabilitated</b>
FFY2016	73.66	82.75	63.33
FFY2017	79.65	85.57	69.79
FFY2018	78.60	94.70	58.50
FFY2019 and 2020	73.33	87.32	45.54
FPY2020*	78.80	91.82	71.20
FPY2021	87.74	94.73	76.66
FPY2022	85.58	95.00	67.69

When compared to the last reporting period, FPY2021, scores for FPY2022 remained consistently high for individual perception of VR staff being respectful, knowledgeable about disability, and sensitive to needs. FPY 2022 survey highlights are provided below:

- ❖ 88 percent of individuals agreed their VR counselor was respectful, resulting in a weighted score of 88.57. Additionally, 81 percent agreed their VR counselor delivered services and service items in a timely manner, scoring 87.32.
- ❖ Individuals believed their VR counselor was sensitive to their needs, scoring an 88.29 (86 percent), and partnered with them in developing their vocational goal, scoring 88.11 (72 percent).
- ❖ 86 percent of individuals agreed their counselor was knowledgeable about their disability, scoring 90.5, the highest score in the last seven years. Additionally, 77 percent agreed their VR counselor partnered with them in choosing services and service providers, scoring 87.18.

Results for satisfaction scores with VR staff from FFY2016 through FPY2022 are included in the table below.

**Table 2. Satisfaction scores with VR Staff FFY2016 through FPY2022**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Respectful</b>	<b>Knowledgeable about disability</b>	<b>Sensitive to needs</b>
FFY2016	83.71	78.59	77.96
FFY2017	86.61	85.96	83.93
FFY2018	92.86	81.43	85.71
FFY2019 & 2020	84.38	83.75	80.00
FPY2020*	85.83	87.23	84.26
FPY2021	90.87	88.70	90.97
FPY2022	88.57	90.50	88.29

In FPY2020 DBVI introduced a Net Promoter Score (NPS) question to the survey. The NPS is a metric used in customer experience evaluation programs. A NPS is used to measure how likely a customer is to refer your product or service to others, scores can range from -100 to +100, a higher score is desirable. A national benchmark NPS for government organizations in 2023 is 48. The FPY2020 NPS responses were calculated to establish a baseline for DBVI equaling 36. The DBVI NPS for FPY2022, the third year this metric was used is 47, an improvement from the baseline, however less than last year's rating of 57. The NPS will continue to be monitored and analyzed in the coming years.

Given the number of evaluation responses submitted in FPY 2022, it is difficult to determine how well the summary statistics represent the entire group of eligible individuals served; as a



result, please view the summary information as informative, and providing general guidance, rather than as definitive statements regarding the consumer satisfaction results of any specific subset of VR cases or individuals being served. A detailed summary of all evaluation questions and responses is located at the website listed below and is available for review and comment.

[https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-XRxTVNBo\\_2B\\_2F23NFc08eW10A\\_3D\\_3D/](https://www.surveymonkey.com/stories/SM-XRxTVNBo_2B_2F23NFc08eW10A_3D_3D/)

The open-ended responses from the VR consumer satisfaction evaluation included numerous comments from consumers regarding their experiences with the agency and their satisfaction with their VR counselors and trainers. Independence and accessibility to services and opportunities continue to be a focus for individuals DBVI serves. DBVI is also aware of the need to continue with early engagement and follow up with individuals to improve services and access to services. Additionally, DBVI is focused on the need to optimize staff coverage for service provision and minimize staff turnover. All responses are included in Attachment B at the end of this document.

The DBVI VR Program is part of the Workforce system within the Commonwealth of Virginia. As a member of this large, coordinated network, DBVI continues to position itself to maintain strong partnerships within the Virginia Workforce system as the Commonwealth continues to implement the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014. The results of the consumer satisfaction survey will be used by DBVI decision makers and the SRC in the continued development and implementation of the Combined Virginia State Plan and WIOA implementation. The feedback and insights will also be used to make recommendations for improvement of services on behalf of individuals. The comments provided by the consumers are rich in content and will continue to aide in improving the high-quality service delivery program that exists at DBVI.

\* FedProgramYear2020 is a partial federal program year, from September 2020 through June 2021. This timeframe is used for this reporting year to align the reporting year at DBVI with the federal program year in WIOA. The next reporting timeframe, Federal Program Year 2021, corresponds to July 1, 2021, through June 30, 2022.



2024-2027

**PROGRAM SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS FOR STATE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES PROGRAM**

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

**(a) State Rehabilitation Council**

All VR agencies, except for those that have an independent consumer-controlled commission, must have a State Rehabilitation Council (Council or SRC) that meets the criteria in section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. DBVI has established a State Rehabilitation Council.

The DBVI State Rehabilitation Council is composed of 15 positions that encompass a wide range of unique perspectives related to programs or personal experiences. The members of the DBVI SRC are listed below along with the mandated position that they hold, the term number of the member. Any vacancies on the DBVI SRC are also listed and are actively being sought through partnerships with the Business Community and Government Program leaders.

<b>Council Representative</b>	<b>Current Term Number/ Vacant</b>	<b>Beginning Date of Term Mo./Yr.</b>
Leelynn Untalan Brady: Representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(i)	1	10/2021
Heidi Lawyer: Representative of a Parent Training and Information Center 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(ii)	1	10/2021
Beth Klein: Representative of Client Assistance Program 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(iii)	1	10/2021
LaSonya Jackson: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor-Ex-Officio, Non-Voting Member 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(iv)	1	10/2023
Rachael Rounds: Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(v)	1	10/2021
Milford Stern: Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(vi)	2	10/2023
Mark Roane: Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(vi)	1	10/2022
Chanthen Nene: Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(vi)	1	10/2022
Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(vi)	Vacant	
Susan Bowmaster: Representative of Disability Advocacy Group 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(3)(ii)(A)	1	10/2023
David Andrews: Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(viii)	1	10/2022
Christine Appert: Former or Current Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(viii)	2	10/2023
Rebecca Ceja: Representative of Department of Education 34 CFR §361.17 b)(1)(B)(x)	1	10/2023
Jennifer Sellers: Representative of an Individual who is blind, has multiple disabilities, and has difficulty representing him or herself or is unable due to disabilities to represent him or herself 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(3)(ii)(B)	1	10/2023
Representative of the Virginia Workforce Board 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(xi)	Vacant	Awaiting Appointment
Commissioner Rick Mitchell: The Director of the designated Statue Unit DBVI as an ex-officio, non-voting member 34 CFR §361.17 (b)(1)(B)(xii)	1	05/2021

If the SRC is not meeting the composition requirements in section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and/or is not meeting quarterly as required in section 105(f) of the Rehabilitation Act, provide the steps that the VR Agency is taking to ensure it meets those requirements.

[text box] The DBVI SRC has 1 position awaiting appointment from the Virginia Governor's office to fill the Representative of the Virginia Workforce Board position. DBVI is working closely with Virginia businesses and industry leaders, the Virginia Board for Workforce Development, and internal business engagement staff to advocate for application of business partners to fill the remaining vacant SRC role for Representative of Business, Industry and Labor.

In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(21)(A)(ii)(III) of the Rehabilitation Act, include a summary of the Council's input (including how it was obtained) into the State Plan and any State Plan revisions, including recommendations from the Council's annual reports, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction and other Council reports.

[text box] The DBVI SRC recommendations

SRC Recommendation 1: The SRC recommends that DBVI report to the SRC quarterly on the progress toward accomplishing the 2024-2027 State Plan goals.

SRC Recommendation 2: Taking into consideration the feedback received from individuals served by DBVI through surveys, success stories and other anecdotal evidence, the SRC recognizes that self-advocacy is vital to the goal setting and subsequent achievements both personally and professionally of the individuals served. The SRC recommends that DBVI continue to recognize the importance of Self-Advocacy across all age groups and should continue to incorporate these values into its rehabilitation programs and other support services.

SRC Recommendation 3: The SRC recommends the following in regard to the consumer satisfaction survey process:

1. Consumer Satisfaction continue to be collected both annually and on a rolling basis throughout the continuum of service provision.
2. DBVI continue to report on the overall consumer satisfaction rate quarterly at each meeting for review and analysis of continuous improvement efforts.

SRC Recommendation 4: The SRC recommends that DBVI continues to provide the SRC with a dedicated administrative staff person to capture the minutes and discussions therein especially any key action items to be addressed during each SRC meeting and for that staff person to coordinate and collaborate with SRC leadership to offer newly appointed SRC members an orientation to the SRC and its stated purpose at least once a year.

SRC Recommendation 5: The SRC recommends the following regarding the opportunity for members of the public to make comment.

1. DBVI shall continue to provide the opportunity for public meetings, whether virtual or in-person, statewide during the current State Plan cycle and for DBVI to share the public comments and feedback gathered along with the agency's responses from those meetings with the SRC at each scheduled SRC meeting.
2. DBVI shall continue to provide timely notification of all public meetings (including regional meetings, state meetings of consumer organizations, and the quarterly SRC meeting) on the DBVI website, the designated channel for Virginia on Newline, and through DBVI's official social media accounts. DBVI should make every effort to allow all ages and stakeholders the opportunity for comment, with special emphasis related to focusing on students and youth with disabilities and their parents, and those students attending the Vocational Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

SRC Recommendation 6: With the enhanced emphasis on the dual service approach of supporting both the individual with a disability and the local business community, DBVI should place special emphasis on

training Vocational Rehabilitation Staff regarding marketing, job development, job placement, enlisting the assistance of job coaches as appropriate for each individual, and leveraging the expertise of DBVI's Employment Services Organizations partnerships. DBVI shall continue to encourage effective and outcome driven collaboration with the DBVI Business Relations Unit to further increase the likelihood of job placement, paid and unpaid work experiences, and specific job search related skills to prepare the individuals that DBVI serves with the best knowledge, skills and confidence in their abilities throughout the individual's tenure with DBVI. The SRC further recommends that DBVI report on these collaborative efforts at each SRC meeting (minimum of 4 times per year).

Provide the VR Agency's response to the Council's input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input or recommendations.

[text box] **SRC Recommendation 1:** The SRC recommends that DBVI report to the SRC quarterly on the progress toward accomplishing the 2024-2027 State Plan goals.

**Agency response:** DBVI supports this recommendation and will report to the SRC quarterly regarding the progress towards accomplishing the State Plan goals for 2024-2027.

**SRC Recommendation 2:** Taking into consideration the feedback received from individuals served by DBVI through surveys, success stories and other anecdotal evidence, the SRC recognizes that self-advocacy is vital to the goal setting and subsequent achievements both personally and professionally of the individuals served. The SRC recommends that DBVI continue to recognize the importance of Self-Advocacy across all age groups and should continue to incorporate these values into its rehabilitation programs and other support services.

**Agency response:** DBVI is in agreement that self-advocacy skills are a crucial component to the individual's achievement of both personal and professional goals. DBVI provides training on appropriate self-advocacy skills through its Pre-Employment Transition Services and the Adult Vocational Rehabilitation program. Additional emphasis is placed on appropriate self-advocacy through DBVI's residential training program (for both students and adults with disabilities) at the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

**SRC Recommendation 3:** The SRC recommends the following regarding the consumer satisfaction survey process:

1. Consumer Satisfaction continue to be collected both annually and on a rolling basis throughout the continuum of service provision.
2. DBVI continue to report on the overall consumer satisfaction rate quarterly at each meeting for review and analysis of continuous improvement efforts.

**Agency Response:** DBVI made great strides during the previous state plan cycle (2020-2023) regarding the collection of consumer satisfaction data and feedback to include the hiring of an individual to work part time with the sole focus of reaching out to both current and former participants in DBVI vocational rehabilitation programming to capture their experiences through qualitative and quantitative data collection. DBVI has updated the consumer satisfaction survey to include more targeted questions to allow for analysis and the proper addressing of any feedback that requires an agency response. DBVI agrees to continue providing quarterly updates on the Consumer Satisfaction survey data collected and will provide a full consumer satisfaction report annually for review and input. DBVI will continue to develop new strategies to engage individuals that have received services throughout the consumer satisfaction process.

**SRC Recommendation 4:** The SRC recommends that DBVI continues to provide the SRC with a dedicated administrative staff person to capture the minutes and discussions therein especially any key action items to be addressed during each SRC meeting and for that staff person to coordinate and collaborate

with SRC leadership to offer newly appointed SRC members an orientation to the SRC and its stated purpose at least once a year.

**Agency Response:** DBVI recognizes the importance of the SRC member's full attention to meeting discussions and opportunities for questions. DBVI agrees to continue providing a dedicated administrative staff person to capture the minutes and discussions therein with a special emphasis of denoting any key action items to be addressed during each SRC meeting. DBVI agrees that the same administrative staff person will coordinate and collaborate with SRC leadership to offer newly appointed SRC members an orientation to the SRC and its stated purpose at least annually.

**SRC Recommendation 5:** The SRC recommends the following regarding the opportunity for members of the public to make comment.

1. DBVI shall continue to provide the opportunity for public meetings, whether virtual or in-person, statewide during the current State Plan cycle and for DBVI to share the public comments and feedback gathered along with the agency's responses from those meetings with the SRC at each scheduled SRC meeting.
2. DBVI shall continue to provide timely notification of all public meetings (including regional meetings, state meetings of consumer organizations, and the quarterly SRC meeting) on the DBVI website, the designated channel for Virginia on Newline, and through DBVI's official social media accounts.

DBVI should make every effort to allow individuals of all ages and stakeholders the opportunity for comment, with special emphasis related to focusing on students and youth with disabilities and their parents and with those students attending the Vocational Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

**Agency Response:** DBVI is committed to continuing to conduct a minimum of four public meetings (either virtual or in person), at least three of which will be conducted in conjunction with consumer group organization meetings. DBVI will continue to provide summaries of public comment and agency responses annually on the DBVI website and on Newline and will share this information with the SRC by emailing an electronic copy to appointed members annually.

DBVI will continue its practice of notification of agency public meetings, including those held in conjunction with state consumer group meetings, but will not assume responsibility for providing notification of state consumer group meetings generally. DBVI will include all consumer group public meetings on the Calendar of Events on the DBVI website if such information is provided by consumer groups.

**SRC Recommendation 6:** With the enhanced emphasis on the dual customer service approach of supporting both the individual with a disability and the local business community, DBVI should place special emphasis on training Vocational Rehabilitation Staff regarding marketing, job development, job placement, enlisting the assistance of job coaches and Employment Service Organizations as appropriate for each individual, and leveraging the expertise of DBVI's Employment Services Organizations partnerships. DBVI shall continue to encourage effective and outcome driven collaboration with the DBVI Business Relations Unit to further increase the likelihood of job placement, paid and unpaid work experiences, and specific job search related skills to prepare the individuals that DBVI serves with the best knowledge, skills and confidence in their abilities throughout the individual's tenure with DBVI. The SRC further recommends that DBVI report on these collaborative efforts at each SRC meeting (minimum of 4 times per year).

**Agency Response:** DBVI will continue its commitment to making Business relations and engagement a priority by engaging with other WIOA partners and continuing business relations efforts both locally and statewide. DBVI will provide continuous training to VR staff in appropriate workforce activities including, but not limited to, job development and placement strategies and education of the workforce partners regarding the viability of the talented pipeline of career seekers that it serves. DBVI will report to the SRC quarterly concerning its ongoing efforts to maintain a collaborative relationship between Vocational

Rehabilitation Counselors and the Business Relations Unit in an effort to provide critical wrap around services related to job development and placement by providing a report quarterly regarding business and corporate initiatives and WIOA title partners engagement with DBVI's talented and qualified career seekers.

**(b) Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)**

Section 101(a)(15), (17), and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to provide an assessment of:

- (1) The VR services needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the state, including:
  - (A) Individuals with the most significant disabilities and their need for supported employment;  
[text box] According to the most recent DBVI Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment in April 2022, the % of individuals having the most significant disabilities (MSD) increased by 39 % from 2017 to 2020, with 88.4% being classified as MSD in 2020. There continues to be limited use of Supported Employment services with a primary concern that many of the Employment Services Organizations (ESOs) who provide Supported Employment services have high turnover rates and limited experience in working with individuals who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind. Extended funding for Supported Employment services was available as needed through Long-Term Employment Support Services. ESO job development, training, and retention remains a top priority to develop for individuals with the most significant disabilities and needing Supported Employment services especially in the more remote rural areas of the state. In 2023, DBVI began holding quarterly meetings with ESOs across the state to provide detailed information regarding blindness as a disability and best practices for working with individuals with vision impairments of all levels and etiologies. DBVI anticipates continuing this practice throughout 2024 with the goal of training new ESO staff as turnover occurs as well as ensuring that a minimum level of education regarding blindness is retained to aid in the job development and employment phases of Supported Employment services.
  - (B) Individuals with disabilities who are minorities and individuals with disabilities who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;  
[text box] Data for ethnicity rates for the general population of the state was obtained from 2019 American Community Survey one-year estimates and the 2014-2019 American Community Survey five-year estimates. The ethnic demographic averages for each region were calculated by adding population totals for each ethnic group and dividing by the total population.

The State's averages for ethnic diversity in the categories of Hispanic/Latino, American Indian and Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander were below the National averages. Whites comprise the largest ethnic group in the State as the average for Whites exceeds all other ethnic category rates by more than 20 % in each Regional Office.

Black or African Americans comprise the second largest ethnic group in the State (19.0%), with an average that is 6.6 % higher than the National average. American Indian and Alaska Natives comprise less than one % of Virginia's population and the averages are identical for the State in each Regional Office.

Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders residing in Virginia comprise less than one % of the State's population and the rates are lower than the averages for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

The total population Nationwide, at the time that the CSNA was conducted, was 328,239,523 with the State's total population at 8,535,519 during the same period.

The Nationwide average of Hispanic or Latino (of any race) was 18.4 % while it was 9.7 % in Virginia. The National average for White alone was 60 % while the average for the State was 61.1 %.

The National average for Black or African American alone was 12.4 % with an average of 19 % in Virginia. While the National average for American Indian and Alaska Native alone was 0.7 %, the average for the State of Virginia was 0.2%.

Asian alone Nationwide when the survey was conducted was 5.6% with Virginia exceeding that percentage with 6.6%. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone in Virginia was 0.1% compared to the National average of 0.2%.

Lastly, those who identified as having two or more races was 2.5% Nationally with the State's average being higher at 3.1%.

According to the Cornell University online disability statistics provides data on disability prevalence rates by ethnicity and disability type. As a result of the review, it was found that less than 1% of working age Asians residing in Virginia reported a visual disability while visual disabilities were reported by over 5.5% of the American Indian and Alaskan Natives who resided in the State. It was noted that Asians comprised roughly 6.5% of Virginia's population and American Indian and Alaskan Natives accounted for less than 1% of the State's population.

In the Cornell University online published disability statistics for National and State employment by disability type and ethnicity (at the time of Assessment) showed that Asians comprised the fourth largest ethnic group in Virginia (6.6% of the population) and had the highest rate of employment for those reporting a visual disability. This exceeded the rates for Whites (the State's largest ethnic group) by roughly 18%. The ethnic category of Some Other Race, non-Hispanic, had the second highest employment rate for those reporting a visual disability. Black/African Americans comprised the second largest ethnic population in Virginia and had the lowest employment rate for those reporting a visual disability.

For DBVI specifically, the data showed that White individuals constituted the largest portion of individuals served by the Agency for every year of the study, though the percentage for this group declined each year of the study. Blacks or African Americans were the second largest group served remaining at or near 39% of all consumers from Program Year (PY) 2018-2020. The rate of Asian individuals served constituted more than 6% in PY 2019 and 2020, while Hispanic individuals rose from 4.8% in PY 2017 to 5.7% in PY 2020.

The data indicated that White individuals are underrepresented in the overall DBVI population compared to their rate overall in Virginia. In addition, Hispanic individuals appeared at a rate of 4% lower than their rate in the State. African Americans were overrepresented- in the overall DBVI population by almost 20% from their rate in Virginia overall. It should be noted that there are many factors to consider when comparing the population of DBVI consumers to Virginia's population overall including consideration of the socioeconomic status of each group. One would expect that individuals that are in greater need would constitute a higher percentage of individuals receiving assistance from the Agency.

At the time of assessment, the top three barriers to achieving employment goals were:

1. Employer's perceptions about employing persons with disabilities
2. Not have job skills
3. Not having job search skills

The top three barriers identified by Agency partners were the same top three barriers selected for the general population.

As a result of the CSNA findings, DBVI has begun a targeted effort to reach unserved and underserved populations. These efforts include hiring more bilingual staff, attending various community cultural events to conduct outreach and inform individuals of the services that DBVI has to offer, and providing many agency documents in other languages. It is anticipated that DBVI will continue to grow its outreach to unserved and underserved populations throughout the current State Plan cycle.

(C) Individuals with disabilities served through other components of the workforce development system; and

[text box] At the time of Assessment, it was noted that there had been considerable progress in the relationship between DBVI and the core partners at the State level since the previous CSNA. The Commissioner continues to sit on the Statewide Workforce Development Board (SWDB) and the Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services at DBVI has a primary role in bringing the core partners together and serves as staff to the SWDB. This has resulted in the development of stronger partnerships between DBVI and the other core partners. Joint planning and frequent communication continued to be common among partners. It was highlighted that DBVI plays a critical role on the SWDB in that the Agency continued to advocate for the accessibility of the American Job Centers (AJCs) and all partner programs and facilities.

As staff to the SWDB, the DBVI Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services has been invited as a core member of several American Job Centers recertification process and continues to provide crucial information to the recertification team regarding both physical and electronic accessibility of each location.

DBVI's sister agency, the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative services (DARS), the general agency, continues to be an important workforce partner for the Agency. The crucial relationship between DARS and DBVI is necessary to provide comprehensive wraparound services for the individuals that DBVI works with who present with co-occurring disabilities. While the level of service and the productivity of the Agency's relationship was seen as sporadic depending upon staff member and Regional Office (at the time), DBVI has made a concerted effort to provide Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor training surrounding dual cases shared between DBVI and DARS, with an update to business practices to support those efforts and expectations of collaboration when working towards the common goal of individuals receiving and/or maintaining competitive integrated employment.

As a core partner, DBVI, continues to provide in-service training for American Job Center Staff regarding the provision of DBVI services and the necessity of the availability of Center services and the braiding of funding to provide comprehensive services. DBVI anticipates continuing the increased partnership with the American Job Centers to leverage all partner services in assisting individuals with visual impairments in their desire to gain or maintain viable competitive integrated employment.

The core workforce partners in Virginia have continued the development of a common referral portal which should aid in tracking co-enrollment. However, the project is currently on hold while the portal system developers work to ensure the system becomes fully accessible. Portal modification and updates continue to be worked on and addressed to ensure that all core partners have the same access to the portal information.

- (D) Youth with disabilities, including students with disabilities and their need for pre-employment transition services. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under IDEA.

[text box] In the 2022 CSNA it was noted that the number of transition-age youth applying for services ranged from 73-88 in PYs 2017-2019 before dropping to 61 in PY 2020. This decrease was determined to be the result of the pandemic and the impact of school closures and the shift to remote services delivery. The average time frame for eligibility determinations for transition-age youth at DBVI decreased during the prior four year period, ending at 38 days. This was found to be well below the established time frame of 60 days maximum in the Rehabilitation Act. All of the youth found eligible were determined to have at least a significant disability, with more than 96% having a most significant disability in PY 2020.

Since the 2022 CSNA, DBVI has continued to work on providing rapid engagement services to bring the average number of days in status to an even lower number. DBVI is committed to its Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor training efforts in support of this initiative.

Despite the pandemic, the number of students with disabilities increased from 2018-2020. In addition, the number of potentially eligible students decreased significantly during that same time period. This was determined to indicate the DBVI is maximizing the number of potentially eligible students that apply to the Vocational Rehabilitation program to become participants. Therefore, the agency has been able to charge a number of supportive services that assist students in participating in the five required services fairly evenly in terms of percentage of all services offered.

As a result of increased data collection, including labor market indicators and stated employer staffing needs throughout Virginia, DBVI has tailored the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services programs to focus on educating students with disabilities on the prevailing career paths related to current Virginia employer needs.

The Assessment indicated that barriers to achieving employment goals for both students and youth with disabilities were not different. Two of the three top barriers selected for DBVI consumers in this population were also listed in the top three barriers selected for the general population. These barriers were:

1. Not having education or training
2. Not having job skills

An assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition services included the following:

1. Transportation barriers from school and work. The lack of reliable transportation, specifically in the rural areas of Virginia, affects every area of the lives of youth and can have a significant impact which limits work options for this population.



2. Low Vision technology and other Assistive technology are key services for youth and students who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind. These services are critical in preparing students and youth for their chosen career and their ability to complete the essential functions of their chosen careers.
3. All five required pre-employment transition services activities have been consistently cited as being necessary for students with disabilities. One of the five required services, work-based learning experiences, were most frequently cited, however skills related to self-advocacy and soft-skills (now referred to as power skills) training were mentioned almost as frequently.
4. The Learning Independence Feeling Empowered (LIFE) summer program at VRCBVI received high praise from those who responded to the survey, as did much of the virtual training opportunities provided by VRCBVI during the pandemic and beyond.
5. DBVI has a close working relationship with the Department of Education through many facets of the programs offered. Specifically related to students with disabilities, DBVI works hand in hand with the Teachers for the Vision Impaired (TVI) Statewide to ensure services are coordinated and comprehensive. In more rural areas of the State where a school district may not have a TVI, it is found that coordination of services for students with disabilities is adversely impacted.
6. At the time of the assessment, DBVI had added Pre-ETS programs focusing on the concepts of resiliency and financial literacy. The new offerings were considered helpful, needed and a positive experience for respondents.
7. The transition from secondary to post-secondary can be a major challenge for students who have received services under an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or 504. The concept of understanding ones disability and what accommodations are necessary to ensure the student is able to access the materials is daunting when first presented. As a support for students transitioning from high school to college, DBVI's Assistive Technology services help bridge the technology gap. However, at times it was reported that the services were not delivered in a timely manner and caused a delay at the beginning of the individuals learning process and goal attainments.

(2) Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State

[text box] Respondents who participated in the survey identified the top six service needs that rehabilitation service providers were unable to meet in the State:

- a. Job Training Services
- b. Assistive Technology
- c. Other transportation assistance
- d. Independent Living Skills training
- e. Adjustment to blindness training
- f. Affordable housing services

The respondents were then provided with a list of five reasons and were asked to identify the primary reasons why vocational rehabilitation service providers were unable to meet individual's service needs. Respondents were able to select more than one item if desired. The majority of respondents stated that there were not enough service providers available in areas, which infers that this item is the primary reason why services through community rehabilitation programs (CRP) was not met. The subsequent reasons cited included:

- a. Low quality of provider services
- b. Individual's barriers prevented successful interactions with providers
- c. The lack of referrals

Survey participants were also asked to identify the most important change that network or rehabilitation service providers in Virginia could make to support individuals who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind efforts to achieve their employment goals. These changes included:

- a. Communication with the consumer and lists of options
- b. More staff and more training for staff with more in-person participation in meetings and training
- c. More training on AT and accommodations
- d. Provide training closer to southwest Virginia

Additional recurring themes from those surveyed included:

- a. The provision of training services provided to individuals by DBVI staff members
- b. The use of CRPs and other individual service providers for some services
- c. In-house service provision was the most common method of service delivery
- d. The use of external service providers for employment services including supported employment; although infrequent
- e. Due to the inherent in-house service provision, it was found that DBVI was not as adversely affected by the loss of external service providers due to layoffs and high turnover as some other VR programs nationally
- f. An expressed need to develop the ability of ESOs to work with individuals who are blind, vision impaired or deafblind. Staff respondents indicated that they would be more likely to work with ESOs for employment services if they had more knowledge and experience working with their consumers
- g. The need to re-establish vocational evaluation services for DBVI consumers due to the lack of professional vocational evaluation services that are tailored to meet the needs of individuals with blindness or vision impairments
- h. The need for peer mentors, especially for youth with blindness and vision impairments. Although mentors are not usually considered as a purchased service, peer mentor training programs and networks can be contractually provided or arranged for on a fee-for-services basis

In response to the feedback received from the CSNA in this area, DBVI has implemented strategies and programs aimed at lessening the gap in the use of ESO provided services. As stated earlier in the report, DBVI has established quarterly in-person training for ESO staff surrounding blindness as a disability and the anticipated interaction of the ESO and DBVI staff while collaborating to support an individual with blindness or vision impairment in their search to gain or retain competitive integrated employment. An additional focus of these trainings are to introduce ESO staff to the myriad of Assistive Technology devices that can be used on the job as well as an introduction to skills of blindness philosophy and training.

Also, DBVI has contracted with Virginia Commonwealth University Rehabilitation Research and Training Center (VCU RRTC) for the provision of peer mentoring services. As part of the contract, VCU RRTC is developing a replicable curriculum and resource tool kit that can be used as a framework for other ESOs to utilize when setting up peer mentoring services. DBVI is currently in the second year of the contract and great success has been reported by student participants who would otherwise not have access to mentors and peers with blindness.

### **(c) Goals, Priorities, and Strategies**

Section 101(a)(15) and (23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe the goals and priorities of the State in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs. The goals and priorities are based on (1) the most recent CSNA, including any updates; (2) the State's performance

under the performance accountability measures of section 116 of WIOA; and (3) other available information on the operation and effectiveness of the VR program, including any reports received from the SRC and findings and recommendations from monitoring activities conducted under section 107 of the Rehabilitation Act. VR agencies must-

- (1) Describe how the SRC and the VR agency jointly developed and agreed to the goal and priorities of any revisions; and  
[text box] During the final SRC meeting of the year, the SRC was presented sample goal language for consideration and discussion. DBVI Director of Vocational Rehabilitation outlined the suggested language and what led to the choosing of each specific goal for consideration. As a part of this review process, the SRC provided input and feedback on the suggested language, and the SRC members were unanimously in favor of adopting the amended suggested goal language for inclusion in the Combined State Plan 2024-2027 cycle.
- (2) Identify measurable goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs and the basis for selecting the goals and priorities (e.g., CSNA, performance accountability measures, SRC recommendations, monitoring and other information). As required in section 101(a)(15)(D), (18), and (23), describe under each goal or priority, the strategies or methods used to achieve the goal or priority, including as applicable, description of strategies or methods that-
  - (A) Support innovation and expansion activities
  - (B) Overcome barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services;
  - (C) Improve and expand VR services for students with disabilities, including the coordination of services designed to facilitate the transition of such students from school to postsecondary life (including the receipt of VR services, post secondary education, employment, and pre-employment transition services); and
  - (D) Improve the performance of the VR and Supported Employment programs in assisting individuals with disabilities to achieve quality employment outcomes.[text box: List and number each goal/priority, noting the basis, and under each goal/priority, list and number the strategies to achieve the goal/priority.]

[text box response] DBVI and the SRC agreed to the following 6 goals for the 2024-2027 cycle of the combined state plan. The goals were developed following the review of the latest CSNA, understanding area of improvement that DBVI needs to focus on, and past input from the SRC regarding what they would like to see and continue to receive updates on moving forward. Please see the following agreed upon goals:

1. Engage and collaborate with WIOA core partners to coordinate business service efforts to include the blind and visually impaired labor market.

During the latest CSNA, it was shown that while DBVI has made great strides in increasing the partnership with other Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) title partners, it was indicated that DBVI should continue these efforts into the future. DBVI has a dedicated Business Relations Unit who have worked tirelessly to bridge the gap between the career seekers DBVI works with and businesses. To that end, the Business Relations Unit has also begun to provide Windmills disability awareness training to title partners across the Commonwealth. In this next cycle, DBVI will continue working with the WIOA core partners to not only coordinate business service efforts, but also to inform employees of the talented and quality pipeline of career seekers who are ready to join or rejoin the workforce. This goal will be measured in the following ways:

1. An increase of the number of career seekers co-enrolled with WIOA core partners

2. The ability/availability for collaboration to braid funding to provide wrap around services for the individuals DBVI works with, shown by an increase of co-enrollment reporting supported by DBVI's case management system.
2. Provide comprehensive vocational rehabilitation services, including rehabilitation technology services, to students with disabilities, youth in transition, and adults resulting in the attainment of industry recognized credentials to obtain competitive integrated employment.

DBVI has a robust and industry recognized Assistive Technology Department that assists individuals with the appropriate equipment to meet their unique needs related to their chosen vocational goal. While DBVI strives to provide the highest quality of services, there have been instances, as noted in the latest CSNA, where individuals did not feel they received the services and necessary assistive technology to move forward confidently in working to achieve their desired level of employment. DBVI is dedicated to reducing the response time to address any such delays and continues to work hand in hand with case managers to ensure individual's needs are not only met, but that the individual can appropriately and functionally utilize the Assistive Technology for its intended purpose. This goal will be measured in the following ways:

1. The utilization of reporting mechanisms through the DBVI case management system
  2. Feedback from individuals regarding their experiences.
3. Conduct outreach efforts to Local Education Agencies and other Community Partners to assist in increasing the number of students with disabilities participating in and benefiting from DBVI offered Pre-Employment Transition programs.

DBVI continues to provide robust and meaningful programming related to the Pre-ETS 5 required activities as set forth in WIOA. One area of improvement is DBVI's outreach to local education agencies and other community partners to inform them about the services available to students with disabilities. In response to this area, DBVI has recently hired an additional staff member to assist in focusing on outreach to the stated audiences. Historically, DBVI has relied on the TVI to let the students and their parents know about the programming and services available to them while still in High School. This goal will be measured in the following ways:

1. An increase in the number of new contacts related to Pre-ETS services
  2. An Increase in participation numbers related to Pre-ETS programming
  3. The increased use of resources to provide support and programming to the DBVI Pre-ETS population statewide.
4. Continue to expand the utilization of Supported Employment and Customized Employment services for adults and youth to increase competitive integrated employment outcomes for individuals with the most significant disabilities.

As noted in the most recent CSNA, DBVI has historically underutilized the provision of Supported Employment for both youth and adults with disabilities. Many factors contribute to this, including case manager lack of understanding of supported employment services and how to leverage ESO assistance in supporting and individual who is blind, vision impaired, or deafblind on the job. As stated earlier in this report, there has been found to be a lack of trained and qualified ESO staff to address the specific needs of individuals who have blindness. DBVI is committed to providing increased training for both case managers and ESO staff on the provision of supported employment services and how to fully support an individual with vision impairment on the job. This goal will be measured in the following ways:

1. Increased use of supported employment services and funding to provide the necessary support for the individual to maintain appropriate competitive integrated employment related to their chosen vocational goal.
  2. Measured through reporting mechanisms available in the DBVI case management system
5. Achieving agency annual performance goals for the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance in section 116(b)(2)(A) of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014.

DBVI strives to remain a good workforce core partner by providing services that lead to achievement of goals related to the performance accountability measures based on primary indicators of performance. Dedicated DBVI staff members are continuously looking at reported measures and work to ensure that the objectives set forth are met. This goal will be measured in the following ways:

1. Data reporting through the DBVI case management system
  2. Power BI (data visualization software) reports to internally measure the number of services provided to individuals during a given quarter or performance year
  3. Reports provided to the Rehabilitation Services Administration on both a quarterly and yearly basis
  4. Internal controls surrounding the collection and reporting of data related to program performance.
6. Increase collaboration with the Virginia Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services to provide comprehensive wrap around services to address the needs of individuals who have dual diagnoses.

The State of Virginia is fortunate to have two separate VR (Title IV) partners to provide comprehensive wrap around services for individuals with disabilities. The latest CSNA mentioned that DBVI should leverage its working relationship with the general agency to

enlist expertise in disabilities other than blindness, and to collaborate as one unit on data measures that are reported as a state and not by each individual agency. Now more than ever, DBVI is recognizing the prevalence of co-occurring disabilities and should collaborate with the general agency to ensure that all of the individuals needs are met, not just needs related to blindness. DBVI has begun to implement business practices regarding the importance and availability of individuals to have a VR case open with both agencies. This goal will be measured in the following ways:

1. An increase in the number of reported joint cases with the general agency
2. Documentation of the increased collaboration of DBVI and the general agency's executive leadership teams to address statewide reporting concerns and remediation of any concerns that would prevent the state from meeting our combined efforts and reporting requirements.

**(d) Evaluation and Reports of Progress: VR and Supported Employment Goals.**

For the most recently completed program year, provide an evaluation and report of progress for the goals or priorities, including progress on the strategies under each goal or priority, applicable to that program year. Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require VR agencies to describe-

- (1) Progress in achieving the goals and priorities identified for the VR and Supported Employment Programs; [text box: List the goals/priorities and discuss the progress or completion of each goal/priority and related strategies]

[text box] The following goals were recommended by the DBVI SRC for the 2020-2023 combined state plan cycle:

SRC Recommendation 1- The SRC recommends DBVI report to the SRC quarterly non the progress toward accomplishing the 2020-2023 state plan goals.

Progress or completion: This goal was completed as a result of DBVI providing both written and verbal reports quarterly as to the progress made towards achieving the designated state plan goals for the current plan cycle

SRC Recommendation 2- Per the feedback from individuals served by DBVI (surveys, success stories, and other anecdotal evidence), the SRC recognizes that self-advocacy skills are critical to the goal setting and thereby achievements of personal and vocational goals for transition-age youth, students and individuals of all ages. Therefore, the SRC recommends that DBVI continue to promote the importance of self-advocacy and continue to incorporate these values into it rehabilitation programs and other services.

Progress or completion: Progress was made on this goal as evidenced by DBVI ensuring incorporation of self-advocacy training as a part of all Pre-ETS programming as well as documenting vocational guidance and counseling provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and other organizations to include increased awareness of consumer organizations

and their roles. Training programs at VRCBVI also include a self-advocacy component in all training modalities.

SRC Recommendation 3- The SRC recommends the following related to consumer satisfaction data.

- a. Consumer Satisfaction survey data is collected annually or on a rolling basis
- b. DBV continue the quarterly reporting cycle whereby consumer satisfaction data and analysis is provided at each scheduled meeting.
- c. Develop strategies to increase consumer participation in consumer satisfaction surveys

Progress or completion: This goal was achieved by DBVI developing and filling a part-time consumer satisfaction employee to follow up with individuals whose cases were closed each week in an attempt both by phone and email to contact individuals to get real time survey information regarding the services they received while working with DBVI. DBVI continued to report quarterly on the consumer satisfaction survey data and responses at each scheduled meeting. DBVI elected to gather the consumer satisfaction survey data on a weekly and rolling basis with a minimum of two emails with survey links sent to the individual followed by a minimum of 3 phone calls in an attempt to allow an individual to provide feedback regarding their services. DBVI collected data from individuals who cases were closed following successful competitive integrated employment as well as individuals who exited the Vocational Rehabilitation Program prior to competitive integrated employment. DBVI will continue with the consumer satisfaction survey process as developed and will monitor the process to allow for any updates or changes to be made as the needs of individuals and reporting requirements change.

SRC Recommendation 4-The SRC recommends that DBVI provide the SRC with a dedicated staff person to capture notes and key action items during SRC meetings and to collaborate with SRC leadership in offering newly appointed SRC members an orientation at least once a year.

Progress or completion: This goal was achieved by the designation of a DBVI administrative team member to capture the quarterly meeting minutes and any key action items that require follow-up. This administrative team member also assists Council members in making arrangements to travel to the meeting location, assists in recording the agenda for upcoming meetings, and works in collaboration with the Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services to schedule and provide meaningful orientation opportunities at least yearly to new members of the SRC. The SRC new member orientation includes an introduction to VR terms and acronyms, a brief history of DBVI and its purpose, and review of the mandate for the SRC and the inherent responsibilities assumed following Governmental appointment. DBVI will continue to provide this requested information and has adopted the recommendation as a best practice.

SRC Recommendation 5- The SRC recommends the following as it pertains to providing opportunities for public comment.

- a. DBVI continue to conduct regional public meetings with regional or state meetings of consumer organizations during the State Plan cycle and share the public comments and agency responses from those meetings with the SRC at each scheduled SRC meeting
- b. DBVI continue to provide notification of all public meetings to include regional meetings, state meetings of consumer organizations, and the quarterly SRC meetings to the DBVI website and the designated channel for Virginia on Newline. In addition, the SRC

recommends that DBVI provide notification of the quarterly SR meetings to students enrolled in VRCBVI.

Progress or completion: The goal was achieved by DBVI's continued willingness to continuing to provide a full report of public comments and the agency's responses on the official DBVI website as well as emailing an electronic copy to SRC members annually and continued posts on Newslines. DBVI remained committed to conducting a minimum of four public meetings (by in-person gatherings and virtual gatherings of stakeholders). At least three of those opportunities are conducted in conjunction with consumer group organizations meetings. All public meetings are advertised on the official DBVI website as well as the official social media pages and Virginia Town Hall so that all interested parties and stakeholders are sufficiently notified of upcoming opportunities to comment. DBVI continues to be open to receiving public comment at any time throughout the year in writing, and stakeholders are advised of this additional opportunity. DBVI is committed to continuing to offer as a best practice.

SRC Recommendation 6- In the interest of providing the best possible customer support to consumers receiving workforce placement services from Virginia DBVI field services, the SRC recommends DBVI place emphasis on training DBVI counselors on Job Development (Entrepreneurship or building relationships with local employees); Job Placement; as well as an overview of Job Coaching and effectively working with Employment Service Organizations. Recommend counselors continue working closely with the DBVI Business Relations Unit to ensure they have the most up-to-date information to assist clients with job placement. The SRC further recommends DBVI report on these efforts at each scheduled SRC meeting (a minimum of four times each year).

Progress/Completion: Throughout the most recent state plan cycle, DBVI has remained committed to providing training to staff, enhancing the counselor relationship with the Business Relations Unit, and providing comprehensive job placement efforts by working with community partners. Each year, DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors attend a scheduled Vocational Rehabilitation Training each month. The topics for the trainings are chosen based on Counselor feedback, reporting trends, and any change in process or policy. DBVI is happy to have seen a large increase in the number of paid work experiences for both students and youth with disabilities but also for adult career seekers as well. This increase could not have occurred without the cooperation and collaboration of the field Counselor and the Business Relations unit. As a rule of thumb, the Business Relations Unit reports out (in-person or virtually) to both DBVI staff and SRC meetings. An update regarding business relations efforts, partnerships and job placement is provided quarterly to the SRC as recommended. DBVI is looking forward to continuing this practice during the next state plan cycle.

SRC Recommendation 7- DBVI develop and distribute various marketing materials for individuals in the community, including business and potentially eligible recipients of services. The SRC recommends that DBVI share these materials with the SRC and ensure that all materials are available in alternate format, to include large print, Braille, and electronic media. The SRC recommends that DBVI conduct targeted outreach to underserved populations.

Progress/Completion: As a commitment to ensuring that all systems and stakeholders are aware of the DBVI services that are available, DBVI has hired a Director of Communications. As part of the first tasks accomplished was consistent branding across all DBVI programs to ensure continuity and understanding of information being received from DBVI. In addition, marketing materials have been developed and are provided in various languages (including the top 5 languages spoken in Virginia). At the time of intake, DBVI case managers confirm with the



individuals being served as to what their preferred format is to receive information. This preference is documented in DBVI's case management system and allows for alternative formats such as large print, Braille, Electronic, or written communication. DBVI has participated in several community outreach events geared towards providing information to populations historically underserved by DBVI and has hired staff who are bi-lingual to help bridge the communication divide. DBVI has hired an additional Pre-ETS specialist dedicated to conducting outreach to Local Education Agencies, TVIs, Parents, and Students with Disabilities to ensure that maximum effort is provided to ensure that DBVI services and opportunities of support are known throughout the State. DBVI shared and will continue to share any new marketing material and website modernization information as they are developed.

- (2) Report on the performance accountability indicators under section 116 of WIOA for the most recently completed program year, reflecting actual and negotiated levels of performance. Explain any discrepancies in the actual and negotiated levels; and
- [text box] Each state submitting a Unified or Combined State Plan is required to identify expected levels of performance for each of the primary indicators of performance for the first two years covered by the plan. The state is required to reach agreement with the Secretary of Labor, in conjunction with the Secretary of Education, on state-negotiated levels of performance for the indicators for each of the first two years of the plan. For PYs 2020-2023 Plans, Title I programs (Adult, Dislocated Worker, and Youth) and the Title II program (Adult Education and Family Literacy Act) had two full years of data available to make reasonable determinations of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:
- a. Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
  - b. Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
  - c. Median earnings (Second Quarter after Exit);
  - d. Credential Attainment Rate; and
  - e. Measurable Skills Gains

The Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program, authorized under the Wagner-Peyser Act, as amended by title III of WIOA, had two full years of data available to make a reasonable determination of expected levels of performance for the following indicators for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- a. Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- b. Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit); and
- c. Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit)

The Credential Attainment Rate and Measurable Skills Gains indicators do not apply to the Wagner-Peyser Act Employment Service program; therefore, this program did not submit expected levels of performance for these indicators.

For the first two years of PYs 2020-2023 Plans, the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, authorized under title I of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA, had two full years of data available for the Measurable Skill Gains indicator only. Therefore, the Departments designated the following indicators as "baseline" for the VR program for PY 2020 and PY 2021:

- a. Employment (Second Quarter after Exit);
- b. Employment (Fourth Quarter after Exit);
- c. Median Earnings (Second Quarter after Exit); and
- d. Credential Attainment Rate

VR agencies were required to continue to collect and report on all indicators, including those that were designated as “baseline, pursuant to section 116(d) of WIOA”. The actual performance data reported by these programs for indicators designated as “baseline” for PY 2020 and PY 2021 serve as baseline data in future years. The Departments required VR agencies to submit expected levels of performance for these indicators for PY 2022 and PY 2023.

The Departments determined that the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator was measured as a shared outcome across all six core programs within each state to ensure a holistic approach to serving employers. The Departments continued piloting approaches for measuring this indicator for the first two years of PY 2020-2023 plans. Therefore, states were not required to submit an expected level of performance for the Effectiveness in Serving Employers indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021. However, core programs were expected to collect data and report on this indicator for PY 2020 and PY 2021 as they did for PYs 2016-2019 plans.

Each core program was required to submit an expected level of performance for all of the other indicators, as applicable, with the exception of the four indicators designated as “baseline” for the VR program in PY 2020 and PY 2021. The Departments worked with states during the negotiation process to establish negotiated levels of performance before the Departments approved a state’s plan.

States could identify additional indicators in the plan, including additional approaches to measuring Effectiveness in Serving Employers, and established levels of performance for each of the state indicators.

The following table shows PY 2022 and PY 2023 expected and negotiated levels of performance:

Performance Indicators	PY 2022 Expected Level	PY 2022 Negotiated Level	PY 2022 Adjusted (SAM)	PY 2022 Actual	PY 2023 Expected Level	PY 2023 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	50.1%	52%	54.3%	VA 58.1% DBVI 51.4%	50.1%	53%
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	47.0%	50.0%	51.45%	VA 55.7% DBVI 39.1%	47.0%	52%
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$3339	\$3600	\$3583	VA \$4123 DBVI \$7465	\$3339	\$3800
Credential Attainment Rate	71.2%	89.0%	47.8%	VA 61.3% DBVI 49.3%	42.2%	45%
Measurable Skill Gains	71.2%	89.0%	Not assessed	VA 87.7% DBVI 93.3%	71.2%	89.1%
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>			Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Effectiveness in Serving Employers” is being reported statewide for the core partners and will reported as such in the Combined State Plan for the 2024-2027 state plan cycle.

Performance Indicators	PY 2024 Expected Level	PY 2024 Negotiated Level	PY 2025 Expected Level	PY 2025 Negotiated Level
Employment (Second Quarter After Exit)	55%		57%	
Employment (Fourth Quarter After Exit)	54%		56%	
Median Earnings (Second Quarter After Exit)	\$3909		\$4200	
Credential Attainment Rate	63%		66%	
Measurable Skill Gains	89%		91.5%	
Effectiveness in Serving Employers	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>	Not Applicable <sup>1</sup>

(3) \*\*The use of funds reserved for innovation and expansion activities (sections 101(a)(18) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act) (e.g. SRC, SILC).

**(e) Supported Employment Services, Distribution of Title IV Funds, and Arrangements and Cooperative Agreements for the Provision of Supported Employment Services.**

(1) Acceptance of title IV funds:

(A)  VR agency requests to receive title VI funds.

(B)  VR agency does NOT elect to receive title VI funds and understands that supported employment services must still be provided under Title I.

(2) If the VR agency has elected to receive title VI funds, Section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act requires VR agencies to include specific goals and priorities with respect to the distribution of title VI funds received under section 603 of the Rehabilitation Act for the provision of supported employment services. Describe the use of title VI funds and how they will be used in meeting the goals and priorities of the Supported Employment program.

[text box] The Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) uses funds received through Title IV of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in the Workforce Innovation and

Opportunity Act of 2014, to purchase Supported Employment services (SE) for eligible individuals, including youth, who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind. DBVI purchases SE using a fee-for-services structure from a statewide network of approximately seventy approved SE vendors.

In PY 2023, 25 individuals with most significant disabilities received services through Supported Employment programs funded by Title IV. DBVI will use Title IV funds to purchase and provide SE support services for approximately 15-20 individuals each year of the state plan cycle, including youth, with most significant disabilities.

Other activities will include:

1. collaborating with Employment Services Organizations (ESO's) to identify areas within the state where Supported Employment services are not available or limited and to provide consultation, training, and support for those ESO's who expand services into those areas;
  2. providing consultation and training to all ESO's to enhance their ability to serve individuals who are blind, deafblind, or who have a vision impairment;
  3. continuing to identify alternative funding opportunities for extended employment services.
- (3) Supported Employment services may be provided with title I or title VI funds following placement of individuals with the most significant disabilities in employment. In accordance with section 101(a)(22) and section 606(b)(3) of the Rehabilitation Act, describe the quality, scope and extent of supported employment services to be provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities, including youth with the most significant disabilities; and the timing of transition to extended services.

[text box] DBVI will continue to reserve and expend 50% of its Title VI funds for youth up to age 25 with the most significant disabilities. DBVI's policies will allow for the provision of extended services for a period not to exceed four years and DBVI will continue to utilize other funds (non—Title VI) for SE services for youth once Title VI funds are exhausted. DBVI collaborates with eight Community Rehabilitation Providers known as Employment Services Organizations (ESO) in Virginia to arrange for and to provide Extended Services.

Once the youth has reached stability on the employment site (as agreed to between the VR counselor and the Employment Services Organization (ESO) job coach), the extended services phase begins.

Extended Services activities can include any of the following on-going support services:

- a. Any particularized assessment needed to supplement the comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs;
- b. The provision of skilled job trainers who accompany the individual for intensive job skill training at the work site;
- c. Job development and placement;
- d. Social skills training;
- e. Regular observation or supervision of the individual;
- f. Follow-up services such as regular contact with the employers, the individuals, the parents, family members, guardians, advocates or authorized representatives of the individuals, and other suitable professional and informed advisors, in order to reinforce and stabilize the job placement;
- g. Facilitation of natural supports at the worksite;
- h. Any other service identified in the scope of rehabilitation services described in 34 CFR part 361; and

i. Any service similar to the foregoing services.

(4) Sections 101(a)(22) and 606(b)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act require the VR agency to describe efforts to identify and arrange, including entering into cooperative agreements, with other State agencies and other appropriate entities in order to provide supported employment services. The description must include extended services, as applicable, to individuals with the most significant disabilities in accordance with 34 CFR 363.4(a) and 34 CFR 361.5(c)(19)(v).

[text box] DBVI will seek to expand and enhance relationships with community partners, including both public and private programs and agencies, with the goal of leveraging additional resources in order to increase extended services and expanded supported employment opportunities in Virginia. Specifically:

1. DBVI is currently working with a larger number of individuals with multiple disabilities, in particular individuals who are blind, deafblind, or have a vision impairment and also have a mental health disability. DBVI continue to collaborate more formally with the local public mental health agencies with the goal of leveraging those entities as an additional resource.
2. DBVI has had sporadic relationships with the Veteran’s Administration (VA) programs across the state. DBVI will identify those VA programs that may be serving a population consistent with those individuals DBVI is currently serving as another possible resource.
3. DBVI has an established policy for jointly serving individuals who may also have (or could have) an open case with the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) in Virginia, and has recently updated business practices to encourage collaboration between the two agencies. Jointly serving individuals with multiple disabilities who require supported employment services, including shared funding of those services, will not only enhance the services to the individual but will limit costs for both agencies.
4. DBVI has been expanding the roster of potential vendors for services, including supported employment services, for individuals who are blind, deafblind, or vision impaired. The majority of these vendors are non-profit agencies, but an enhanced collaboration with them may provide access to other resources for the population DBVI serves.
5. DBVI, through the approved supported employment vendors (Employment Services Organizations – ESO’s), has been able to access some Long-Term Extended Support Services (LTESS) for the population served in supported employment. DBVI has as a goal to continue increasing its utilization of these ESO’s for supported employment services, and that increased utilization will mean increased LTESS funds targeted for those served by DBVI.

**(f) Annual Estimates.** Sections 101(a)(15) and 101(a)(23) of the Rehabilitation Act require all VR agencies to annually conduct a full assessment of their resources and ability to serve all eligible individuals before the start of the Federal fiscal year. In accordance with 34 CFR § 361.29(b), annual estimates must include the following projections:

(1) \*\*Estimates for next Federal fiscal year-  
(A) VR Program; and

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under VR Program	Cost of Services using Title 1 Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
Priority Category 1	1550	1350	2,395,830.00	200

Most Significantly Disabled				
Priority Category 2 Significantly Disabled	1,700	1,500	75,000.00	200
Priority Category 3 All Others Eligible	1,700	1,500	0.00	200

(B) \*\*Supported Employment Program

Priority Category (if applicable)	No. of Individuals Eligible for Services	No. of Eligible Individuals Expected to Receive Services under Supported Employment Program	Costs of Services using Title 1 and Title IV Funds	No. of Eligible Individuals Not Receiving Services (if applicable)
Priority Category 1 Most Significantly Disabled	1350	25		1325

**(g) Order of Selection**

[check box] The VR agency is **not** implementing an order of selection and all eligible individuals will be served.

[check box] The VR agency is implementing an order of selection with one or more categories closed.

- VR agencies may maintain an order of selection policy and priority of eligible individuals without implementing or continuing to implement an order of selection

Pursuant to section 101(a)(5) of the Rehabilitation Act, this description must be amended when the VR agency determines, based on the annual estimates described in description (f), that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities in the State who apply for and are determined eligible for services.

(1) For VR Agencies that have defined priority categories describe-

(A) The justification for the order;

[text box] An Order of Selection (OOS) will be implemented when services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals with disabilities who have applied for services. Individuals with the most significant disabilities will be given priority for services. At this time, DBVI does not expect to enter into an Order of Selection during the 2024-2027 stat plan cycle.

(B) The order (priority categories) to be followed in selecting eligible individuals to be provided VR services ensuring that individuals with the most significant disabilities are selected for services before all other individuals with disabilities; and

[text box] **Category I: Individuals with a Most Significant Disability (MSD)**

The individual meets the definition of an individual with a significant disability and;

1. The severe vision impairment and/or any secondary disabilities, seriously limits two or more life activities (such as mobility, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, self-direction, work tolerance or work skills) in terms of achieving an employment outcome and;

1. The individual's vocational rehabilitation must also be expected to require multiple core VR services over an extended period of time (6 months or longer).

**Category II: Individuals with a Significant Disability (SD):**

1. The severe vision impairment and/or any secondary disabilities, "seriously limits" one life activity (such as mobility, communication, self-care, interpersonal skills, self-direction, work tolerance or work skills) in terms of achieving an employment outcome.

1. The individual's vocational rehabilitation must also require multiple core VR services over an extended period of time (minimum of six months)."

**Category III: All Other Eligible Individuals**

(C) The VR agency's goals for serving individuals in each priority category including how the agency will assist eligible individuals assigned to closed priority categories with information and referral, the method in which the VR agency will manage waiting lists, and the projected timelines for opening priority categories. NOTE: Priority categories are considered open when all individuals in the priority category may be served.

[text box]

Priority Category Assignment If DBVI is operating under an Order of Selection:

The VR Counselor shall assign individuals determined eligible for VR services to the appropriate priority category and must then document the rationale for the assignment in the case record. The VR Counselor shall communicate to the individual, through appropriate modes of communication (per 34 CFR 361.57(e)), the category assignment as well as DBVI's appeal process. Only those assigned to an open category will be served.

- a. The VR Counselor must assign individuals who receive either Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Income (SSDI), or both, to priority Category I or II since they are presumed to have a significant disability that results in serious functional limitations in one or more areas (per 34 CFR 361.42(a)(3)). Individuals receiving SSDI survivor or family benefits are not presumed to have a significant disability because they are receiving SSA benefits under the work record and disability of another person.
- b. Individuals whose cases are in Eligible status or higher are exempt from the Order of Selection and should continue to be served. Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) may be developed for those individuals who were previously placed in Eligible status before the date that the category became closed. Those individuals in Service status should continue to be served under their IPE.
- c. The Order of Selection process will be implemented if DBVI cannot provide services, due to limited resources, to all individuals who are eligible for VR services.
- d. The Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services will provide written notification to all regional offices regarding the category and date to implement or discontinue the Order of Selection.
- e. The Order of Selection does not apply to individuals who have already been determined eligible prior to the priority category they are in closing or to individuals in Service status.

- f. Applications for VR services will be accepted without restrictions. All applicants will receive the necessary assessment services to determine eligibility and will receive assistance in locating services available from other sources, including services available through Virginia's workforce development services system.
- g. In the event that VR services cannot be provided to all eligible individuals in a given category, a waiting list (also referred to as Delayed Status) based upon the date of application for VR services will be used within a category.
- h. If an individual who is eligible for VR services does not meet the criteria for the category(ies) being served (i.e., is placed in a priority category that's not open to be served) under the Order of Selection and does not request case closure from Application, they must be accepted for services and held in a waiting status. An individual placed into this status has been determined eligible for VR services (Certificate of Eligibility completed) but cannot receive services because he or she does not meet the State agency's Order of Selection priorities.
- i. The individual should be notified via the Order of Selection letter in AWARE (DBVI's case management system)



j. Individuals will be held in the waiting status until

1. the priority category they are in is fully opened (all individuals in a specific priority category or categories become open to be served as of a date specified),
2. the priority category they are in is partially opened (all individuals in a specific priority category within a defined date range by application date become open to be served as of a date specified),
3. the individual requests their VR case be closed.

k. Individuals who are on the waiting list due to an order of selection and are closed prior to receiving services should be closed as "Other."

l. An individual determined to be eligible for VR services may appeal their priority category assignment in accordance with the agency's standard appeal procedures.

m. If DBVI should open a priority category, or partially open a priority category, the VR Counselor should communicate with those individuals on their caseload who are on the waiting list and would be impacted by this change. The individual should be notified through appropriate modes of communication to include as appropriate by mail, electronic mail and/or telephone to best ensure the individual has been fully informed of the opening of their category.

(2) Has the VR agency elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection who require specific services or equipment to maintain employment?

[check box] Yes

[check box] No

**(h) Waiver of Statewideness.** The State plan shall be in effect in all political subdivisions of the State, however, the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (Commissioner) may waive compliance with this requirement in accordance with section 101(a)(4) of the Rehabilitation Act and the has a previously approved waiver of statewideness, describe the types of services and the local entities providing such services under the waiver of statewideness and how the agency has complied with the requirements in 34 CFR 361.26. If the VR agency is not requesting or does not have an approved waiver of statewideness, please indicate "not applicable"

[text box] not applicable

**(i) Comprehensive System of Personnel Development** In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(7) of the Rehabilitation Act, the VR agency must develop and maintain annually a description (consistent with the purpose of the Rehabilitation Act) of the VR agency's comprehensive system of personnel development which shall include a description of the procedures and activities the VR agency will undertake to ensure it has an adequate supply of qualified State rehabilitation professionals and paraprofessionals that provides the following:

(1) Analysis of current personnel and projected personnel needs including-

(A) The number and type of personnel that are employed by the VR agency in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, including ratios of qualified vocational rehabilitation counselors to clients;

(B) The number of personnel currently needed by the VR agency to provide VR services, broken down by personnel category; and

(C) Projections of the number of personnel, broken down by personnel category, who will be needed by the VR agency to provide VR services in 5 years based on projections of the number of individuals to be served, including individuals with significant disabilities, the number of personnel expected to retire or leave the field, and other relevant factors. \*\*

Personnel Category	No. of Personnel Employed	No. of Personnel Currently Needed	Projected No. of Personnel Needed in 5 years
Senior Regional Manager	2	2	2
Regional Manager	4	4	4
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	16	17	19
Rehabilitation Teachers	20	20	20
Education Services Coordinator	5	6	8
Orientation and Mobility Instructors	8	10	10
Rehabilitation and Technology Specialists	3	4	4
Administrators, Program Directors, Data and Program Analysts	20	20	20
Regional Office Administrative Staff	16	16	16
Director of Vocational Rehabilitation and Workforce Services	1	1	1
Director of Business and Corporate Initiatives	1	1	1
Business Relations Specialists	4	5	5
VRCBVI: Instructors, Orientation and Mobility Specialists, Access Technology Specialists, Health Educator, Administrative Support Staff, drivers, dorm staff	39	40	40
VRCBVI: Administrators	3	3	3

\*\* (D) Ratio of Qualified VR Counselors to clients: [text box] 1:70 currently; in PY2024 expected ratio is 1:60

\*\* (E) Projected number of individuals to be served in 5 years: [text box] 1347

(2) Data and information on personnel preparation and development, recruitment and retention, and staff development, including the following:

(A) A list of the institutions of higher education in the State that are preparing VR professionals, by type of program; the number of students enrolled at each of those institutions, broken down by type of program; and the number of students who graduated during the prior year from each of those institutions with certification or licensure, or with the credentials for certification or licensure, broken down by the personnel category for which they have received or have the credentials to receive, certification or licensure.

Institute of Higher Education	Type of Program	No. of Students enrolled	No. of Prior Year Graduates
Virginia Commonwealth University	Masters of Science in Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling	111	46

(B) The VR agency's plan for recruitment, preparation and retention of qualified personnel. Which addresses the current and projected needs for qualified personnel; and the coordination and facilitation of efforts between the VR agency and institutions of higher education and professional associations to recruit, prepare, and retain personnel who are qualified, including personnel from minority backgrounds and personnel who are individuals with disabilities.

[text box] Virginia is fortunate to have one accredited school offering a degree program in vocational rehabilitation. The degree program at Virginia Commonwealth University (VCU) in Richmond is accredited by the Council for Accreditation of Counseling & Related Educational Programs (CACREP). The VCU Master of Science in Rehabilitation Counseling prepares students for the CRC certification upon graduation.

DBVI has adopted, as a minimum standard, the educational standards established by the Commission of Rehabilitation Counselor Certification (CRCC) and supports counselors in becoming CRCs. For the past 19 years, nearly all of DBVI's VR Counselors and Regional Managers have met the CRCC education standards.

If there are no applicants meeting the educational standards adopted by DBVI for VR Counseling positions, DBVI will consider a second tier of applicants that have completed a significant amount of their coursework towards a master's degree in Rehabilitation Counseling or closely related field and will complete their program within one year of their hire date. This type of position is developed as a Counselor Trainee position with expectations of movement to Rehabilitation Counselor within 6 months of graduation.

DBVI maintains a Personnel Policies Handbook containing procedures for recruiting, advertising, screening applications, interviewing, hiring decisions, and applicant notification. DBVI specifically emphasizes advertising geared to attract qualified minorities, females, and individuals with disabilities.

DBVI supports recruiting and hiring qualified blind individuals to provide rehabilitation services. DBVI provides job announcements directly to consumer groups, *Newsline*, the National Federation of the Blind, and the American Council of the Blind central offices. To attract minorities to rehabilitation careers, DBVI collaborates with historically black colleges and universities for recruitment. Additionally, DBVI provides or sponsors VR staff training to improve cultural awareness and sensitivity.

DBVI sponsors eligible blind, vision impaired, or deafblind individuals attending any of the Commonwealth of Virginia's four historically black colleges and universities: Hampton University in Hampton, Norfolk State University in Norfolk, Virginia State University in Petersburg, and

Virginia Union University in Richmond. DBVI maintains contact with these schools through service provision to eligible individuals receiving VR services, VR Counselors, the Human Resources office, and other agency staff. DBVI will continue to expand its outreach activities with these colleges and universities.

(C) Description of staff development policies, procedures, and activities that ensure all personnel employed by the VR agency receive appropriate and adequate training and continuing education for professional and paraprofessionals:

i. Particularly with respect to assessment, vocational counseling, job placement, and rehabilitation technology, including training implemented in coordination with entities carrying out State programs under section 4 of the Assistive Technology Act of 1998; and

ii. Procedures for the acquisition and dissemination of significant knowledge from research and other sources to VR agency professionals and paraprofessionals and for providing training regarding the amendments to the Rehabilitation Act made by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.

[text box] The personnel standard that is used to comply with the qualified personnel requirement of the Rehabilitation Act is that prospective VR counselors are required to possess a master's or doctoral degree in a field of study such as vocational rehabilitation counseling, law, social work, psychology, disability studies, business administration, human resources, special education, management, public administration, or another field that reasonably provides competence in the employment sector, in a disability field, or in both business-related and rehabilitation-related field.

DBVI VR Counselors are required to hold a master's degree as previously noted. If new hires do not possess the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC) credential, they are expected to obtain the credential within 12 months of hire and to maintain the credential while employed.

In 2024-2027, DBVI will continue several key workforce training activities focusing on improving services and developing and maintaining collaborative partnerships with individuals receiving services. DBVI planning for training in this area includes:

- analyses of the changing workforce
- analyses of demographic information and agency staffing
- assessment of future needs
- determination of gaps between current and future staffing needs
- enhancing Workforce Development activities including continuing to establish relationships with businesses
- utilizing Career Pathways opportunities in Virginia

(3) Description of VR agency policies and procedures for the establishment and maintenance of personnel standards consistent with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) to ensure that VR agency professional and paraprofessional personnel are adequately trained and prepared, including-

(A) Standards that are consistent with any national or State-approved or -recognized certification, licensing, registration, or other comparable requirements that apply to the profession or discipline in which such personnel are providing VR services; and

(B) The establishment and maintenance of education experience requirements, in accordance with section 101(a)(7)(B)(ii) of the Rehabilitation Act to ensure that the

personnel have a 21<sup>st</sup> century understanding of the evolving labor force and the needs of individuals with disabilities.

[text box] DBVI will reimburse VR Counselors, Rehabilitation Teachers, O&M specialists, and Education Coordinators for fees required to obtain and maintain certification.

(4) Method(s) the VR agency uses to ensure that personnel are able to communicate in appropriate modes of communication with or in the native language of applicants or eligible individuals who have limited English speaking ability.

[text box] DBVI ensures that staff and individuals who apply for or are eligible for VR services who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind and/or have other disabilities or have limited English speaking abilities are provided with accommodations to address appropriate modes of communication. Examples include, but are not limited to, interpreters, use of electronic media, braille, and translators to facilitate communication; DBVI purchases interpreter and translator services at the local level as needed.

(5) As appropriate, describe the procedures and activities to coordinate the designated State unit's comprehensive system of personnel development with personnel development under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

[text box] VR Counselors routinely partner with students, their families, and teachers to ensure eligible students aged 14 to 21 receive vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services.

In response to the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), DBVI's Education Coordinators provide support and technical assistance at the local level to children and students, their parents, school division administrators, and itinerant teachers for the visually impaired. The goal is to further students' involvement in academics and extracurricular school activities.

DBVI has five Education Coordinator positions located in Regional Offices. Education Coordinators have graduate-level training and when appropriate, participate with VR staff in joint training initiatives per DBVI's Personnel Development Plan.

### **Cooperation, Collaboration, and Coordination (Section 101(a)(11) of the Rehabilitation Act)**

**(i) Coordination with Education Officials.** In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(11)(D) of the Rehabilitation Act-

(1) Describe plans, policies, and procedures for coordination between the designated State agency and education officials responsible for the public education of students with disabilities, that are designed to facilitate the transition of the students with disabilities from the receipt of educational services in school to the receipt of vocational rehabilitation services, including pre-employment transition services.

[text box] DBVI maintains collaborative relationships with state and local education officials. Interagency partnering includes developing and implementing cooperative agreements with the Virginia Department of Education (DOE) and each local school division that identify plans, policies, and procedures.

These annual agreements facilitate the transition of blind, vision impaired, or deafblind students from school to the receipt of VR services for eligible students, as well as procedures for the timely development and approval of individualized plans for employment for the students and the financial obligations of each agency.

Additionally, the agreements establish collaboration and coordination efforts to help blind, vision impaired, or deafblind students fully participate in school. DBVI has implemented pre-employment transition services and includes these services in all planning, policies, procedures, and agreements in the cooperative agreement cycle.

The cooperative agreement between DBVI and DOE identifies each agency's respective and joint responsibilities. DOE is the lead agency assuring eligible students with disabilities receive free appropriate public education, while DBVI prepares and delivers a program of special education services in addition to those provided in the public school system. DBVI works with students who are potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services and school systems to plan and provide services to students.

Transition services are delivered to youth with a disability. A Youth with a Disability means individual with a disability who:

- is not younger than 14 years of age; and
- is not older than 24 years of age.

Pre-Employment Transition Services are delivered to students who are at least 14 years of age but less than 22 years of age. The age range for pre-employment transition Services was agreed upon with and aligns with the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitation Services age range for pre-employment transition services.

(2) Describe the current status and scope of the formal interagency agreement between the VR agency and the State educational agency. Consistent with the requirements of the formal interagency agreement pursuant to 34 CFR 361.22(b), provide at a minimum, the following information about the agreement:

(A) Consultation and technical assistance, which may be provided using alternative means for meeting participation (such as video conferences and conference calls), to assist educational agencies in planning for the transition of students with disabilities from school to post-school activities, including pre-employment transition services and other vocational rehabilitation services;

(B) Transition planning by personnel of the designated State agency and educational agency personnel for students with disabilities that facilitates the development and implementation of their individualized education programs (IEPs) under section 614(d) of the individuals with Disabilities Education Act;

(C) The roles and responsibilities, including financial responsibilities, of each agency, including provisions for determining State lead agencies and qualified personnel responsible for transition services and pre-employment transition services;

(D) Procedures for outreach to and identification of students with disabilities who need transition services and pre-employment transition services. Outreach to these students should occur as early as possible during transition planning process and must include, at a minimum, a description of the purpose of the Vocational Rehabilitation program, eligibility requirements, application procedures, and scope of services that may be provided to eligible individuals;

(E) Coordination necessary to satisfy documentation requirements set forth in 34 CFR part 397 regarding students and youth with disabilities who are seeking subminimum wage employment; and

(F) Assurance that, in accordance with 34 CFR 397.31, neither the SEA nor the local educational agency will enter into a contract or other arrangement with an entity, as defined in 34 CFR 397.5(d), for the purpose of operating a program under which youth with a disability is engaged in work compensated at a subminimum wage.

[text box] This state-level cooperative agreement specifies that DBVI:

- assists DOE staff and other facilities with developing “child find” efforts to identify and locate students who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind;
- assists DOE staff to plan for the assistive technology needs of eligible students;
- assists DOE staff in planning for Virginia’s statewide testing program;
- invites DOE staff to DBVI meetings that address major issues affecting students who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind;
- provides information and educational materials defining DBVI services and procedures;
- provides a lending service through DBVI’s Library and Recourse Center (LRC) from which the School Division may borrow certain items that are appropriate for teaching students who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind; and
- provides professional development opportunities for Teachers of the Vision Impaired (TVI) on a regional basis, to include two training sessions for new teachers related to the DBVI Low Vision program and the process for ordering materials from the Library Resource Center.

**San Diego State University**  
**Interwork Institute**

**Commonwealth of Virginia**  
**Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired**  
**And**  
**The State Rehabilitation Council**  
**Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment**  
**Report**

**April 30, 2022**

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- Maggie Mills, Executive Assistant for Services
- Megan O'Toole Hall, Assistant Director of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Deborah Collard, Program Analyst

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Commonwealth of Virginia, Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), the State Rehabilitation Council and the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University jointly conducted an assessment of the vocational rehabilitation needs of persons with blindness and vision impairments residing in the Commonwealth of Virginia. A triennial needs assessment is required by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and is intended to help inform the Unified State Plan developed by the core partners in Virginia's Workforce Development System. The data was gathered analyzed and grouped into the sections listed below. A summary of key findings in each section is contained here. The full results are found in the body of the report.

All of the qualitative information gathered for this report and the quantitative data for the last quarter of PY 2019 and all of PY 2020 should be interpreted within the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The restrictions on in-person meetings, office closures and concerns for personal and public safety had a dramatic impact on all VR programs.

It is important to note that in the midst of the pandemic, DBVI did an admirable job of shifting to remote service delivery and gained national recognition for their innovative programming, especially in the area of pre-employment transition services. A list of the programs developed by DBVI includes, but is not limited to:

Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) focused programs that include:

- Robotics and Cyber academy for hands-on career exploration
- Virtual and hands-on IT credential fairs
- Raspberry Pi and the Security Camera Academy
- Leap into Linux Academy
- Ethical Hacker Academy
- HTML Hero Academy

Other programs include:

- ACE Academy for College Success
- ACE Advocacy for College
- ACE Leadership for College Success
- Financial Literacy
- Advocating for Science

All of these programs and more were highlighted by participants in this assessment as examples of how effectively DBVI responded to the restrictions of the pandemic and the positive focus of the organization on helping youth and students with disabilities to prepare for the 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce.

It should also be noted that given the number of survey respondents and interview participants in this assessment, it is difficult to determine how well the summary statistics represent the entire

group of individuals served; as a result, please view the summary information as informative, and providing general guidance, rather than as definitive statements regarding the results of any specific subset of VR cases or individuals being served.

### **Section One: Overall Performance of DBVI**

**The following findings and recurring themes emerged from all of the research methods (data, surveys and interviews) related to this topic area:**

1. The pandemic significantly impacted the number of applications and employment outcomes for DBVI and all VR programs in the last two years.
2. Although applications have decreased during COVID, staff and partners indicate that business is starting to pick back up and they are optimistic about the future.
3. The quality of employment outcomes achieved by DBVI consumers was overwhelmingly noted as being very good. Consumers are prepared for in-demand jobs that are high in pay and career-level. These outcomes reflect the agency-wide belief in the abilities and capabilities of people with blindness. DBVI staff have high expectations for their consumers and work hard to convey those expectations to the individuals they serve.
4. DBVI shifted and adapted to virtual service delivery quickly and efficiently as a result of the pandemic.
5. DBVI and VRCBVI were very creative in the development of virtual training, and the new platforms allowed the agency to reach many more individuals than they had when providing training in-person only. Outreach and training, especially for youth, increased significantly as a result of the shift to virtual training. DBVI has been recognized nationally among VR programs for the programs they have created during the pandemic.
6. The community awareness of DBVI is lacking in many areas of the state and needs to increase.

**The following recommendations are made to DBVI based on the findings and recurring themes that emerged from all of the research methods:**

1. DBVI is encouraged to increase marketing and outreach efforts as the pandemic restrictions continue to be lifted throughout Virginia, while being cognizant of available fiscal and staff resources so that there is not a need to enter an order of selection again;
2. The agency is encouraged to actively recruit interns to help address the need for qualified counseling and instruction staff. DBVI is encouraged to embark on a “grow your own” program whereby consumers are supported to achieve their graduate degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and can serve as interns for the agency during their practicum requirements. This can result in a steady pipeline of qualified individuals to work for the agency upon graduation;
3. DBVI should continue the innovative work they are doing with virtual training and expand the opportunities in this area as resources allow;
4. DBVI is encouraged to identify and implement strategies and practices that can help reduce the administrative burden of gathering, tracking and reporting on counseling and direct service staff. The agency has considered participating in the SARA artificial

intelligence pilot program with the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM). The agency should continue to pursue this possibility or look into programs or technology that may help in this area;

5. Where possible, DBVI should identify ways to streamline processes and reduce administrative duties of field staff; and
6. DBVI is encouraged to identify methods to ensure that the agency can gather and analyze data related to performance across multiple levels to support data-driven decision-making.

## **Section Two: The needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment**

**The following findings and recurring themes emerged from all of the research methods related to this topic area:**

1. Transportation and assistive technology were the two most commonly cited rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments. This need is consistent with other agency reports and past CSNAs and is common for this population
2. Assistive technology is especially important for Deaf-Blind individuals.
3. Common recurring rehabilitation needs other than transportation and AT included training, soft-skills (especially for youth), benefits planning, self-advocacy training and work experience.
4. Individuals that receive either SSI or SSDI or both have significant fears about losing benefits due to work, especially medical insurance. This fear limits their return-to-work behavior, resulting in them looking for part-time work that keeps their earnings level below that which would remove them from support by SSA. Consequently, these individuals do not pursue self-sustaining employment and do not achieve desired levels of employment. This is a common issue for SSA beneficiaries served by all VR programs nationally. The importance of reaching these beneficiaries as youth and helping them strive for self-sufficiency was noted as critical.
5. The pandemic exposed the need for individuals to have available broadband Internet access.
6. It has become increasingly common for DBVI consumers to have a secondary mental health impairment in addition to blindness or a vision impairment. Staff and partners need training on how to effectively work with these individuals.
7. Supported and customized employment are not common strategies or practices utilized by DBVI.
8. VRCBVI was praised for providing excellent adjustment to blindness and independent living skills training to consumers. In addition, the center has worked to increase its vocational focus, though there is still room for growth in this area. They shifted to remote services and responded as effectively as possible to the pandemic's effect on a residential training program.

**The following recommendations are made to DBVI based on the findings and recurring themes that emerged from all of the research methods:**

1. DBVI is encouraged to ensure that follow-up training on the use of AT is provided in the individual's home once they leave VRCBVI and return to their living environment. This training should include an initial set-up and training until the individual demonstrates independence in using the technology;
2. DBVI is encouraged to provide training to all staff on how to effectively work with individuals with mental health impairments. This training should be ongoing and is an area where the continued partnership with the General agency can be beneficial;
3. Since a large percentage of DBVI consumers are SSA beneficiaries whose fear of benefit loss affects their return-to-work behavior, it would be helpful for DBVI to augment benefits planning services with training for staff and providers on strategies that contribute to the pursuit of work above the level of SGA, including self-sufficiency. These interventions and strategies include:
  - a. Establishing and reinforcing high expectations for the individual;
  - b. Identifying role models, or peer mentors that will model positive behavior and provide a positive "push" for the individual to achieve their maximum potential (in many instances, the positive push can come from the rehabilitation counselor if there are no family members, friends or mentors available);
  - c. Maximizing the individual's ability to live and function independently;
  - d. Reinforcing the need for tenacity and persistence by the individual by helping them develop resiliencies, and then providing constant support and positive feedback;
  - e. Benefits planning that is ongoing and plans for overpayments when work occurs. Overpayments are planned for and the individual or the Benefits Planner is aware enough to calculate the effect of wages on benefits by themselves and set aside dollars that will likely occur as a result of overpayments for future payback to SSA;
  - f. Pursuit of higher education at the highest possible level for the individual; and
  - g. Work experience, internships or any exposure to work in the beneficiary's field of choice;
4. Training in supported and customized employment strategies should be a regular and ongoing for DBVI staff;
5. DBVI is encouraged to continue to develop resources and training that promote financial literacy and empowerment for their consumers. It is recommended that DBVI avail themselves of the resources available through the National Disability Institute at <https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/>;
6. DBVI is encouraged to conduct connectivity assessments for all consumers that are engaged in the comprehensive assessment process for plan development. When needed, DBVI should purchase the necessary equipment and service to ensure their participants are able to effectively access and function in the digital world. This includes broadband Internet where available and laptops, cell phones and hotspots in cellular service plans.

One possibility for adaption is the BPD Technology Assessment Checklist created by the Technology Committee for the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors. The tool is available in Appendix F. DBVI should adapt the tool for their own needs if they decide to use it.

7. DBVI is encouraged to market the services of VRCBVI in order to increase enrollment. The center has had low enrollment due to COVID, and as Virginia emerges from the pandemic, it will be important to ensure that individuals with blindness and vision impairments, especially youth and students, are aware of VRCBVI.

### **Section Three: The needs of individuals with blindness or vision impairments from different ethnic groups, including needs of individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program**

**The following findings and recurring themes emerged from all of the research methods related to this topic area:**

1. As was the case in the last CSNA, the interview participants did not generally feel that any specific groups of individuals were underserved or unserved by the agency. They indicated that DBVI works with whomever is interested in services without regard to race.
2. Hispanic and Asian individuals were cited most commonly as the two ethnic groups that do not access DBVI services as frequently as others. Lack of knowledge about the program and available services, fear or mistrust of government agencies, lack of representative staff, language barriers and cultural factors were commonly cited as possible reasons for this lack of access. The data supports that Hispanic individuals appear less in the DBVI consumer population than in Virginia's overall population.
3. Individuals with intellectual disabilities in addition to vision loss were cited as possibly being underserved.
4. The rural areas of Virginia were commonly mentioned as an underserved geographic area primarily due to the lack of transportation and Internet access. The lack of Internet access was especially noted as problematic for rural areas during the pandemic when services were delivered virtually.
5. The barriers to employment experienced by minority populations are similar to those experienced by all other populations of DBVI consumers except that they face language barriers when looking for employment and when trying to access DBVI services.

**The following recommendations are made to DBVI based on the findings and recurring themes that emerged from all of the research methods:**

1. DBVI is encouraged to recruit bilingual Hispanic counselors when they have vacant positions. In addition to being able to speak to consumers in their native language, these counselors can help build trust and relationships with the Hispanic community and increase DBVI's ability to reach this population;
2. DBVI is encouraged to establish liaison and referral relationships with community programs serving minority populations in the State. Targeted outreach to these

community service organizations can help increase the awareness of DBVI and build trust among traditionally underserved populations. The agency is encouraged to collaborate with Virginia Department of Health's Division of Multicultural Health and Community Engagement. Information is available at

<https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/health-equity/division-of-multicultural-health-and-community-engagement/>;

3. DBVI is encouraged to provide training for staff and partners on diversity, equity and inclusion. These efforts can impact the perspectives and beliefs of agency staff and partners and improve outreach efforts;
4. DBVI is encouraged to continue to partner with the General program (DARS) and the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Service to increase awareness of their services to individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities that have vision impairments. This partnership may have the secondary effect of increasing the number of individuals who can benefit from the supported employment model; and
5. DBVI needs to increase its ability to gather and analyze its own data related to case movement and outcomes for individuals from minority populations so that it can make evidence-based decisions on how to improve services.

#### **Section Four: The needs of youth and students with blindness or vision impairments in transition**

**The following findings and recurring themes emerged from all of the research methods related to this topic area:**

1. Transportation to and from school and work was the most common rehabilitation and employment need mentioned for students and youth with blindness and vision impairments. The lack of reliable or available transportation, especially in the rural areas, affects every area of the lives of youth and can significantly limit their work options.
2. Low vision technology and other assistive technology is needed for youth and students with blindness and vision impairments to prepare for their career and perform the essential functions of their jobs.
3. All of the five required pre-employment transition services required activities were consistently cited as needed by students with disabilities. Work--based learning experiences were the most frequently cited need, but self-advocacy and soft-skills training were also noted frequently.
4. Although the pandemic adversely affected enrollment at VRCBVI and in-person attendance at school, the agency found that the shift to virtual training and programming opened the doors for more students and youth to participate, which was a positive outcome.
5. DBVI's counselors work closely with the Teachers for the Visually Impaired (TVIs) in most of the school districts. When the relationship between the TVIs and DBVI are close, services for students with blindness and vision impairments are coordinated and



comprehensive. In many rural areas where schools have limited resources and there may not be a TVI, services to youth are adversely impacted.

6. The agency added resiliency and financial literacy training to their pre-employment transition services programs. These new offerings were considered as positive, needed and helpful for students.
7. The transition from secondary school to college can be a major challenge for youth with blindness or vision impairments as they have had someone in secondary school actively work to meet their accommodation needs, but when they get to college, this must be a self-directed process. It generally takes at least one, and often two semesters before consumers get their technology and reasonable accommodation needs met in college. This creates a slow start to their higher education pursuits which can be frustrating and result in a delay in achieving their goals.

**The following recommendations are made to DBVI based on the findings and recurring themes that emerged from all of the research methods:**

1. DBVI should continue to develop virtual and in-person options for training and pre-employment transition services. The agency has received national recognition for the training for students and youth with blindness and vision impairments, especially the training that is offered in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) occupations. DBVI should continue to develop these options that contribute to training students and youth to work in high-demand, high-paying career-level occupations;
2. The use of advanced technology such as AI programs to interact with students with blindness and vision impairments can contribute the ability of DBVI to recruit students and youth and help keep them engaged in the VR process. DBVI is encouraged to explore these possibilities as resources allow and to expand their use of social media platforms to attract and engage youth;
3. DBVI is encouraged to connect youth that are transitioning to college from secondary education with the college student ability centers prior to beginning their first semester of college work to ensure that all of their reasonable accommodation needs are met. This will help ensure these individuals get a good start to their education pursuits; and
4. DBVI is encouraged to consider developing a peer mentoring program for youth with disabilities in Virginia. One possibility is an online peer mentoring program available through PolicyWorks at <https://disabilitypolicyworks.org/peer-mentoringworks-2/>. A key component of this mentoring program is the development of self-advocacy skills in youth and students with disabilities.



**Section Five: The needs of individuals with blindness or vision impairments served through other components of the statewide Workforce Development System**

**The following findings and recurring themes emerged from all of the research methods related to this topic area:**

1. There has been considerable progress in the relationship between DBVI and the core partners at the State level since the previous CSNA. Joint planning and frequent communication are common among partners.
2. Virginia DARS (the General agency) is an important Workforce partner for DBVI. The relationship between DARS and DBVI was characterized as helpful and beneficial. DBVI staff and partners indicated that the relationship with DARS is especially helpful when a DBVI consumer has a mental health impairment, and they can take advantage of the expertise and resources of the General agency.
3. Although the State-level relationship between DBVI and the core partners was described as good and improved, relationships at the local levels were primarily based on referral alone. AJC staff were generally described as struggling to work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments, uncertain what to do, and untrained on how to use the AT in the AJCs when it is functioning. AJC staff need frequent and regular training in order to effectively work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments.

**The following recommendations are made to DBVI based on the findings and recurring themes that emerged from all of the research methods:**

1. DBVI is encouraged to continue to work with the core partners to ensure that the common intake form is accessible. This will help develop the ability to track and analyze data on co-enrollment with core partners;
2. DBVI should identify successful partnerships with the AJCs and other core partners and tell the story of these successes to the field throughout the State so that they can try and be replicated. This may help the partnership to go beyond one of referral in many areas of the State;
3. DBVI is encouraged to continue to collaborate with the core partners to ensure physical and programmatic accessibility of their programs for individuals with blindness and vision impairments;
4. DBVI is encouraged to create customized training programs with their core partners in order to increase opportunities for braided funding and productive outcomes; and
5. DBVI should consider allowing a representative from the other core partners to come to VRCBVI and make presentations to participants on core program services and how they can be of assistance when the participants complete their adjustment to blindness training and return to their communities to look for work. DBVI should consider allowing core partners to outstation staff at VRCBVI on a regular basis to facilitate the exchange of information and an increase in co-enrollment.

### **Section Six: The need to establish, develop or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs in Virginia**

The following findings and recurring themes emerged from all of the research methods related to **this topic area:**

1. DBVI continues to provide most of their consumer services through their own staff. They do use CRPs and other individual service providers for some services, but in-house service provision is the most common method of service delivery.
2. The focus on in-house service provision was beneficial for the agency during the pandemic as they were not as adversely affected by the loss of external service providers due to layoffs or high turnover as some other VR programs nationally.
3. There is a need to develop the ability of Employment Services Organizations (ESOs) to work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments.
4. There is a need to develop either internal or external vocational evaluation services for DBVI consumers. There is a lack of professional vocational evaluation services that are tailored to the needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments in Virginia.
5. There is a need to develop peer mentors for individuals with blindness and vision impairments, especially youth.

**The following recommendations are made to DBVI based on the findings and recurring themes that emerged from all of the research methods:**

1. DBVI is encouraged to provide training for CRP staff that work primarily with the general agency on how to effectively work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments. This training may help with ensuring that DBVI consumers have qualified CRP staff to work with them when receiving employment services;
2. DBVI should consider recruiting for vocational evaluation services from a certified vocational evaluator. One possibility would be to identify experts in Virginia through the American Board of Vocational Experts at <https://abve.net/search/>;
3. DBVI is encouraged to establish a peer mentoring network for their consumers. One possibility would be to identify their successful consumers to act as mentors.

### **Section Seven: The needs of businesses and effectiveness in serving employers**

This category captures the needs of businesses in Virginia as it relates to recruiting, hiring, retaining and accommodating individuals with blindness or vision impairments. It includes an analysis of how DBVI serves business and tries to meet their needs in each of these areas.

**The following findings and recurring themes emerged from all of the research methods related to this topic area:**

1. The Business Relations Team at DBVI was given high marks by multiple individuals interviewed during this assessment for their ability to shift to virtual services and meet the needs of employers during the pandemic.

2. Although there has been significant progress in serving the needs of business and in educating them through the efforts of DBVI since the last CSNA, there are still many employers that are fearful of the ability of individuals with blindness and vision impairments to perform the essential functions of jobs. Businesses continue to need to be educated about the ability of individuals with blindness and vision impairments.

**The following recommendations are made to DBVI based on the findings and recurring themes that emerged from all of the research methods:**

1. At the time of this CSNA, there were two vacancies in the Business Relations Team. DBVI is encouraged to fill these positions in order to sustain the momentum that the team has made since the previous assessment; and
2. DBVI is encouraged to continue to offer disability awareness training and other educational opportunities that promote awareness of the ability of individuals with blindness and vision impairments in Virginia.

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Appendix F.....**Error! Bookmark not defined.**

## **Impetus for Needs Assessment**

Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) contains the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended and requires all state vocational rehabilitation agencies to assess the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities within the respective State and relate the planning of programs and services and the establishment of goals and priorities to those needs. According to Section 102 of WIOA and Section 412 of the Rehabilitation Act, each participating State shall submit a Unified or Combined State Plan every four years, with a biannual modification as needed. In addition, Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 361.29 indicates that: The State Plan must include the “results of a comprehensive, statewide assessment, jointly conducted by the designated State unit and the State Rehabilitation Council every three years describing the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State.” In response to this mandate, and to ensure that adequate efforts are being made to serve the diverse needs of individuals with blindness or vision impairments in Virginia, the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), in partnership with the State Rehabilitation Council SRC), entered into a contract with the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University for the purpose of jointly developing and implementing a comprehensive statewide needs assessment of the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments residing in Virginia.

## **Purpose of Needs Assessment and Utilization of Results**

The purpose of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) is to identify and describe the rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments residing within Virginia. In particular, the CSNA seeks to provide information on:

- The overall performance of DBVI as it relates to meeting the rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments in the State;
- The rehabilitation needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;
- The rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments who are minorities, and those who have been unserved or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation program;
- The rehabilitation needs of youth and students with blindness and vision impairments in transition, including their need for pre-employment transition services;
- The rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments served through other components of the statewide workforce development system;
- The need to establish, develop and/or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and
- The needs of businesses in recruiting, hiring, accommodating and retaining individuals with blindness and vision impairments.



It is expected that data from the needs assessment effort will provide DBVI and the SRC with direction when creating the VR portion of the Unified State Plan and when planning for future program development, outreach and resource allocation. This CSNA covers quantitative data for Program Years (PY) 2017 through 2020 which reflects the time from July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2021, and qualitative data through October 31, 2021.

## METHODOLOGY

The comprehensive statewide needs assessment was conducted using qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry. The specific methods for gathering the data used in this assessment are detailed below. It should be noted that the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions on travel and in-person meetings significantly affected the methodology for the conduct of this CSNA. Interviews and focus groups were conducted using a hybrid model of in-person and virtual interviews. There was only one in-person week-long in-person interview process that occurred in Richmond in October 2021. All other interviews were conducted virtually.

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### *Analysis of Existing Data Sources*

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The project team at SDSU reviewed a variety of existing data sources for the purposes of identifying and describing demographic data within Virginia including the total possible target population and sub-populations potentially served by DBVI. Data relevant to the population of Virginia, the population of persons with blindness or vision impairments in Virginia, ethnicity of individuals, income level, educational levels and other relevant population characteristics were utilized in this analysis. Sources analyzed include the following:

- The 2019 American Community Survey- One and Five Year Estimates;
- US Census Annual Estimates of Resident Population, 2019;
- U.S. Department of Labor Disability Employment Statistics
- 2020 Social Security Administration SSI/DI Data;
- The Virginia Department of Education;
- US Bureau of Labor Statistics at <https://data.bls.gov>;
- Virginia Employment Commission Economics and Analytics Division: Richmond, Virginia
- Cornell University's Disabilitystatistics.org;
- Houtenville, A. and Rafal, M. (2020). Annual Report on People with Disabilities in America: 2020. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, Institute on Disability
- DBVI case service data compiled at the request of the project team; and
- The Federal Rehabilitation Services Administration's RSA 911 case service data for DBVI and data submitted and entered into RSA's Management Information System (MIS).

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### *Individual and Focus Group Interviews*

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*Instrument.* The instruments used for the individual and focus group interviews (Appendix A) were developed by the researchers at SDSU and reviewed and revised by DBVI. The interview protocols act as guides for the interview process and were not limiting in their scope. The project team was able to adapt the questions and focus areas as needed and appropriate. The questions were consistent with those asked for the previous CSNA in order to maximize the ability to follow-up on themes that emerged from the 2018 CSNA. There were a series of questions added to the interview protocol for this CSNA related to the pandemic and its effect on service delivery.

*Interview population.* The individual and focus group population consisted of DBVI staff, community partners, individuals with blindness or vision impairments and businesses. A total of 65 participants were interviewed as part of this CSNA, 43 individually and 22 as part of a focus group.

*Data collection.* Individual and focus group interviews were conducted from August 2021 to November 2021. The general format of the interviews was consistent between participants regardless of their group. First, participants were asked questions to ascertain their personal and professional experience with or knowledge of DBVI. Participants were then asked open-ended questions about their perceptions of the employment needs of individuals with blindness or vision impairments in Virginia. Finally, participants were asked to share their perceptions of how DBVI could improve their ability to help meet these needs, especially as it relates to helping consumers obtain and retain employment.

*Efforts to ensure respondent confidentiality.* Names and other identifying characteristics were not shared with anyone by the interviewers. Participants were informed that their responses would be treated as anonymous information, would not be reported with information that could be used to identify them, and would be consolidated with information from other respondents before results were reported.

*Data analysis.* The interviewers took notes on the discussions as they occurred. The notes were transcribed and analyzed by the researchers at SDSU. Themes or concerns that surfaced with consistency across interviews were identified and are reported as common themes in the report narrative.

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### *Surveys*

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*Instrument.* The instruments used for the electronic survey of individuals with blindness or vision impairments, community partners, staff and businesses (Appendices B-E) were developed by the project team and reviewed and revised by DBVI.

*Survey population.* Individuals identified for participation in this survey effort can be described as individuals with blindness or vision impairments who are potential, current or former clients of DBVI. Community partners include representatives of organizations that provide services, coordinate services or serve an advocacy role for persons with blindness or vision impairments in Virginia. DBVI staff members include those working for the organization between September 2021 and January 2022.

*Data collection.* Data was gathered from this population through the use of an Internet-based survey and by mail. In partnership with the SRC, DBVI identified individuals with blindness or vision impairments and invited them to participate in the electronic survey effort via e-mail. Once the survey was active, DBVI sent an invitation and link to the survey by e-mail. Approximately two weeks after the distribution of the initial invitation, another electronic notice was sent as both a “thank you” to those who had completed the survey and a reminder to those who had not. Another reminder was sent a month later and the survey completion date was extended by one month to maximize response totals. Survey responses were then analyzed using Qualtrics.

*Efforts to ensure respondent confidentiality.* Respondents to the surveys were not asked to identify themselves when completing the survey. In addition, responses were aggregated by the project team at SDSU prior to reporting results, which served to further obscure the identities of respondents.

*Accessibility.* The electronic survey was designed using an accessible, internet-based survey application. Respondents were provided with the name and contact information of the Research Director at SDSU in order to place requests for other alternate survey formats.

*Data analysis.* Data analysis consisted of computing frequencies and descriptive statistics for the survey items with fixed response options. Open-ended survey questions, which yielded narrative responses from individuals, were analyzed by the researchers for themes or concepts that were expressed consistently by respondents.

*Number of completed surveys.* A total of 182 surveys were completed from the different groups. Because the surveys were distributed electronically and recipients of the electronic survey links were encouraged to share these links as broadly as possible, it is not possible to identify a valid response rate for the survey groups. As indicated earlier, the reader is cautioned to interpret the findings informative and not definitive.

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*Totals for all Data Collection Methods*

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Table 1 identifies the totals for all data collection methods for the CSNA.

Table 1

*Data Collection Totals by Type for 2022 Virginia DBVI CSNA*

<b>Data Collection Totals by Type and Group for 2022 Virginia DBVI CSNA</b>					
<b>Research Method</b>	<b>Research Group and Count</b>				
	<b>Consumer</b>	<b>Partner</b>	<b>Staff</b>	<b>Business</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Electronic Survey</b>	96	21	59	6	182
<b>Individual Interview</b>	5	5	32	1	43
<b>Focus Group</b>					
<b>Number of groups</b>	1	1	1	1	4
<b>Number of participants</b>	10	7	2	3	22
<b>Total participants</b>	111	33	93	10	247

The total number of participants for this CSNA was lower by 180 individuals from the previous CSNA conducted for DBVI in 2018. The decrease is attributed primarily to the lower number of consumer and partner respondents. The reduction in the total of individuals served by DBVI resulting from the pandemic impacted the total population of possible respondents, which may account for some of the decrease in totals from 2018.

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*Analysis and Triangulation of Data*

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The data gathered from the national and agency-specific data sets, key informant interviews, surveys and focus groups were analyzed by the researchers on the project team. The common themes that emerged regarding needs of persons with blindness or vision impairments from each data source were identified and compared to each other to validate the existence of needs, especially as they pertained to the target populations of this assessment. These common themes are identified and discussed in the Findings section.

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*Dissemination Plans*

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The CSNA report is delivered to DBVI and the SRC. We recommend that DBVI publish the report on their website for public access and that they notify the public of the availability of the report by e-mail.

## **Study Limitations**

Inherent in any type of research effort are limitations that may constrain the utility of the data that is generated. Therefore, it is important to highlight some of the most significant issues that may limit the ability to generalize the needs assessment findings to larger populations. Inherent in the methods used to collect data is the potential for bias in the selection of participants. The findings that are reported reflect only the responses of those who could be reached and who were willing to participate. Individuals who were disenfranchised, dissatisfied, or who did not wish to be involved with DBVI may have declined to participate in the focus group and individual interview research. A second significant concern is that the information gathered from respondents may not accurately represent the broader concerns of all potential constituents and stakeholders. Data gathered from service providers, for example, may reflect only the needs of individuals who are already recipients of services, to the exclusion of those who are not presently served. Although efforts were made to gather information from a variety of stakeholders in the vocational rehabilitation process, it would be imprudent to conclude with certainty that those who contributed to the focus groups and the individual interviews constitute a fully representative sample of all of the potential stakeholders in the vocational rehabilitation process in Virginia.

# FINDINGS

**Section 1: Overall agency performance**

**Section 2: Needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment**

**Section 3: Needs of individuals with blindness or vision impairments that are minorities, including needs of individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program**

**Section 4: Needs of youth and students with blindness or vision impairments in transition**

**Section 5: Needs of individuals with blindness or vision impairments served through other components of the statewide workforce development system**

**Section 6: Need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs in Virginia**

**Section 7: Needs of businesses and effectiveness in serving employers**

## **SECTION 1:**

### **OVERALL AGENCY PERFORMANCE**

The first section of the CSNA reports on areas of general performance by DBVI. General performance refers to how well DBVI is fulfilling its mission of assisting people with blindness and vision impairments to increase their independence and employment. The area of general performance also refers to how effectively DBVI performs the processes that facilitate case movement through the stages of the rehabilitation process, how well DBVI adheres to the timelines for this case movement identified in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by Title IV of WIOA, and DBVI's policies and procedures. Finally, overall performance also refers to how successfully DBVI achieves their common performance measures and the quantity and quality of employment outcomes achieved by their consumers.

The structure of this section, as well as the following sections, will include the following:

1. Data that pertains to the section in question, including observations based on the data;
2. Survey results pertaining to the section;
3. Recurring/consensual themes that emerged during the individual interviews and focus groups; and
4. Recommendations to address the findings in each area of the assessment.

The time-period covered by the data in this comprehensive statewide needs assessment is the four-year period from July 1, 2017 – June 30, 2021. The data on agency performance included in this section comes from the case management system used by DBVI and is compared to the available RSA 911 data submitted by DBVI where available.

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#### ***Recurring Themes Across all Data Collection Methods***

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The following recurring themes emerged in the area of Overall Agency Performance:

1. The pandemic significantly impacted the number of applications and employment outcomes for DBVI and all VR programs in the last two years.
2. Although applications have decreased during COVID, staff and partners indicate that business is starting to pick back up and they are optimistic about the future.
3. The quality of employment outcomes achieved by DBVI consumers was overwhelmingly noted as being very good. Consumers are prepared for in-demand jobs that are high in pay and career-level. These outcomes reflect the agency-wide belief in the abilities and capabilities of people with blindness. DBVI staff have high expectations for their consumers and work hard to convey those expectations to the individuals they serve.
4. DBVI shifted and adapted to virtual service delivery quickly and efficiently as a result of the pandemic.



5. DBVI and VRCBVI were very creative in the development of virtual training, and the new platforms allowed the agency to reach many more individuals than they had when providing training in-person only. Outreach and training, especially for youth, increased significantly as a result of the shift to virtual training. DBVI has been recognized nationally among VR programs for the programs they have created during the pandemic.
6. The community awareness of DBVI is lacking in many areas of the state and needs to increase.

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***NATIONAL, STATE, LOCAL AND AGENCY SPECIFIC DATA  
RELATED TO OVERALL AGENCY PERFORMANCE***

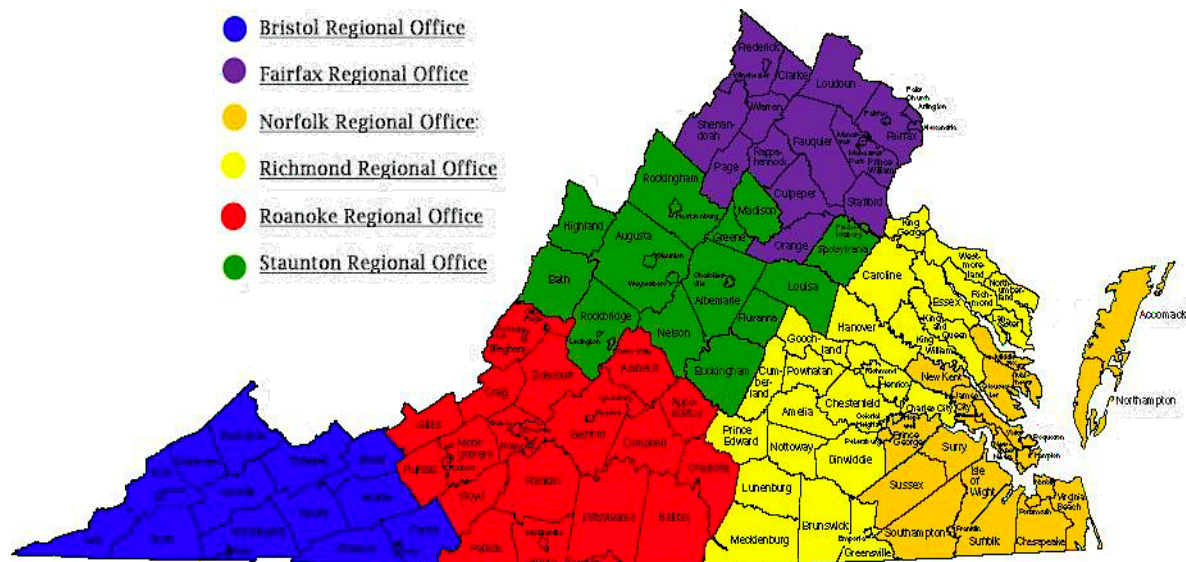
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The project team gathered data from national and state data sets to provide information to DBVI and to interested parties related to population, disability prevalence, income, poverty, educational attainment, unemployment and labor force participation in Virginia. Where available, we have included information specific to the six Regions identified by DBVI as their service areas. The project team is hopeful that this information will provide DBVI and their partners with data that can guide resource allocation and future planning.

**General Trends of DBVI with State and National Comparisons**

**Geographic Composition**

The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) divides the State into six service regions, with a regional office located within each designated area. Virginia government areas are divided into 95 counties and 38 independent cities. It is important to note that the State’s independent cities are not legally part of the county where the city is located and are treated as independent equivalents to counties. The data calculated for this report is based on the county and city entities as determined by State and local government agencies.





An alpha-numeric code has been applied to each regional office for ease of reference in reading this report.

Table 2

*Regional Office Codes*

Regional Office	Code
Bristol	RO1
Fairfax	RO2
Norfolk	RO3
Richmond	RO4
Roanoke	RO5
Staunton	RO6

**Population**

Population (raw number of people in area) and population density (number of people per square mile of land) provide a picture of where consumers may be located in the State and assists for developing service delivery strategies (i.e., DBVI office locations, number of staff members) in a region.

In 2021, Virginia ranked as the 12<sup>th</sup> most populous state in the Nation and makes up 2.6% of the United States' population. Table 3 contains the general population data for the state of Virginia.

Table 3

*Local Area Population for Virginia: 2019 Estimates*

Area	Total Population	Percent Rate of VA Population
United States	328,239,523	-----
Virginia	8,535,519	VA = 2.6% of US Pop.
RO1	376,114	4.4%
RO2	3,085,696	36.2%
RO3	1,874,871	22.0%
RO4	1,438,680	16.9%
RO5	1,007,374	11.8%
RO6	752,784	8.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Population Division, Annual Estimates of the Resident Population for Counties in Virginia: April 1, 2010 to July 1, 2019 and the World Population Review online.

The U.S. Census Bureau defines urban areas as “densely developed residential, commercial, and other non-residential areas” and defines rural areas as “areas not included in urban areas.” The total square miles for the State are 42,775, comprised of 39,490 square miles of land and 3,285 square miles of water.

In 2012, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that approximately 6.8% of Virginia's total land area is classified as urban (approximately 2,665 square miles) and 93.3% of Virginia's land space is

comprised of rural areas (approximately 36,825 square miles). The report stated that approximately 75.5% of Virginia’s total population resides in urban areas and 24.6% of the population resides in rural areas. Thirty-one counties have greater than 99.5 percent of the people residing in rural areas. Table 4 denotes these counties.

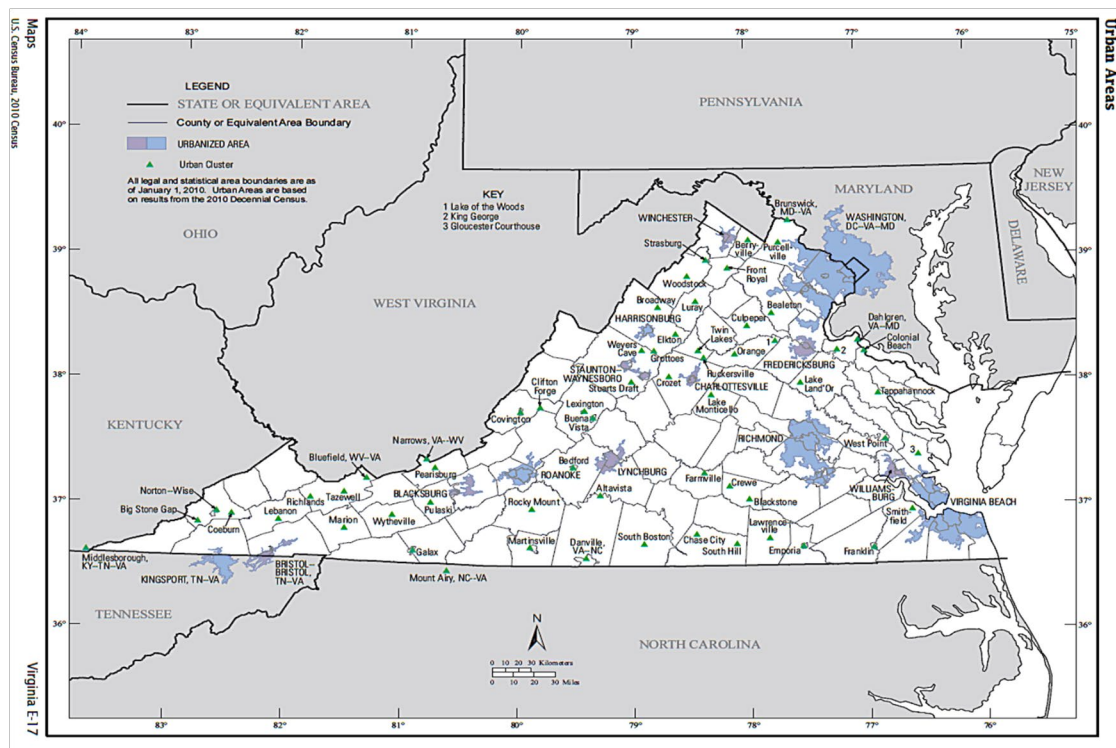
Table 4  
*Counties with 99.5 Percent and Higher Rural Population*

RO	Counties with 99.5 Percent and Higher Rural Population
RO1	Bland, Buchanan, Dickenson, Grayson, Lee
RO2	Rappahannock
RO3	Accomack, Mathews, Middlesex, New Kent, Northampton, Surry, Sussex
RO4	Amelia, Charles City County, King and Queen, Lancaster, Lunenburg, Northumberland, Powhatan, Richmond County
RO5	Appomattox, Charlotte, Craig, Floyd
RO6	Bath, Buckingham, Highland, Louisa, Madison, Nelson

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates and 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

The Census Bureau defines an urbanized area as having 50,000 or more people and an urban cluster as having at least 2,500 people and less than 50,000 people. Virginia has 75 urban areas: 14 urbanized areas and 61 urban clusters. It is essential to note that 65 of the urban areas are entirely in the State and ten urban areas are partly in the State. Urban areas that are partly in the State share land space with the bordering states of Kentucky, West Virginia, Maryland, North Carolina, and Tennessee. Map 1 denotes the locations of the urban areas and clusters.

Map 1  
*Urban Areas and Clusters*



The location of the regional office and the distance the consumer travels to the regional office influences the consumer's access to DBVI services. Table 5 identifies the counties and independent cities in each region in addition to the average mileage and travel times to each regional office from the "center" of the specified county and city. The data is classified from highest number of miles to lowest number of miles to the regional office. The information is presented to help inform DBVI as it engages in strategic planning for the future.

Table 5  
*Distance and Travel Times to the Regional Office*

<b>Travel to Bristol RO (RO1)</b>					
<b>Highest</b>			<b>Lowest</b>		
<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
Galax city	106	1 hour 47 mins	Dickenson	65.4	1 hour 28 mins
Carroll	105	1 hour 36 mins	Norton city	63.7	1 hour 15 mins
Bland	84	1 hour 19 mins	Lee	57.8	1 hour 16 mins
Grayson	81.6	1 hour 31 mins	Smyth	44	46 mins
Buchanan	74.3	1 hour 40 mins	Russell	43.6	1 hour
Wythe	69.9	1 hour 7 mins	Scott	33.4	54 mins
Wise	69.7	1 hour 24 mins	Washington	21.8	31 mins
Tazewell	69.3	1 hour 19 mins	Bristol city	0.4	9 mins
<b>Travel to Fairfax RO (RO2)</b>					
<b>Highest</b>			<b>Lowest</b>		
<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
Shenandoah	80.9	1 hour 15 mins	Loudoun	33.4	41 mins
Frederick	79.3	1 hour 17 mins	Fauquier	28.2	35 mins
Page	79	1 hour 29 mins	Alexandria city	19.3	32 mins
Orange	69.9	1 hour 24 mins	Prince William	17.5	22 mins
Winchester city	61.6	1 hour 11 mins	Arlington	16.6	26 mins
Warren	59.3	1 hour 3 mins	Manassas city	13.1	25 mins
Clarke	53.7	57 mins	Falls Church city	12.2	20 mins
Rappahannock	53.5	1 hour 6 mins	Manassas Park city	10.9	20 mins
Culpeper	51.4	1 hour 1 min	Fairfax	7	20 mins
Stafford	37.6	51 mins	Fairfax city	1.5	5 mins
<b>Travel to Norfolk RO (RO3)</b>					
<b>Highest</b>			<b>Lowest</b>		
<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
Hopewell city	102	1 hour 40 mins	Williamsburg city	48.2	55 mins
Middlesex	77.5	1 hour 31 mins	York	39.7	53 mins

Mathews	75.8	1 hour 30 mins	Isle of Wight	39.6	49 mins
Sussex	74.4	1 hour 26 mins	Northampton	34.3	46 mins
Accomack	74.2	1 hour 31 mins	Poquoson city	31.9	42 mins
Prince George	73.1	1 hour 26 mins	Newport News city	28.5	35 mins
New Kent	71	1 hour 12 mins	Suffolk city	25.7	32 mins
Southampton	61.1	1 hour 7 mins	Hampton city	19.7	26 mins
Gloucester	58.1	1 hour 10 mins	Virginia Beach city	12.8	19 mins
Surry	57.1	1 hour 20 mins	Chesapeake city	11.4	15 mins
James City County	55.4	1 hour 5 mins	Portsmouth city	8.8	14 mins
Franklin city	49.2	56 mins	Norfolk city	6.9	12 mins
<b>Travel to Richmond RO (RO4)</b>					
<b>Highest</b>			<b>Lowest</b>		
<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
Mecklenburg	108	1 hour 48 mins	Essex	46.1	1 hour 3 mins
Greensville	81.6	1 hour 19 mins	Amelia	44.6	56 mins
Lunenburg	80.8	1 hour 36 mins	Caroline	40.1	46 mins
Brunswick	76.2	1 hour 18 mins	King and Queen	37.8	51 mins
Prince Edward	74.2	1 hour 26 mins	Goochland	36.8	40 mins
Lancaster	72.5	1 hour 31 mins	Powhatan	35.3	42 mins
Northumberland	72.2	1 hour 31 mins	Petersburg city	31.2	38 mins
Emporia city	72	1 hour 13 mins	Charles City County	30.3	39 mins
Westmoreland	61.8	1 hour 20 mins	Colonial Heights city	30	36 mins
Nottoway	60.2	1 hour 10 mins	Chesterfield	23	33 mins
Cumberland	55.3	1 hour 5 mins	King William	20.8	30 mins
King George	54.6	1 hour	Hanover	15.7	23 mins
Richmond	54.6	1 hour 12 mins	Henrico	10.6	24 mins
Dinwiddie	51.9	56 mins	Richmond city	8.4	14 mins
<b>Travel to Roanoke RO (RO5)</b>					
<b>Highest</b>			<b>Lowest</b>		
<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
Halifax	88.8	1 hour 56 mins	Henry	52	1 hour 1 min
Charlotte	88.4	1 hour 59 mins	Martinsville city	48.9	1 hour 4 mins
Appomattox	77.5	1 hour 28 mins	Radford city	46.9	49 mins
Amherst	74.4	1 hour 22 mins	Montgomery	41	44 mins
Danville city	71.6	1 hour 35 mins	Floyd	40.2	56 mins

Patrick	67.7	1 hour 24 mins	Craig	38.8	53 mins
Giles	63.4	1 hour 8 mins	Botetourt	33.8	44 mins
Alleghany	63	1 hour 28 mins	Bedford	31.4	49 mins
Covington city	62.3	1 hour 17 mins	Franklin	30.2	37 mins
Pittsylvania	61.3	1 hour 17 mins	Roanoke	18.4	26 mins
Lynchburg city	57.4	1 hour 12 mins	Salem city	12.4	16 mins
Pulaski	54.6	55 mins	Roanoke city	0.8	4 mins
Campbell	54.4	1 hour 18 mins			
<b>Travel to Staunton RO (RO6)</b>					
<b>Highest</b>			<b>Lowest</b>		
<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>	<b>County/city</b>	<b>Miles</b>	<b>Minutes</b>
Fredericksburg city	99	2 hours 3 mins	Buena Vista city	40.6	41 mins
Spotsylvania	92	1 hour 44 mins	Nelson	39.8	47 mins
Buckingham	66.2	1 hour 23 mins	Rockingham	39.1	46 mins
Louisa	66	1 hour 7 mins	Lexington city	37	38 mins
Madison	65.3	1 hour 17 mins	Charlottesville city	34.3	38 mins
Bath	60	1 hour 14 mins	Harrisonburg city	28	31 mins
Fluvanna	54.9	1 hour	Albemarle	25.2	30 mins
Highland	53.8	1 hour 15 mins	Augusta	19.2	25 mins
Greene	51	1 hour 8 mins	Waynesboro city	6.6	13 mins
Rockbridge	45.4	48 mins	Staunton city	5.3	12 mins

Source: Table developed by Interwork Staff using information from distancefrom.com and googlemaps.com

### **Report Note:**

Several tables throughout this report contain data from the United States Census Bureau. Due to the covid pandemic, it is the recommendation of the Bureau to utilize 2019 data. Unless otherwise noted, data for the United States and Virginia is taken from the U.S. Census Bureau 2019 1-year estimates and 1-year Supplemental estimates. Data for the service regions is taken from the U.S. Census Bureau 2014-2019 5-year estimates.

### **Age, Income, and Home Value**

*Understanding a population's age composition provides insight into an area's changing phenomena, and current and future social and economic challenges. Income is the gauge often used to determine well-being. Home value provides a picture of the housing situation in the area and insight into the local economic status.*

Table 6 provides statistics for median age, median household income, and median home values for the U.S. and the state of Virginia. The median working age for all of the regional areas equal or exceed the National average. The State's median working age is 0.1 percentage point higher than the median working age average of RO6.

The median household income for the State exceeds the National average by over \$10,700. RO5, which has four completely rural counties, has a median household income average that falls below the National and State rural averages by more than \$14,200. The median household income for RO2 exceeds the averages of the other regional areas by more than \$27,600 and exceeds Virginia's urban average by roughly \$11,400.

Thirteen of the 16 counties in RO1 are considered more than 50 percent rural. The median home value for RO1 is the lowest in the state (\$101,656). RO1's median home value falls below the National rural average by \$89,160 and is lower than the State's rural average by \$122,963. RO2 is considered over 68 percent urban and has a median home value average that is the highest in the state (\$392,365). RO2's median home value exceeds the National urban average by \$134,926 and exceeds the State's urban average by \$70,092.

Table 6 provides statistics for Median Age, Median Household Income, and Median Home Value.

Table 6

*Median Age/Median Household Income/Median Home Values*

<i>Geographic Area</i>	<i>Median Age</i>	<i>Median Working Age 16 to 64</i>	<i>Median Household Income</i>	<i>Household Income Ranges</i>	<i>*Home Value 2019</i>	<i>Home Value Ranges</i>
<b>US</b>	38.5	39.6	\$65,712		\$240,463	
<b>US-Urban</b>	37.4	38.9	\$66,047	-----	\$257,439	-----
<b>US-Rural</b>	43.6	42.8	\$64,314		\$190,816	
<b>Virginia</b>	38.5	39.7	\$76,456		\$288,833	
<b>VA-Urban</b>	36.6	38.6	\$80,602	-----	\$322,273	-----
<b>VA-Rural</b>	46.4	43.8	\$66,149		\$224,619	
<b>RO #1</b>	45	41.7	\$39,007	\$29,000 - \$49,364	\$101,656	\$72,300 - \$151,800
<b>RO #2</b>	39.6	41.4	\$92,003	\$51,792 - \$142,299	\$392,365	\$169,200 - \$789,300
<b>RO #3</b>	41.1	40.8	\$64,387	\$39,030 - \$97,118	\$228,375	\$122,900 - \$340,500
<b>RO #4</b>	43.5	42	\$59,031	\$27,063 - \$94,274	\$198,511	\$108,100 - \$375,200
<b>RO #5</b>	42.8	41.1	\$50,052	\$34,371 - \$71,110	\$147,988	\$72,900 - \$227,700
<b>RO #6</b>	40.9	39.6	\$58,349	\$32,455 - \$88,628	\$224,880	\$126,600 - \$367,200

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates Source and U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates. \*Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2019 1-year Estimates or 1-year Supplemental Estimates Detailed Tables and U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Poverty

*Poverty is defined as not having enough money to meet basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter. Examining poverty in an area, in addition to income, provides more insight into determining the well-being of an area's population.*

Radford city, an urban city in RO5, has a significantly higher poverty rate than the U.S. urban average by 31.5 percent and also has a significantly higher poverty rate than the State's urban average by 33.8 percent. Loudoun County, in RO2, has the lowest average poverty rate (3.3%), which is significantly lower than the National average by 8.2 percent and is lower than the State's average by 6.1 percentage points. Based on the 2012 Census report, Loudoun County has roughly 87.4 percent of the population residing in urban areas and 12.6 percent of the population residing in rural areas. When compared to National and State urban poverty rates, Loudoun County's poverty rate is significantly lower by roughly 6 to 8.5 percentage points.

Table 7 presents the average poverty rate and the range of poverty rates for each regional office area. Poverty rates are calculated for the civilian noninstitutionalized population ages 18 to 64 years by averaging data collected from 2019 U.S. Census 1-year estimates or from the 2014-2019 5-year estimates. It is important to note prior to reviewing Table 7, that the State's lowest and highest poverty levels are based on 5-year Census estimates.

Table 7

*Poverty Rates: Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population Ages 18 to 64 Years*

Area	Average Poverty Rate	Lowest Level	Highest Level
US	11.5%	New Hampshire 7.6%	Mississippi 18.0%
US-Urban	11.8%	-----	-----
US-Rural	10.3%	-----	-----
VA	9.4%	Loudoun 3.3%	Radford city 43.3%
VA-Urban	9.5%	-----	-----
VA-Rural	9.4%	-----	-----
RO1	20.0%	Bland 9.0%	Buchanan 28.8%
RO2	7.8%	Loudoun 3.3%	Winchester city 15.2%
RO3	11.6%	York 4.3%	Williamsburg city 26.6%
RO4	12.9%	King George 4.7%	Petersburg city 22.2%
RO5	15.6%	Botetourt 6.0%	Radford city 43.3%
RO6	15.3%	Fluvanna 6.2%	Lexington city 35.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates and 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

## Internet Accessibility

*Access to fast and reliable high-speed internet service offers the opportunity to participate equally in society and engage in the global community.*

Important for DBVI consumers is access to the internet. Past studies have concluded that rural communities lack infrastructure and access to internet and satellite networks.

Over 78 percent of households in Virginia's regional office areas have one or more computing devices and over 68 percent of the RO households have an internet subscription. RO1, where the majority of the population reside in rural communities, has a significantly lower rate of desktop/laptop only ownership when compared to National and State rural area rates. RO1 also has a significantly lower smartphone ownership average and less than 69% of RO1 households are without any type of internet access.

Tables 8 and 9 provides a picture of the availability of virtual accessibility in the U.S. and Virginia (including urban and rural areas), and for each of the ROs.



Table 8

*Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions: U.S. and V.A., including Urban and Rural Areas*

	US	US -- Urban	US -- Rural	VA	VA -- Urban	VA -- Rural
Total households	122,802,852	98,754,458	24,048,394	3,191,847	2,392,926	798,921
<b>TYPES OF COMPUTERS</b>						
Has one or more types of computing devices:	92.9%	93.4%	90.6%	93.0%	94.7%	88.1%
Desktop or laptop	77.3%	78.3%	73.5%	79.7%	82.4%	71.5%
Desktop or laptop with no other type of computing device	3.7%	3.4%	4.7%	3.5%	3.2%	4.5%
Smartphone	86.6%	87.6%	82.6%	87.0%	89.2%	80.4%
Smartphone with no other type of computing device	9.8%	9.6%	10.8%	8.3%	7.6%	10.5%
Tablet or other portable wireless computer	61.5%	62.2%	58.5%	64.8%	67.2%	57.6%
Tablet or other portable wireless computer with no other type of computing device	0.9%	0.8%	1.1%	0.8%	0.7%	1.0%
Other computer	2.4%	2.5%	2.0%	3.1%	3.4%	2.1%
Other computer with no other type of computing device	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%
No computer	7.1%	6.6%	9.4%	7.0%	5.3%	11.9%
<b>TYPE OF INTERNET SUBSCRIPTIONS</b>						
With an Internet subscription:	86.6%	87.6%	82.7%	86.9%	89.6%	78.7%
Dial-up with no other type of Internet subscription	0.2%	0.2%	0.4%	0.2%	0.1%	0.3%
Broadband of any type	86.4%	87.4%	82.3%	86.7%	89.5%	78.4%
Cellular data plan	78.0%	79.4%	72.3%	79.3%	82.7%	69.4%
Cellular data plan with no other type of Internet subscription	11.8%	11.0%	15.3%	11.6%	9.8%	17.1%
Broadband such as cable, fiber optic or DSL	70.8%	73.9%	57.8%	71.2%	78.1%	50.4%
Satellite Internet service	6.5%	5.3%	11.4%	6.0%	4.0%	11.7%
Without an Internet subscription	13.4%	12.4%	17.3%	13.1%	10.4%	21.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates

Table 9

*Types of Computers and Internet Subscriptions: Regional Office Service Areas 1 - 6*

	RO1	RO2	RO3	RO4	RO5	RO6
Total households	154,374	1,070,621	703,133	539,816	405,406	277,695
<b>TYPES OF COMPUTERS</b>						
Has one or more types of computing devices:	78.9%	95.7%	92.0%	89.7%	85.1%	89.7%
Desktop or laptop	61.7%	89.5%	79.8%	77.4%	70.5%	78.2%
Desktop or laptop with no other type of computing device	9.1%	4.8%	5.8%	6.5%	7.9%	7.9%
Smartphone	63.9%	87.9%	82.5%	79.5%	72.9%	77.7%
Smartphone with no other type of computing device	9.3%	3.2%	6.9%	7.1%	9.1%	6.3%
Tablet or other portable wireless computer	47.5%	71.5%	62.1%	59.1%	51.6%	57.3%
Tablet or other portable wireless computer with no other type of computing device	1.8%	0.4%	0.8%	0.8%	0.9%	0.7%
Other computer	2.3%	4.8%	3.2%	2.8%	3.9%	3.4%
Other computer with no other type of computing device	0.1%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%
No computer	21.1%	4.3%	8.0%	10.3%	14.9%	10.3%
<b>TYPE OF INTERNET SUBSCRIPTIONS</b>						
With an Internet subscription:	68.4%	92.0%	84.3%	81.6%	76.0%	81.0%
Dial-up with no other type of Internet subscription	0.6%	0.3%	0.3%	0.4%	0.6%	0.5%
Broadband of any type	67.8%	91.7%	84.0%	81.2%	75.4%	80.5%
Cellular data plan	47.8%	78.1%	70.0%	66.6%	58.7%	64.2%
Cellular data plan with no other type of Internet subscription	10.7%	6.4%	11.4%	10.3%	12.2%	13.8%
Broadband such as cable, fiber optic or DSL	50.9%	82.6%	69.7%	66.2%	56.3%	60.3%
Satellite Internet service	8.0%	4.8%	4.6%	6.3%	8.4%	7.1%
Without an Internet subscription	31.6%	8.0%	15.7%	18.4%	24.0%	19.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

## Educational Attainment

*Educational attainment refers to the highest level of education completed in terms of the highest degree, or the highest level of schooling completed. Level of education influences the job market, both in public and private sectors.*

Table 10 provides rates for both High School Graduation and Education at or above a Bachelor's degree for the State's total population ages 25 years and over. The National and State data reflects the 2019 U.S. Census 1-year estimates. Data for the regional service areas is taken from the U.S. Census 2014-2019 5-year estimates and are calculated by adding the total population data for each RO and dividing by population data for each category.

### High School Graduation Rates:

The National average for the total population over the age of 25 whose highest level of educational attainment is a high school diploma or its equivalent, is 26.9 percent and the State's average is 23.6 percent. Three RO service areas have averages that are 2 to 8.5 percentage points higher than the National rates. The rate for attaining a high school diploma or its equivalent in RO1 is significantly higher than the State average by almost 12 percent.

### Education Level at or above Bachelor's Degree:

The National and State averages for the total population over the age of 25 whose highest level of educational attainment is a Bachelor's degree is 20.3% and 22.4%, respectively. RO3's rate for achieving a Bachelor's degree exceeds the National rate by 8.1 percent and exceeds the State average by 6 percent. RO1's rate is the lowest in the State (10.2%) and is lower than the State's rate by 12.2 percentage points and lower than the National average by 10.1 percentage points.

Table 10

*Educational Attainment: Population 25 years and over*

Geo-graphic Area	HS Graduate (includes equivalency)	Some college, no degree	Assoc. degree	Bach. degree	Graduate or professional degree	Percent HS Graduate or higher	Percent Bachelor's degree or higher
US	26.9%	20.0%	8.6%	20.3%	12.8%	88.6%	33.1%
VA	23.6%	18.9%	8.0%	22.4%	17.2%	90.0%	39.6%
RO1	35.4%	20.4%	9.3%	10.2%	5.8%	81.0%	15.9%
RO2	16.6%	15.0%	6.3%	28.4%	25.3%	91.6%	53.7%
RO3	25.6%	24.4%	9.7%	19.1%	12.2%	90.9%	31.3%
RO4	26.0%	20.0%	7.4%	22.0%	13.6%	89.0%	35.6%
RO5	31.4%	20.9%	9.6%	15.3%	10.1%	87.4%	25.4%
RO6	28.9%	18.8%	6.6%	19.1%	14.9%	88.3%	34.0%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates and 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

### **Disabilities Under the Age of 65**

*In addition to understanding the general trends of a geographic area, it is also important to gain knowledge of the State's structure of the disability population. In this section, demographic data regarding the State's disability population with reference to age, disability type, income, poverty and education are detailed with comparisons to the Nation and to local regions.*

#### **Disability Status**

The estimated average for the number of people with disabilities residing in the Nation in 2019 is 12.7 percent. The State's percentage is lower than the National average by .5 percent, averaging at 12.2 percent. Of the civilian noninstitutionalized population ages 18 to 64 years in urban Virginia, 8.7 percent of the residents report a disability, which is significantly lower than rural Virginia's average of 13.3 percent, and roughly 1 percentage point lower than the Nation's urban average for the same age group. The average percentage rate for individuals 18 to 64 years reporting a disability in RO2 is recorded at 6.0 percent, which is lower than the State average by approximately 3.7 percent.

Disability Status estimates for the Nation, State and ROs are provided in Table 11. Disability Status estimates are calculated for the Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population (TCNP) by the U.S. Census Bureau, a population group which excludes those in the military and those residing in institutions. The RO averages for each category are calculated by dividing the total number of individuals within the RO who report a disability by the total number of civilian noninstitutionalized individuals residing in the RO.

Table 11

*Disability Status: Total Civilian Noninstitutionalized Population*

Geographic Area	With a disability	Under 18 years with a disability	18 to 64 years with a disability
US	12.7%	4.3%	10.3%
	<b>Urban</b> 12.2%	<b>Urban</b> 4.2%	<b>Urban</b> 9.8%
	<b>Rural</b> 15.0%	<b>Rural</b> 4.6%	<b>Rural</b> 12.5%
VA	12.2%	4.3%	9.7%
	<b>Urban</b> 10.9%	<b>Urban</b> 4.0%	<b>Urban</b> 8.7%
	<b>Rural</b> 16.2%	<b>Rural</b> 5.5%	<b>Rural</b> 13.3%
<b>RO1</b>	23.3%	6.6%	21.3%
<b>RO2</b>	7.9%	2.8%	6.0%
<b>RO3</b>	13.1%	4.8%	11.1%
<b>RO4</b>	13.0%	5.0%	10.6%
<b>RO5</b>	14.7%	4.8%	11.9%
<b>RO6</b>	12.1%	4.1%	9.2%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates and 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

**Disability Types**

*Knowledge of the types of disabilities reported by area residents helps VR programs anticipate and prepare for meeting service needs and assisting the consumer to obtain necessary accommodations relevant to the local population.*

The data indicates that the State rates for disability types in the categories of “population under 18 years” and “population 18 to 64” vary by less than 1 percent when compared to the National rates for the same age groups. All disability type averages in RO1 for the ages 18 to 64 rank the highest when compared to the other regional office service areas. Four RO service areas have over 4 percent of individuals with disabilities ages 18 to 64 reporting cognitive disability. Important to note that mental health impairments are not included in the ACS data.

Disability types are classified into six categories and detailed by age in the U.S. Census data. Tables 12 and 13 provide specific data for the total civilian noninstitutionalized population. Table categories include the population under 18 years and the population ages 18 to 64. Disability type percentages are calculated by dividing the total number of individuals reporting the disability type within the area by the number of noninstitutionalized civilians residing in the area.

Table 12

*Disability Types: U.S., V.A., including Urban and Rural Areas*

Disability Type	Percent with a Disability					
	US	US-Urban	US-Rural	VA	VA-Urban	VA-Rural
With a hearing difficulty	3.6%	3.2%	4.9%	3.5%	3.0%	5.0%
Population under 18 years	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.5%
Population 18 to 64 years	2.0%	1.7%	2.9%	2.0%	1.7%	3.0%
With a vision difficulty	2.3%	2.2%	2.7%	2.2%	2.0%	3.0%
Population under 18 years	0.8%	0.7%	0.8%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%
Population 18 to 64 years	1.9%	1.8%	2.3%	1.9%	1.6%	2.6%
With a cognitive difficulty	5.2%	5.1%	5.6%	4.7%	4.3%	5.7%
Population under 18 years	4.4%	4.4%	4.6%	4.4%	4.1%	5.6%
Population 18 to 64 years	4.6%	4.5%	5.1%	4.0%	3.7%	5.0%
With an ambulatory difficulty	6.9%	6.6%	8.1%	6.4%	5.7%	8.7%
Population under 18 years	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%	0.5%
Population 18 to 64 years	4.7%	4.4%	6.0%	4.3%	3.6%	6.3%
With a self-care difficulty	2.6%	2.6%	2.8%	2.5%	2.3%	3.1%
Population under 18 years	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%	1.1%	1.0%	1.4%
Population 18 to 64 years	1.8%	1.7%	2.1%	1.6%	1.5%	2.2%
With an independent living difficulty	5.9%	5.8%	6.4%	5.6%	4.9%	7.7%
Population 18 to 64 years	3.7%	3.6%	4.4%	3.6%	3.0%	5.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates and 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Table 13

*Disability Types: Regional Office Service Areas*

Disability Type	Percent with a Disability					
	RO1	RO2	RO3	RO4	RO5	RO6
With a hearing difficulty	7.5%	2.3%	3.3%	3.3%	4.0%	3.7%
Population under 18 years	0.7%	0.4%	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%	0.4%
Population 18 to 64 years	4.5%	1.3%	1.2%	1.7%	2.1%	2.0%
With a vision difficulty	4.9%	1.4%	2.6%	2.3%	2.6%	2.1%
Population under 18 years	1.2%	0.5%	1.0%	0.7%	0.8%	0.5%
Population 18 to 64 years	4.5%	1.1%	1.4%	1.9%	2.0%	1.5%
With a cognitive difficulty	8.7%	2.8%	4.7%	5.0%	5.5%	4.5%
Population under 18 years	6.4%	2.8%	4.8%	5.2%	5.0%	4.3%
Population 18 to 64 years	8.8%	2.4%	2.6%	4.6%	5.3%	4.0%
With an ambulatory difficulty	13.2%	3.7%	6.7%	6.5%	7.9%	0.6%
Population under 18 years	1.1%	0.5%	0.5%	0.6%	0.7%	0.6%

Population 18 to 64 years	11.8%	2.4%	3.1%	4.9%	6.1%	4.2%
With a self-care difficulty	4.6%	1.5%	2.5%	2.5%	3.1%	2.4%
Population under 18 years	1.8%	0.9%	1.1%	1.2%	1.4%	1.1%
Population 18 to 64 years	3.7%	0.9%	1.1%	1.8%	2.4%	1.5%
With an independent living difficulty	9.4%	2.7%	4.5%	4.4%	5.3%	4.3%
Population 18 to 64 years	9.4%	2.0%	2.3%	3.6%	4.5%	3.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates and 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

**Disablement Index**

*The environment contributes to the process of an individual’s ability to engage in meaningful tasks, by either enabling participation (enablement) or creating barriers to participation (disablement). An example, blindness or having serious vision difficulty even when wearing glasses (= vision disability) may be more disabling in areas without a mass transit system. Researchers at the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR) created the “Disablement Index” which is designed to take a snapshot of the disabling nature of one’s local environment.*

The Disablement Index examines the reporting of an independent living disability among people who also reported a hearing, vision, ambulatory, and/or cognitive disability. In the 2020 Annual Disability Compendium, the Disablement Index for civilians in the United States with hearing, vision, ambulatory, and/or cognitive disabilities ages 18-64 living in community settings who also reported an independent living disability in the year 2019 was 34 percent. Researchers at the NIDILRR graciously calculated State data by request. Table 14 contains the Disablement Index for the 50 States and the District of Columbia in ranking order from lowest index rate to the highest.

Table 14

*Disablement Index: Ranking Order – Lowest to Highest*

Disablement Index – United States					
Ranking Low to High			Ranking Low to High		
Rank	State	Index	Rank	State	Index
1	South Dakota	19.8	27	Georgia	33.4
2	North Dakota	26.9	28	Minnesota	33.5
3	Idaho	28.7	29	West Virginia	33.6
4	Wyoming	29.3	30	North Carolina	34
5	Colorado	29.9	31	Virginia	34
6	Maryland	30	32	Montana	34.1
7	Alaska	30.1	33	Massachusetts	34.2
8	Nebraska	30.3	34	Arkansas	34.3
9	Iowa	30.5	35	Florida	34.3
10	Delaware	30.7	36	California	34.4
11	Utah	30.8	37	New Mexico	34.4

Disablement Index – United States					
Ranking Low to High			Ranking Low to High		
Rank	State	Index	Rank	State	Index
12	Wisconsin	31.5	38	Pennsylvania	34.5
13	Alabama	31.9	39	Michigan	34.6
14	Nevada	32.1	40	Mississippi	34.7
15	Kansas	32.2	41	Indiana	34.8
16	Arizona	32.3	42	South Carolina	34.8
17	Tennessee	32.4	43	Vermont	34.8
18	New Hampshire	32.5	44	Illinois	34.9
19	Connecticut	32.7	45	New York	35.5
20	Oklahoma	32.7	46	Maine	35.9
21	Oregon	32.7	47	Missouri	36
22	Texas	32.7	48	New Jersey	36.2
23	Washington	32.7	49	Hawaii	36.8
24	Louisiana	32.8	50	Rhode Island	39
25	Ohio	32.9	51	District of Columbia	41.2
26	Kentucky	33.2	NA	United States	34.0

Citation: Houtenville, A. and Rafal, M. (2020). Annual Report on People with Disabilities in America: 2020. Durham, NH: University of New Hampshire, Institute on Disability.

Virginia ranks in the 31st position (lowest to highest rate scale) when examining how many individuals who reported a hearing, vision, ambulatory and/or a cognitive disability also reported an independent living disability (31.5%). South Dakota ranked in the first position, with less than 20 percent of individuals who reported a specific disability and also reported an independent living disability. Over 40 percent of individuals residing in the District of Columbia who reported a specific physical disability also reported an independent living disability.

When examining the Disablement Index, observations noted include: 1) South Dakota's population is roughly 56.7% urban and 43.4 percent rural while the District of Columbia is entirely urban; 2) Rhode Island and Hawaii are noted to have over 90% urban populations and higher disablement indexes; and 3) The top four states with the lowest ranking scores have urban populations of less than 71% while the four states with the highest disablement index have urban populations of over 90 percent. More in-depth analysis of the Disablement Index to State urban/rural population rates is needed to determine a correlation between Disablement Index rates and urban/rural population rates.

### Income and Disability

People with disabilities in the United States earn approximately \$11,992 per year less than individuals without a disability. In the State of Virginia, people with disabilities earn roughly \$14,179 less than people without disabilities. Females with disabilities in RO5 have the lowest earnings in the State, with an average that is lower than the National average for females with a disability by \$3,175 and lower than the State average by \$5,286. In RO2, the median earnings for



males with disabilities is \$43,671, which exceeds the State and the National averages for males with disabilities by more than \$11,850. When examining data for the individual ROs, males with disabilities in RO2 make \$17,661 more than males in RO5. Tables 15 and 16 provide statistics for median earnings (income) for people with disabilities age 16 and over.

Table 15

*Median Earnings for People with Disabilities 16 Years and Older: US and WI*

	US	US – Urban	US – Rural	VA	VA - Urban	VA - Rural
<b>Total:</b>	\$36,595	\$36,676	\$36,251	\$40,390	\$40,976	\$37,175
<b>With a disability:</b>	\$25,270	\$25,159	\$25,687	\$26,774	\$26,930	\$26,367
<b>Male</b>	\$30,193	\$29,618	\$31,360	\$31,805	\$31,651	\$32,215
<b>Female</b>	\$21,185	\$21,428	\$20,166	\$23,296	\$24,184	\$21,560
<b>No disability:</b>	\$37,262	\$37,334	\$36,952	\$40,953	\$41,509	\$38,226
<b>Male</b>	\$43,568	\$43,040	\$45,308	\$47,655	\$49,883	\$44,670
<b>Female</b>	\$31,403	\$31,670	\$30,272	\$34,844	\$35,608	\$31,709

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Table 16

*Median Earnings for People with Disabilities 16 Years and Older: ROs*

	RO1	RO2	RO3	RO4	RO5	RO6
<b>Total:</b>	\$28,766	\$46,084	\$34,826	\$33,879	\$30,431	\$30,800
<b>With a disability:</b>	\$22,148	\$34,393	\$27,683	\$24,964	\$20,681	\$24,603
<b>Male</b>	\$26,139	\$43,671	\$36,125	\$26,032	\$26,010	\$31,849
<b>Female</b>	\$20,622	\$29,865	\$22,253	\$24,808	\$18,010	\$20,470
<b>No disability:</b>	\$29,652	\$46,826	\$35,530	\$34,481	\$31,128	\$31,262
<b>Male</b>	\$34,499	\$56,316	\$42,663	\$39,817	\$36,580	\$36,606
<b>Female</b>	\$24,491	\$38,197	\$29,516	\$29,773	\$26,421	\$26,527

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2019 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates

## Poverty and Disability

According to Cornell University Disability Statistics, in the year 2018, an estimated 26.0% of non-institutionalized persons aged 21 to 64 years with a disability in the United States were living below the poverty line. In Virginia, the rate was 22.5%. The poverty rates by disability type in Virginia are roughly 3 to 5 points lower than the National averages except for visual disability where there is less than one percentage point difference. Individuals with visual and independent living disabilities had the highest poverty rates in the State. Table 17 contains the 2018 Poverty by Disability Type rates for the Nation and State.

Table 17

*Poverty by Disability Type for Non-institutionalized Civilians Ages 21 - 64*

Poverty and Disability Type	United States	Virginia
No Disability	10.0%	8.1%
Any Disability	26.0%	22.5%
Visual	27.2%	26.9%
Hearing	19.6%	14.7%
Ambulatory	29.5%	26.1%
Cognitive	31.3%	26.4%
Self-care	31.6%	26.5%
Independent Living	31.2%	26.9%

<https://disabilitystatistics.org/>**Educational Attainment of Individuals with Disabilities**

Tables 18 and 19 contain educational attainment rates for individuals with disabilities for the total civilian noninstitutionalized population (TCNP) ages 25 and older. Data is available for 37 of the State's 133 counties and cities. Counties and cities with the lowest and highest disability population are listed in Table 18 in lieu of a regional office service area average. Data for the Nation, State and Fairfax County is taken from the 2019 one-year estimates and the remaining data is taken from the 2014-2019 five-year U.S. Census Bureau estimates.

Table 18

*Educational Attainment for Individuals with: US and Virginia*

	United States			Virginia		
	TCNP	With a Disability	No Disability	TCNP	With a Disability	No Disability
Population Age 25 and over	220,658,920	35,950,412	184,708,508	5,695,268	887,512	4,807,756
Less than high school graduate	11.2%	19.5%	9.6%	9.8%	19.7%	8.0%
High school graduate (includes equivalency)	26.7%	33.8%	25.3%	23.6%	31.9%	22.0%
Some college or associate's degree	28.6%	28.5%	28.6%	26.7%	27.0%	26.6%
Bachelor's degree or higher	33.5%	18.2%	36.5%	39.9%	21.5%	43.3%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Table 19

*Educational Attainment for Individuals with Disabilities: Regional Office Service Areas*

<i>RO</i>	<i>County/city</i>		<i>Population Age 25 and over</i>	<i>Less than high school graduate</i>	<i>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</i>	<i>Some college or associate's degree</i>	<i>Bachelor's degree or higher</i>
<i>RO1</i>	<i>Smyth County</i>	TCNP	21,857	16.1%	37.4%	31.6%	14.8%
		With a Disability	6,546	27.7%	39.5%	23.8%	9.0%
		No Disability	15,311	11.2%	36.5%	34.9%	17.3%
	<i>Washington County</i>	TCNP	39,045	14.2%	34.0%	28.7%	23.1%
		With a Disability	10,025	25.2%	34.5%	27.7%	12.6%
		No Disability	29,020	10.4%	33.9%	29.0%	26.8%
<i>RO2</i>	<i>Frederick County</i>	TCNP	58,619	10.7%	32.1%	28.6%	28.6%
		With a Disability	9,067	15.3%	39.4%	25.2%	20.1%
		No Disability	49,552	9.8%	30.8%	29.2%	30.2%
	<i>Fairfax County</i>	TCNP	770,978	7.4%	12.1%	18.3%	62.2%
		With a Disability	76,778	12.5%	19.8%	24.5%	43.2%
		No Disability	694,200	6.8%	11.3%	17.7%	64.3%
<i>RO3</i>	<i>James City County</i>	TCNP	52,982	4.7%	17.7%	26.7%	50.9%
		With a Disability	8,675	9.8%	23.8%	26.0%	40.4%
		No Disability	44,307	3.7%	16.4%	26.9%	53.0%
	<i>Virginia Beach city</i>	TCNP	289,847	6.6%	21.3%	35.9%	36.1%
		With a Disability	42,022	12.9%	29.6%	34.0%	23.5%
		No Disability	247,825	5.6%	19.9%	36.3%	38.3%
<i>RO4</i>	<i>Hanover County</i>	TCNP	72,655	6.8%	25.4%	27.9%	39.8%
		With a Disability	9,673	15.8%	33.9%	27.6%	22.7%
		No Disability	62,982	5.4%	24.1%	28.0%	42.5%
	<i>Henrico County</i>	TCNP	224,785	8.1%	21.1%	26.8%	44.0%
		With a Disability	31,378	16.4%	30.7%	30.4%	22.5%
		No Disability	193,407	6.7%	19.6%	26.2%	47.5%
<i>RO5</i>	<i>Danville city</i>	TCNP	27,446	17.4%	31.4%	33.1%	18.2%
		With a Disability	6,903	30.9%	30.0%	30.0%	9.1%
		No Disability	20,543	12.8%	31.9%	34.1%	21.2%
	<i>Roanoke city</i>	TCNP	68,847	13.6%	34.1%	28.8%	23.6%
		With a Disability	11,814	22.5%	38.7%	27.2%	11.5%
		No Disability	57,033	11.7%	33.1%	29.1%	26.1%

RO	County/city		Population Age 25 and over	Less than high school graduate	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	Some college or associate's degree	Bachelor's degree or higher
RO6	Albemarle County	TCNP	71,686	7.7%	15.6%	21.2%	55.6%
		With a Disability	8,205	16.3%	22.5%	23.2%	38.0%
		No Disability	63,481	6.6%	14.7%	20.9%	57.8%
	Spotsylvania County	TCNP	87,552	8.8%	29.5%	30.0%	31.7%
		With a Disability	13,014	15.9%	36.0%	25.8%	22.2%
		No Disability	74,538	7.6%	28.3%	30.7%	33.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates and 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

With the exception of Danville city, individuals with disabilities complete high school at higher rates, ranging between 0.6 percent to 11.1 percent higher, than individuals without disabilities in Virginia. Three counties have bachelor’s degree attainment rates that are significantly high, starting at 38 percent up to 43.2 percent, for people with disabilities. However, the bachelor’s degree attainment rates for people with disabilities are between 8.3 to 25 percent lower than the rates for those without disabilities throughout the State.

**General Trends of Employment, Occupations, Industries and Labor Force Participation for the Civilian Non-institutionalized Population**

*Local economies thrive based on employment, occupations, and industries available to area residents and the individuals’ participation in the labor force. Knowledge of the local area labor force internet accessibility, employment rates, occupations, industries, and labor force participation facilitates helping consumers find local job opportunities and securing appropriate job placement.*

*The labor force includes all people classified in the civilian labor force, plus members of the U.S. Armed Forces (people on active duty with the United States Army, Air Force, Navy, Marine Corps, or Coast Guard). The civilian labor force consists of people classified as employed or unemployed and actively looking for work. The labor force participation rate represents the proportion of the population that is in the labor force.*

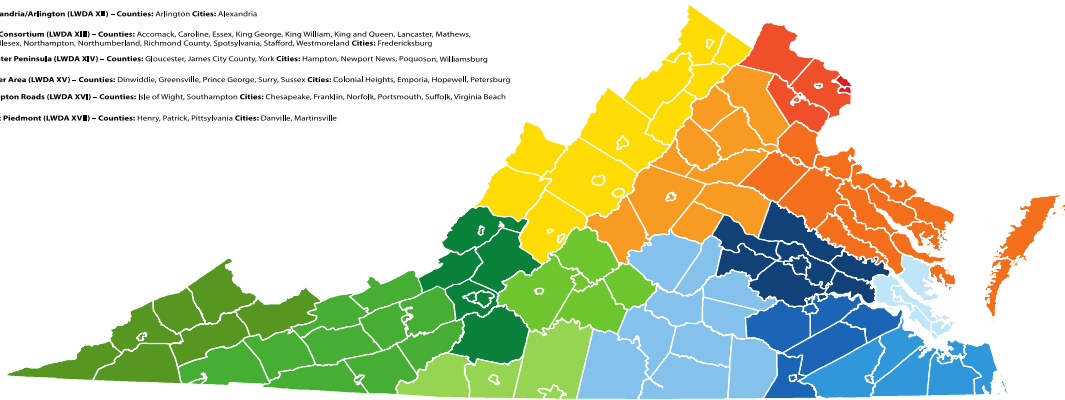
**Local Workforce Areas**

Virginia’s Employment Commission Economic Information and Analytics Division publishes information on the State’s labor market and trends. The Commission establishes the State’s workforce development areas (LWDA). Virginia has fifteen workforce development areas. Map 2 contains the LWDA area structure. Table 20 contains detailed information comparing the LWDA and the RO service area structure. This information is presented to help inform DBVI as it engages in strategic planning for the future.

Map 2  
Local Workforce Development Areas: State of Virginia

Local Workforce Development Areas (LWDAs)

- **Southwestern Virginia (LWDA I)** – Counties: Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, Wise. Cities: Norton
- **New River/Mt. Rogers (LWDA II)** – Counties: Bland, Carroll, Floyd, Giles, Grayson, Montgomery, Pulaski, Smyth, Washington, Wythe. Cities: Bristol, Galax, Radford
- **Western Virginia (LWDA III)** – Counties: Alleghany, Botetourt, Craig, Franklin, Roanoke. Cities: Covington, Roanoke, Salem
- **Shenandoah Valley (LWDA IV)** – Counties: Augusta, Bath, Clarke, Frederick, Highland, Page, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Shenandoah, Warren. Cities: Buena Vista, Harrisonburg, Lexington, Staunton, Waynesboro, Winchester
- **Piedmont Workforce Network (LWDA VI)** – Counties: Albemarle, Culpeper, Fauquier, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson, Orange, Rappahannock. Cities: Charlottesville
- **Region 2000/Central Virginia (LWDA VII)** – Counties: Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell. Cities: Lynchburg
- **South Central (LWDA VIII)** – Counties: Amelia, Brunswick, Buckingham, Charlotte, Cumberland, Halifax, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Prince Edward
- **Capital Region Workforce Partnership (LWDA IX)** – Counties: Charles City County, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, New Kent, Powhatan. Cities: Richmond
- **Northern Virginia (LWDA XI)** – Counties: Fairfax, Loudoun, Prince William. Cities: Fairfax, Falls Church, Manassas, Manassas Park
- **Alexandria/Arlington (LWDA XII)** – Counties: Arlington. Cities: Alexandria
- **Bay Consortium (LWDA XIII)** – Counties: Accomack, Caroline, Essex, King George, King William, King and Queen, Lancaster, Mathews, Middlesex, Northampton, Northumberland, Richmond County, Spotsylvania, Stafford, Westmoreland. Cities: Fredericksburg
- **Greater Peninsula (LWDA XIV)** – Counties: Gloucester, James City County, York. Cities: Hampton, Newport News, Poquoson, Williamsburg
- **Crater Area (LWDA XV)** – Counties: Dinwiddie, Greenville, Prince George, Surry, Sussex. Cities: Colonial Heights, Emporia, Hopewell, Petersburg
- **Hampton Roads (LWDA XVI)** – Counties: Isle of Wight, Southampton. Cities: Chesapeake, Franklin, Norfolk, Portsmouth, Suffolk, Virginia Beach
- **West Piedmont (LWDA XVII)** – Counties: Henry, Patrick, Pittsylvania. Cities: Danville, Martinsville



Source: Virginia Employment Commission Economics and Analytics Division: Richmond, Virginia

Table 20  
RO and LWDA Area Comparison

RO	LWDA	County/City
RO1	New River/ Mt Rogers LWDA II	Bland, Bristol city, Carroll, Galax city, Grayson, Smyth, Washington, Wythe
	Southwestern Virginia LWDA I	Buchanan, Dickenson, Lee, Norton city, Russell, Scott, Tazewell, Wise
RO2	Alexandria/Arlington LWDA XII	Alexandria city, Arlington
	Bay Consortium LWDA XIII	Stafford
	Northern Virginia LWDA XI	Fairfax city, Fairfax County, Falls Church city, Loudoun, Manassas city, Manassas Park city, Prince William
	Piedmont Workforce Network LWDA VI	Culpeper, Fauquier, Orange, Rappahannock
	Shenandoah Valley LWDA IV	Clarke, Frederick, Page, Shenandoah, Warren, Winchester city
RO3	Bay Consortium LWDA XIII	Accomack, Mathews, Middlesex, Northampton
	Capital Region Workforce Partnership LWDA IX	New Kent
	Crater Area LWDA XV	Hopewell city, Prince George, Surry, Sussex
	Greater Peninsula LWDA XIV	Gloucester, Hampton city, James City County, Newport News city, Poquoson city, Williamsburg city, York
	Hampton Roads LWDA XVI	Chesapeake city, Franklin city, Isle of Wight, Norfolk city, Portsmouth city, Southampton, Suffolk city, Virginia Beach city

RO	LWDA	County/City
RO4	Bay Consortium LWDA XIII	Caroline, Essex, King George, King William, King and Queen, Lancaster, Northumberland, Richmond County, Westmoreland
	Capital Region Workforce Partnership LWDA IX	Charles City County, Chesterfield, Goochland, Hanover, Henrico, Powhatan, Richmond city
	Crater Area LWDA XV	Colonial Heights city, Dinwiddie, Emporia city, Greensville, Petersburg city
	South Central LWDA VIII	Amelia, Brunswick, Cumberland, Lunenburg, Mecklenburg, Nottoway, Prince Edward
RO5	New River/ Mt Rogers LWDA II	Floyd, Giles, Montgomery, Pulaski, Radford city
	Region 2000/Central VA LWDA VII	Amherst, Appomattox, Bedford, Campbell, Lynchburg city
	South Central LWDA VIII	Charlotte, Halifax
	West Piedmont LWDA XVII	Danville city, Henry, Martinsville city, Patrick, Pittsylvania
	Western Virginia LWDA III	Alleghany, Botetourt, Covington, Craig, Franklin County, Roanoke city, Roanoke County, Salem city
RO6	Bay Consortium LWDA XIII	Fredericksburg city, Spotsylvania
	Piedmont Workforce Network LWDA VI	Albemarle, Charlottesville city, Fluvanna, Greene, Louisa, Madison, Nelson
	Shenandoah Valley LWDA IV	Augusta, Bath, Buena Vista city, Harrisonburg city, Highland, Lexington city, Rockbridge, Rockingham, Staunton city, Waynesboro city
	South Central LWDA VIII	Buckingham

Source: Table developed by Interwork Staff using lists from the Virginia Employment Commission and the Virginia DBV

### Internet Accessibility of Individuals in the Labor Force

The U.S. Census Bureau gathers data regarding the availability of the internet using two different populations: 1) working age population 18 to 64; and 2) based on employment status age 16 years and over. The data for working age individuals (ages 18 to 64) in the State's regional office service areas indicates that over 83.5 percent of the working age population has access to broadband internet subscriptions. The averages range between 83.9 to 94.4 percent.

The employment status data includes civilians ages 16 and over, with no cut-off age. The data cites that those who are not in the labor force have significantly lower rates of access to broadband internet subscriptions when compared to the labor force participants, both employed and unemployed. The gap between rates of access to broadband internet for those who are unemployed and those who do not participate in the labor force in each RO ranges from 2.4 to 11.5 percentage points.

Tables 21 and 22 contains internet accessibility data for the Nation, State, and each RO.

Table 21: *Internet Accessibility: Working Age 18 to 64 and by Employment Status for the US and Virginia*

United States																																																																																																																																																				
United States -- Urban					United States -- Rural																																																																																																																																															
Category	Total	With a computer		Percent no computer	Total	With a computer		Percent no computer	Total	With a computer		Percent no computer																																																																																																																																								
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18 to 64 years	194,817,736	91.3%	5.8%	2.8%	158,571,482	92.0%	5.4%	2.5%	36,246,254	88.4%	7.5%	4.0%																																																																																																																																								
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>																																																																																																																																																				
Civilian population 16 years and over	254,639,295	88.6%	6.2%	5.0%	204,449,707	89.5%	5.8%	4.5%	50,189,588	85.0%	7.7%	6.9%																																																																																																																																								
In labor force	164,811,855	92.5%	5.2%	2.2%	134,805,125	93.1%	4.9%	2.0%	30,006,730	89.8%	6.8%	3.2%																																																																																																																																								
Employed	157,491,355	92.7%	5.1%	2.1%	128,656,936	93.3%	4.7%	1.9%	28,834,419	90.0%	6.7%	3.1%																																																																																																																																								
Unemployed	7,320,500	88.7%	7.5%	3.7%	6,148,189	89.3%	7.2%	3.5%	1,172,311	85.4%	9.5%	4.9%																																																																																																																																								
Not in labor force	89,827,440	81.6%	7.9%	10.2%	69,644,582	82.6%	7.6%	9.5%	20,182,858	77.8%	9.1%	12.5%																																																																																																																																								
<table border="1" style="width: 100%; border-collapse: collapse;"> <thead> <tr> <th colspan="5">Virginia</th> <th colspan="3">Virginia-- Urban</th> <th colspan="5">Virginia -- Rural</th> </tr> <tr> <th rowspan="2">Category</th> <th rowspan="2">Total</th> <th colspan="2">With a computer</th> <th rowspan="2">Percent no computer</th> <th rowspan="2">Total</th> <th colspan="2">With a computer</th> <th rowspan="2">Percent no computer</th> <th rowspan="2">Total</th> <th colspan="2">With a computer</th> <th rowspan="2">Percent no computer</th> </tr> <tr> <th>Percent Broadband Internet</th> <th>Percent without Internet</th> <th>Percent Broadband Internet</th> <th>Percent without Internet</th> <th>Percent Broadband Internet</th> <th>Percent without Internet</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td colspan="13" style="text-align: center;"><b>AGE</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>18 to 64 years</td> <td>5,107,520</td> <td>91.8%</td> <td>5.7%</td> <td>2.4%</td> <td>3,936,319</td> <td>93.4%</td> <td>4.7%</td> <td>1.8%</td> <td>1,171,201</td> <td>86.5%</td> <td>9.0%</td> <td>4.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td colspan="13" style="text-align: center;"><b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Civilian population 16 years and over</td> <td>6,543,888</td> <td>89.0%</td> <td>6.0%</td> <td>4.9%</td> <td>4,894,302</td> <td>91.2%</td> <td>5.0%</td> <td>3.7%</td> <td>1,649,586</td> <td>82.4%</td> <td>9.0%</td> <td>8.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>In labor force</td> <td>4,365,765</td> <td>92.7%</td> <td>5.2%</td> <td>2.0%</td> <td>3,388,584</td> <td>94.2%</td> <td>4.3%</td> <td>1.5%</td> <td>977,181</td> <td>87.9%</td> <td>8.2%</td> <td>3.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Employed</td> <td>4,194,673</td> <td>92.9%</td> <td>5.0%</td> <td>2.0%</td> <td>3,253,762</td> <td>94.3%</td> <td>4.1%</td> <td>1.5%</td> <td>940,911</td> <td>87.9%</td> <td>8.1%</td> <td>3.8%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Unemployed</td> <td>171,092</td> <td>88.9%</td> <td>8.3%</td> <td>2.7%</td> <td>134,822</td> <td>89.5%</td> <td>7.7%</td> <td>2.8%</td> <td>36,270</td> <td>86.7%</td> <td>10.7%</td> <td>2.4%</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Not in labor force</td> <td>2,178,123</td> <td>81.4%</td> <td>7.7%</td> <td>10.6%</td> <td>1,505,718</td> <td>84.6%</td> <td>6.7%</td> <td>8.5%</td> <td>672,405</td> <td>74.4%</td> <td>10.1%</td> <td>15.2%</td> </tr> </tbody> </table>													Virginia					Virginia-- Urban			Virginia -- Rural					Category	Total	With a computer		Percent no computer	Total	With a computer		Percent no computer	Total	With a computer		Percent no computer	Percent Broadband Internet	Percent without Internet	Percent Broadband Internet	Percent without Internet	Percent Broadband Internet	Percent without Internet	<b>AGE</b>													18 to 64 years	5,107,520	91.8%	5.7%	2.4%	3,936,319	93.4%	4.7%	1.8%	1,171,201	86.5%	9.0%	4.4%	<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>													Civilian population 16 years and over	6,543,888	89.0%	6.0%	4.9%	4,894,302	91.2%	5.0%	3.7%	1,649,586	82.4%	9.0%	8.4%	In labor force	4,365,765	92.7%	5.2%	2.0%	3,388,584	94.2%	4.3%	1.5%	977,181	87.9%	8.2%	3.8%	Employed	4,194,673	92.9%	5.0%	2.0%	3,253,762	94.3%	4.1%	1.5%	940,911	87.9%	8.1%	3.8%	Unemployed	171,092	88.9%	8.3%	2.7%	134,822	89.5%	7.7%	2.8%	36,270	86.7%	10.7%	2.4%	Not in labor force	2,178,123	81.4%	7.7%	10.6%	1,505,718	84.6%	6.7%	8.5%	672,405	74.4%	10.1%	15.2%
Virginia					Virginia-- Urban			Virginia -- Rural																																																																																																																																												
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		Percent Broadband Internet	Percent without Internet			Percent Broadband Internet	Percent without Internet			Percent Broadband Internet	Percent without Internet																																																																																																																																									
<b>AGE</b>																																																																																																																																																				
18 to 64 years	5,107,520	91.8%	5.7%	2.4%	3,936,319	93.4%	4.7%	1.8%	1,171,201	86.5%	9.0%	4.4%																																																																																																																																								
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>																																																																																																																																																				
Civilian population 16 years and over	6,543,888	89.0%	6.0%	4.9%	4,894,302	91.2%	5.0%	3.7%	1,649,586	82.4%	9.0%	8.4%																																																																																																																																								
In labor force	4,365,765	92.7%	5.2%	2.0%	3,388,584	94.2%	4.3%	1.5%	977,181	87.9%	8.2%	3.8%																																																																																																																																								
Employed	4,194,673	92.9%	5.0%	2.0%	3,253,762	94.3%	4.1%	1.5%	940,911	87.9%	8.1%	3.8%																																																																																																																																								
Unemployed	171,092	88.9%	8.3%	2.7%	134,822	89.5%	7.7%	2.8%	36,270	86.7%	10.7%	2.4%																																																																																																																																								
Not in labor force	2,178,123	81.4%	7.7%	10.6%	1,505,718	84.6%	6.7%	8.5%	672,405	74.4%	10.1%	15.2%																																																																																																																																								

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS 1-year Estimates.

Table 22

*Internet Accessibility: Working Age 18 to 64 and by Employment Status for ROs*

<b>RO1</b>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>With a Computer</b>		<b>Percent No Computer</b>
		<b>Percent With BB Internet</b>	<b>Percent No Internet</b>	
<b>18 to 64 years</b>	216,110	77.9%	11.6%	10.0%
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>				
<b>Civilian population 16 years and over</b>	303,977	72.0%	11.0%	16.4%
<b>In labor force</b>	155,312	82.0%	10.6%	6.9%
<b>Employed</b>	145,936	82.6%	10.3%	6.7%
<b>Unemployed</b>	9,376	73.1%	16.0%	10.3%
<b>Not in labor force</b>	148,665	61.6%	11.4%	26.3%
<b>RO2</b>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>With a Computer</b>		<b>Percent No Computer</b>
		<b>Percent With BB Internet</b>	<b>Percent No Internet</b>	
<b>18 to 64 years</b>	1,911,662	94.4%	3.6%	1.8%
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>				
<b>Civilian population 16 years and over</b>	2,330,984	92.9%	3.8%	3.1%
<b>In labor force</b>	1,688,475	94.6%	3.5%	1.8%
<b>Employed</b>	1,625,165	94.7%	3.4%	1.7%
<b>Unemployed</b>	63,310	90.9%	5.4%	3.5%
<b>Not in labor force</b>	642,509	88.5%	4.5%	6.6%
<b>RO3</b>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>With a Computer</b>		<b>Percent No Computer</b>
		<b>Percent With BB Internet</b>	<b>Percent No Internet</b>	
<b>18 to 64 years</b>	1,113,302	89.3%	7.4%	3.2%
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>				
<b>Civilian population 16 years and over</b>	1,372,930	86.3%	7.6%	5.9%
<b>In labor force</b>	900,276	90.0%	7.1%	2.7%
<b>Employed</b>	851,244	90.3%	7.0%	2.6%
<b>Unemployed</b>	49,032	85.9%	9.7%	4.2%
<b>Not in labor force</b>	472,654	79.1%	8.5%	12.1%



<b>RO4</b>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>With a Computer</b>		<b>Percent No Computer</b>
		<b>Percent With BB Internet</b>	<b>Percent No Internet</b>	
<b>18 to 64 years</b>	848,785	87.4%	7.7%	4.7%
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>				
<b>Civilian population 16 years and over</b>	1,103,374	84.3%	7.7%	7.7%
<b>In labor force</b>	731,316	89.0%	7.0%	3.9%
<b>Employed</b>	695,549	89.2%	6.8%	3.8%
<b>Unemployed</b>	35,767	83.8%	10.6%	5.5%
<b>Not in labor force</b>	372,058	75.0%	9.1%	15.3%
<b>RO5</b>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>With a Computer</b>		<b>Percent No Computer</b>
		<b>Percent With BB Internet</b>	<b>Percent No Internet</b>	
<b>18 to 64 years</b>	584,447	83.9%	9.1%	6.7%
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>				
<b>Civilian population 16 years and over</b>	794,742	79.2%	8.9%	11.3%
<b>In labor force</b>	473,230	85.3%	8.7%	5.7%
<b>Employed</b>	450,630	85.6%	8.5%	5.6%
<b>Unemployed</b>	22,600	79.0%	12.6%	8.1%
<b>Not in labor force</b>	321,512	70.3%	9.2%	19.6%
<b>RO6</b>				
	<b>Total</b>	<b>With a Computer</b>		<b>Percent No Computer</b>
		<b>Percent With BB Internet</b>	<b>Percent No Internet</b>	
<b>18 to 64 years</b>	431,340	86.1%	9.2%	4.4%
<b>EMPLOYMENT STATUS</b>				
<b>Civilian population 16 years and over</b>	568,940	83.1%	8.8%	7.7%
<b>In labor force</b>	367,687	87.5%	8.4%	3.8%
<b>Employed</b>	352,878	87.9%	8.2%	3.7%
<b>Unemployed</b>	14,809	79.5%	13.2%	7.0%
<b>Not in labor force</b>	201,253	74.9%	9.6%	14.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

### Unemployment Rates

During the time period from August through November 2021, Virginia’s monthly non-adjusted employment rate fell below the National average by roughly 1 percentage point. Petersburg city in RO4 had the highest unemployment rates for the August through November time period. Note that RO4 accounts for 16.9 percent of the State’s population and has eight counties that are comprised of greater than 99.5 percent rural populations. The lowest unemployment rate (1.7 percent) was in Highland County, located in RO6, during October and November 2021. RO6 has an overall rural population average of 51 percent according to the 2012 census report.

Table 23 contains the National, State, and local region non-seasonally adjusted unemployment rates for the August through November of 2021, published by the United States Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Table 23  
*Local Area Unemployment Rates*

	Area	US	VA	RO1	RO2	RO3	RO4	RO5	RO6	
21-Aug	Low	5.3%	Nebraska 1.8%	3.8%	Bland, Grayson 2.9%	Falls Church city, Frederick 2.7%	Poquoson city 2.7%	King George 2.7%	Botetourt, Montgomery, Roanoke County 3%	Madison 2.3%
	High		California 7.5%		Buchanan 6.2%	Page 4%	Hopewell city 7.1%	Petersburg city 9.6%	Martinsville 7.2%	Buckingham 4.8%
21-Sep	Low	4.6%	Nebraska 1.4%	3.2%	Grayson 2.4%	Falls Church city 2%	Poquoson city 2.4%	King George 2.2%	Montgomery 2.5%	Madison 2.2%
	High		CA, HI, NV 6.4%		Buchanan 5.3%	Page 3.7%	Hopewell city 6.2%	Petersburg city 8.4%	Martinsville 6.8%	Buckingham 4.2%
21-Oct	Low	4.3%	Nebraska 1.9%	3.0%	Grayson 2.1%	Falls Church city 1.8%	Poquoson city 2.2%	King George 2.1%	Floyd 2.1%	Highland 1.7%
	High		California 7.3%		Buchanan 4.9%	Page 3.5%	Portsmouth city 5.8%	Petersburg city 8.6%	Martinsville 6.8%	Lexington city 3.9%
21-Nov	Low	3.9%	Nebraska 1.8%	2.7%	Grayson 2%	Falls Church city 1.8%	Poquoson city 2%	King George 2%	Floyd, Montgomery 2%	Highland 1.7%
	High		California 6.9%		Buchanan 5%	Page 3.1%	Hopewell city 5.4%	Petersburg city 7.8%	Martinsville 5.4%	Buckingham 4.1%

Source: <https://data.bls.gov>

## Occupations

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics provides data for the largest occupations within the various States and the Nation. The top ten occupations in Virginia are reflective of the top ten occupations in the Nation. The largest occupation in Virginia is Cashiers, which ranks as the third largest occupation in the United States. A few differences between Virginia and the U.S. occur. Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers, which is the fourth largest occupation in Virginia, is not included in the top ten occupations in the U.S. overall. Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners also does not appear on the U.S. list. Home Health and Personal Care Aides and Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand, which are ranked in the fourth and seventh positions on the U.S. list, do not appear on Virginia's list.

The following charts are the most recent data (May, 2020) results indicating the largest occupations for the United States and Virginia.

Chart 1

### *Occupational Employment Statistics for the US*

<b>Largest Occupations in the United States, May 2020</b>	
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Employment</b>
<b>Retail Salespersons</b>	3,659,670
<b>Fast Food and Counter Workers</b>	3,450,120
<b>Cashiers</b>	3,333,100
<b>Home Health and Personal Care Aides</b>	3,211,590
<b>Registered Nurses</b>	2,986,500
<b>Customer Service Representatives</b>	2,833,250
<b>Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand</b>	2,805,200
<b>Office Clerks, General</b>	2,788,090
<b>General and Operations Managers</b>	2,347,420
<b>Stockers and Order Fillers</b>	2,210,960

<https://www.bls.gov/oes>

Chart 2

*Occupational Employment Statistics for VA*

<b>Largest occupations in Virginia, May 2020</b>	
<b>Occupation</b>	<b>Employment</b>
<b>Cashiers</b>	100,830
<b>Fast Food and Counter Workers</b>	99,570
<b>Retail Salespersons</b>	91,020
<b>Software Developers and Software Quality Assurance Analysts and Testers</b>	77,260
<b>Office Clerks, General</b>	74,690
<b>Customer Service Representatives</b>	69,350
<b>Registered Nurses</b>	66,450
<b>Stockers and Order Fillers</b>	65,540
<b>General and Operations Managers</b>	57,600
<b>Janitors and Cleaners, Except Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners</b>	55,190

[https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/area\\_emp\\_chart/area\\_emp\\_chart.htm#](https://www.bls.gov/oes/current/area_emp_chart/area_emp_chart.htm#)

**Industries in Virginia**

*Industry describes the types of business establishments that are part of local economies that provide employment opportunities for residents in the local area.*

The Virginia Employment Commission provided the data on the State's occupations and industries via special request for this CSNA. Table 24 contains data on the 10 largest industries by employment for the second quarter of 2021. Each industry employs over 1,000 employees.

Table 24

*Top Industries by Employment: 2nd Quarter 2021*

Top Industries by Employment: Virginia (2021 Q2)			
Rank	Employer Name	Industry Name	Ownership Type (Class of Worker)
1	U.S. Department of Defense	National Security and International Affairs	Federal Gov't
2	Wal Mart	General Merchandise Stores	Private
3	Fairfax County Public Schools	Educational Services	Local Gov't
4	Huntington Ingalls Industries, Inc.	Transportation Equipment Manufacturing	Private
5	Sentara Healthcare	Hospitals	Private
6	University of Virginia / Blue Ridge Hospital	Educational Services	State Gov't
7	Food Lion	Food and Beverage Stores	Private
8	Inova Health System	Hospitals	Private
9	Capital One Bank	Credit Intermediation and Related Activities	Private
10	Postal Service	Postal Service	Federal Gov't

Source: Virginia Employment Commission Economics and Analytics Division: Richmond, Virginia

### Regional Industries

*The term industry in this section of the report refers to the kind of business conducted by a person's employing organization.*

The U.S. Census Bureau publishes data from the American Community Survey detailing information on the top industries by employment for the Nation, State, and each county in the state. Virginia's list of leading industries by employment reflects the National list except for Construction and has ranking order differences. The top five industries in rural Virginia match the top five industries on the rural United States' list. Public administration, and Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services, each ranked in the 6<sup>th</sup> position on Rural Virginia's list. However, Public administration has 401 more employees than the Arts. Table 25 displays the U.S. and Virginia's top 6 industries with the most employees.

Table 25

*Local Area Top Industries by Employment: U.S. and V.A., including Urban and Rural Averages*

Region	Industries	Percent
US	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 23.3%
	2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2) 11.8%
	3) Retail trade	3) 10.8%
	4) Manufacturing	4) 9.9%
		5) 9.7%
		6) 7.0%

Region	Industries	Percent
	5) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services 6) Construction	
<b>US Urban</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance 2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services 3) Retail trade 4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services 5) Manufacturing 6) Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	1) 23.5% 2) 12.6% 3) 10.9% 4) 10.2% 5) 9.3% 6) 6.8%
<b>US Rural</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance 2) Manufacturing 3) Retail trade 4) Construction 5) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services 6) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	1) 22.5% 2) 13.0% 3) 10.6% 4) 9.0% 5) 8.4% 6) 7.3%
<b>VA</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance 2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services 3) Retail trade 4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services 5) Public administration 6) Manufacturing	1) 22.4% 2) 15.6% 3) 10.2% 4) 9.1% 5) 8.4% 6) 7.0%
<b>VA Urban</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance 2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services 3) Retail trade 4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services 5) Public administration 6) Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	1) 22.3% 2) 17.0% 3) 9.9% 4) 9.7% 5) 8.8% 6) 6.5%
<b>VA Rural</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance 2) Retail trade 3) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services 4) Manufacturing 5) Construction 6) Public administration AND Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	1) 23.1% 2) 11.1% 3) 11.0% 4) 10.4% 5) 9.0% 6) 6.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

## **Employment, Occupations, Industries and Labor Force Participation for People with Disabilities**

*Data on employment, occupations, industries, and labor force participation for people with disabilities is collected and analyzed by various government bureaus and research institutes. This section presents statistics from the various agencies regarding people with disabilities and their participation in the labor force.*

### **Occupations and Employees with Disabilities**

*The U.S. Census Bureau collects and analyzes data for the largest occupations within the various States and the Nation for people with disabilities who are part of the total civilian noninstitutionalized population (TCNP).*

The following tables summarize percentage rates of the occupations that people with disabilities are employed in. One-year 2019 U.S. Census data is used for documenting the U.S., Virginia, and RO2. Five-year 2014-2019 U.S. Census estimates are provided in Table 26 in lieu of an RO average for those counties in which rates are available.

Table 26

*Distribution of Employed Individuals by Disability Status and Occupation: U.S. and V.A.*

	United States			Virginia		
	TCNP	With a Disability	No Disability	TCNP	With a Disability	No Disability
Management, business, science, and arts occupations	39.9%	30.8%	40.4%	45.4%	35.5%	46.1%
Service occupations	17.7%	21.8%	17.4%	17.1%	20.8%	16.9%
Sales and office occupations	20.4%	21.6%	20.3%	19.0%	21.3%	18.8%
Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	8.8%	9.2%	8.8%	7.8%	9.1%	7.7%
Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	13.2%	16.7%	13.0%	10.7%	13.3%	10.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Table 27

*Percent Distribution of Employed Individuals by Disability Status and Occupation: ROs*

RO	County	TCNP and Disability Category	Management, business, science, and arts occupations	Service occupations	Sales and office occupations	Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations
ROI	Smyth	TCNP	26.9%	20.9%	18.1%	9.8%	24.3%
		With a Disability	22.7%	17.7%	21.9%	8.5%	29.1%
		No Disability	27.4%	21.4%	17.7%	9.9%	23.7%
	Tazewell	TCNP	30.6%	18.0%	22.2%	14.5%	14.7%

RO	County	TCNP and Disability Category	Management, business, science, and arts occupations	Service occupations	Sales and office occupations	Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	
		With a Disability	25.2%	20.8%	17.4%	14.7%	21.9%	
		No Disability	31.2%	17.7%	22.7%	14.5%	14.0%	
		<b>Washington</b>	TCNP	34.4%	18.8%	19.7%	8.4%	18.6%
			With a Disability	27.6%	27.0%	15.9%	12.9%	16.6%
			No Disability	35.2%	18.0%	20.1%	7.9%	18.8%
			<b>Wise</b>	TCNP	35.1%	18.8%	23.8%	9.8%
			With a Disability	32.4%	18.6%	21.8%	14.1%	13.1%
			No Disability	35.4%	18.8%	24.0%	9.3%	12.4%
			<b>RO2</b>	<b>Fairfax</b>	TCNP	58.7%	15.9%	14.9%
With a Disability	46.7%	18.5%			20.4%	5.2%	9.2%	
No Disability	59.3%	15.8%			14.6%	5.2%	5.2%	
<b>RO3</b>	<b>James City County</b>	TCNP	48.5%	16.3%	21.8%	6.0%	7.4%	
		With a Disability	39.4%	23.3%	21.2%	6.7%	9.3%	
		No Disability	49.2%	15.7%	21.9%	6.0%	7.3%	
	<b>Chesapeake city</b>	TCNP	41.8%	15.6%	22.7%	9.6%	10.3%	
		With a Disability	33.8%	20.9%	23.2%	9.4%	12.7%	
		No Disability	42.3%	15.3%	22.6%	9.6%	10.2%	
	<b>Hampton city</b>	TCNP	34.9%	18.3%	22.0%	10.4%	14.3%	
		With a Disability	29.0%	19.7%	22.5%	12.5%	16.3%	
		No Disability	35.5%	18.2%	22.0%	10.2%	14.1%	
	<b>Newport News city</b>	TCNP	34.6%	19.1%	21.5%	9.8%	15.0%	
		With a Disability	29.1%	23.3%	22.1%	11.8%	13.7%	
		No Disability	35.2%	18.7%	21.4%	9.5%	15.1%	
	<b>Norfolk city</b>	TCNP	34.2%	21.3%	21.8%	10.1%	12.6%	
		With a Disability	30.9%	23.4%	18.6%	10.4%	16.8%	
		No Disability	34.4%	21.2%	22.0%	10.1%	12.3%	
	<b>Portsmouth city</b>	TCNP	29.8%	19.1%	23.6%	11.5%	16.0%	
		With a Disability	28.5%	20.8%	23.5%	10.8%	16.4%	



RO	County	TCNP and Disability Category	Management, business, science, and arts occupations	Service occupations	Sales and office occupations	Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	
		No Disability	29.9%	19.0%	23.6%	11.5%	15.9%	
		<i>Suffolk city</i>	TCNP	39.0%	16.9%	20.9%	9.1%	14.2%
			With a Disability	33.7%	18.7%	19.3%	13.5%	14.8%
		No Disability	39.3%	16.8%	21.0%	8.8%	14.1%	
		<i>Virginia Beach city</i>	TCNP	41.5%	17.0%	23.2%	9.0%	9.3%
			With a Disability	34.9%	17.7%	25.4%	10.3%	11.7%
	No Disability		42.0%	17.0%	23.0%	8.9%	9.1%	
	<i>RO4</i>	<i>Chesterfield</i>	TCNP	43.3%	14.8%	22.8%	8.0%	11.0%
			With a Disability	38.4%	17.5%	24.8%	7.9%	11.5%
No Disability			43.6%	14.6%	22.7%	8.0%	11.0%	
<i>Hanover</i>		TCNP	46.5%	13.3%	23.0%	8.7%	8.5%	
		With a Disability	38.9%	16.8%	25.7%	5.8%	12.8%	
		No Disability	46.9%	13.1%	22.9%	8.9%	8.3%	
<i>Henrico</i>		TCNP	45.1%	15.3%	24.0%	5.6%	10.0%	
		With a Disability	30.9%	22.5%	24.9%	5.3%	16.4%	
		No Disability	45.9%	14.9%	24.0%	5.7%	9.6%	
<i>Richmond city</i>		TCNP	42.0%	20.9%	20.2%	6.7%	10.3%	
		With a Disability	28.4%	29.8%	20.7%	6.3%	14.7%	
		No Disability	43.1%	20.2%	20.1%	6.7%	9.9%	
<i>RO5</i>		<i>Bedford</i>	TCNP	37.5%	14.8%	23.0%	9.1%	15.6%
			With a Disability	18.1%	19.8%	26.9%	10.9%	24.4%
			No Disability	38.7%	14.6%	22.7%	9.0%	15.1%
	<i>Campbell</i>	TCNP	32.8%	16.9%	23.1%	11.4%	15.8%	
		With a Disability	17.5%	19.2%	27.7%	9.3%	26.3%	
		No Disability	33.8%	16.8%	22.8%	11.5%	15.1%	
	<i>Franklin</i>	TCNP	35.9%	14.2%	20.6%	12.0%	17.3%	
		With a Disability	30.7%	21.4%	15.6%	14.5%	17.8%	
		No Disability	36.2%	13.8%	20.9%	11.9%	17.3%	

RO	County	TCNP and Disability Category	Management, business, science, and arts occupations	Service occupations	Sales and office occupations	Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations	
	<i>Henry</i>	TCNP	26.6%	16.9%	23.0%	10.5%	22.9%	
		With a Disability	16.8%	11.3%	20.0%	13.0%	38.9%	
		No Disability	27.2%	17.2%	23.2%	10.4%	21.9%	
	<i>Montgomery</i>	TCNP	48.1%	18.0%	17.7%	6.3%	9.9%	
		With a Disability	31.8%	19.5%	25.7%	7.7%	15.3%	
		No Disability	49.0%	17.9%	17.3%	6.2%	9.6%	
	<i>Pittsylvania</i>	TCNP	26.3%	18.7%	20.3%	11.7%	23.0%	
		With a Disability	23.6%	21.8%	19.4%	13.3%	22.0%	
		No Disability	26.5%	18.4%	20.4%	11.6%	23.1%	
	<i>Roanoke County</i>	TCNP	43.5%	14.0%	23.3%	6.9%	12.4%	
		With a Disability	31.9%	15.8%	23.9%	8.9%	19.5%	
		No Disability	44.0%	13.9%	23.3%	6.8%	12.0%	
	<i>Danville city</i>	TCNP	26.2%	25.7%	20.8%	6.2%	21.1%	
		With a Disability	20.2%	30.6%	21.2%	13.5%	14.5%	
		No Disability	26.7%	25.3%	20.7%	5.6%	21.7%	
	<i>Lynchburg city</i>	TCNP	40.0%	22.2%	20.0%	6.4%	11.4%	
		With a Disability	34.8%	24.2%	15.8%	5.8%	19.3%	
		No Disability	40.4%	22.0%	20.3%	6.4%	10.8%	
	<i>Roanoke city</i>	TCNP	32.1%	20.7%	23.6%	7.4%	16.2%	
		With a Disability	24.9%	24.5%	20.5%	8.9%	21.2%	
		No Disability	32.5%	20.5%	23.7%	7.4%	16.0%	
	<i>RO6</i>	<i>Albemarle</i>	TCNP	54.7%	15.6%	18.4%	6.0%	5.3%
			With a Disability	43.7%	21.9%	23.1%	6.1%	5.2%
			No Disability	55.2%	15.3%	18.2%	6.0%	5.3%
		<i>Augusta</i>	TCNP	33.5%	16.7%	21.5%	10.1%	18.2%
			With a Disability	25.8%	26.1%	19.7%	8.1%	20.3%
			No Disability	34.1%	16.0%	21.7%	10.3%	18.0%
<i>Rockingham</i>		TCNP	33.1%	16.4%	21.2%	11.9%	17.5%	

RO	County	TCNP and Disability Category	Management, business, science, and arts occupations	Service occupations	Sales and office occupations	Natural resources, construction, and maintenance occupations	Production, transportation, and material moving occupations
		With a Disability	27.1%	14.7%	22.7%	9.1%	26.3%
		No Disability	33.5%	16.5%	21.1%	12.1%	16.9%
	<i>Spotsylvania</i>	TCNP	40.7%	18.0%	22.2%	8.7%	10.4%
		With a Disability	36.4%	23.2%	20.8%	9.8%	9.8%
		No Disability	41.0%	17.7%	22.3%	8.6%	10.4%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates and 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Based on the above statistics regarding occupational groups, workers with disabilities were less likely to work in management, business, science and arts occupations in Virginia. The rate for workers without disabilities exceeds the rate for workers with disabilities in management, business, science and arts occupations by 10.6 percent in the State and the range of difference for the ROs with data available is from 1.4 percent (Portsmouth city) to 20.6 percent (Bedford County).

### Regional Industries and Employees with Disabilities

*The US Census Bureau publishes data that provides information on the top industries by employment for people with disabilities. The data represents the total civilian employed population ages 16 and over.*

Table 28 displays the top 6 industries in the United States, Virginia and the regional office service areas and compares the percentage rates of employees with disabilities and with rates for employees without disabilities. Data includes 31 of the State's 133 counties and cities. For comparison purposes, county population ranking is documented in the table for reference. Data for the Nation, State and Fairfax County in RO2 is taken from the 2019 one-year estimates and the remaining data is taken from the 2014-2019 five-year US Census Bureau Estimates.

Table 28

Local Area Top Industries by Employment: People with & without Disabilities Ages 16 and Over

Geographic Area		Industries	Employees with Disabilities	Employees without Disabilities
US		1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 22.3%	1) 23.3%
		2) Retail trade	2) 13.0%	2) 10.7%
		3) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	3) 10.8%	3) 11.9%
		4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4) 10.3%	4) 9.6%
		5) Manufacturing	5) 9.7%	5) 10.0%
		6) Construction	6) 6.6%	6) 7.0%
VA		1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 21.5%	1) 22.5%
		2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2) 13.5%	2) 15.8%
		3) Retail trade	3) 12.3%	3) 10.1%
		4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4) 9.8%	4) 9.0%
		5) Construction	5) 7.4%	5) 6.8%
		6) Public administration	6) 7.3%	6) 8.5%
RO1	Smyth Pop Rank = 58	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 26.0%	1) 25.2%
		2) Manufacturing	2) 18.8%	2) 20.0%
		3) Retail trade	3) 18.3%	3) 12.7%
		4) Public administration	4) 8.3%	4) 6.0%
		5) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	5) 6.6%	5) 7.6%
		6) Other services (except public administration)	6) 6.3%	6) 4.0%
	Tazewell Pop Rank = 41	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 26.1%	1) 28.1%
		2) Retail trade	2) 14.3%	2) 14.2%
		3) Manufacturing	3) 10.2%	3) 7.1%
		4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4) 8.0%	4) 6.4%
		5) Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5) 7.4%	5) 4.6%
		6) Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	6) 6.4%	6) 4.5%
	Washington Pop Rank = 34	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 20.1%	1) 27.2%
		2) Manufacturing	2) 13.8%	2) 13.3%
		3) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	3) 12.4%	3) 7.3%
		4) Retail trade	4) 11.2%	4) 14.4%
		5) Public administration	5) 10.5%	5) 5.0%
		6) Construction	6) 10.3%	6) 5.3%

Geographic Area		Industries	Employees with Disabilities	Employees without Disabilities
	<b>Wise Pop Rank = 46</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 24.3%	1) 24.8%
		2) Retail Trade	2) 19.0%	2) 14.2%
		3) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	3) 14.9%	3) 9.9%
		4) Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	4) 9.5%	4) 6.1%
		5) Public administration	5) 9.1%	5) 8.5%
		6) Construction	6) 7.6%	6) 2.9%
<b>RO2</b>	<b>Fairfax County Pop Rank = 1</b>	1) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	1) 20.2%	1) 26.1%
		2) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	2) 18.5%	2) 18.5%
		3) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	3) 10.1%	3) 9.5%
		4) Retail trade	4) 9.8%	4) 6.6%
		5) Public administration	5) 9.4%	5) 11.1%
		6) Other services (except public administration)	6) 8.6%	6) 6.5%
<b>RO3</b>	<b>James City County Pop Rank = 27</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 28.0%	1) 25.8%
		2) Retail trade	2) 17.6%	2) 11.4%
		3) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	3) 17.6%	3) 13.3%
		4) Public administration	4) 10.7%	4) 6.9%
		5) Manufacturing	5) 5.2%	5) 6.9%
		6) Other services (except public administration)	6) 4.8%	6) 4.6%
	<b>Chesapeake city Pop Rank = 7</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 20.7%	1) 24.3%
		2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2) 12.1%	2) 11.8%
		3) Public administration	3) 10.7%	3) 9.5%
<b>Hampton city Pop Rank = 15</b>	4) Retail trade	4) 10.2%	4) 10.5%	
	5) Other services (except public administration)	5) 8.5%	5) 5.2%	
	6) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	6) 8.2%	6) 7.7%	
	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 21.5%	1) 22.1%	
	2) Manufacturing	2) 14.7%	2) 12.4%	
	3) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	3) 10.4%	3) 12.8%	
<b>Newport News city</b>	4) Public administration	4) 10.2%	4) 9.5%	
	5) Retail trade	5) 9.7%	5) 10.4%	
	6) Construction	6) 9.3%	6) 6.1%	
		1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 25.9%	1) 23.2%

Geographic Area		Industries	Employees with Disabilities	Employees without Disabilities
	<b>Pop Rank = 11</b>	2) Retail trade	2) 14.5%	2) 11.5%
		3) Manufacturing	3) 11.9%	3) 13.9%
		4) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	4) 11.7%	4) 10.6%
		5) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	5) 6.7%	5) 11.0%
		6) Other services (except public administration)	6) 6.7%	6) 4.3%
	<b>Norfolk city Pop Rank = 8</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 22.4%	1) 23.1%
		2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2) 14.0%	2) 11.5%
		3) Retail trade	3) 11.6%	3) 11.2%
		4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4) 11.5%	4) 12.8%
		5) Construction	5) 8.0%	5) 6.9%
		6) Manufacturing	6) 7.2%	6) 7.1%
	<b>Portsmouth city Pop Rank = 20</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 28.6%	1) 24.0%
		2) Manufacturing	2) 10.9%	2) 10.3%
		3) Retail trade	3) 10.5%	3) 13.6%
		4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4) 10.1%	4) 8.3%
		5) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	5) 9.4%	5) 9.5%
		6) Construction	6) 7.1%	6) 6.9%
	<b>Suffolk city Pop Rank = 22</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 23.7%	1) 25.1%
		2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2) 15.7%	2) 10.1%
		3) Retail trade	3) 11.7%	3) 10.3%
		4) Manufacturing	4) 10.3%	4) 12.6%
		5) Public administration	5) 8.3%	5) 9.9%
		6) Construction	6) 7.6%	6) 5.4%
	<b>Virginia Beach city Pop Rank = 3</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 18.3%	1) 23.2%
		2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2) 15.7%	2) 12.6%
		3) Retail trade	3) 12.4%	3) 11.4%
		4) Public administration	4) 10.1%	4) 9.1%
		5) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	5) 8.7%	5) 11.3%
		6) Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	6) 7.4%	6) 7.8%
<b>RO4</b>	<b>Chesterfield</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 23.0%	1) 23.5%

Geographic Area		Industries	Employees with Disabilities	Employees without Disabilities
	<b>Pop Rank = 5</b>	2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2) 11.7%	2) 11.5%
		3) Retail trade	3) 11.5%	3) 11.3%
		4) Public administration	4) 10.0%	4) 6.8%
		5) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	5) 8.8%	5) 8.3%
		6) Other services (except public administration)	6) 7.2%	6) 4.9%
	<b>Hanover Pop Rank = 17</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 20.1%	1) 22.9%
		2) Retail trade	2) 17.1%	2) 10.9%
		3) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	3) 12.9%	3) 11.1%
		4) Public administration	4) 8.5%	4) 6.3%
		5) Construction	5) 7.4%	5) 8.9%
		6) Manufacturing	6) 6.3%	6) 5.6%
	<b>Henrico Pop Rank = 6</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 24.8%	1) 23.4%
		2) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	2) 12.2%	2) 9.0%
		3) Retail trade	3) 12.0%	3) 10.6%
		4) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	4) 9.1%	4) 13.2%
		5) Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	5) 8.8%	5) 11.7%
		6) Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	6) 7.6%	6) 5.5%
	<b>Richmond city Pop Rank = 10</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 29.2%	1) 25.4%
		2) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	2) 13.2%	2) 14.3%
		3) Retail trade	3) 11.7%	3) 10.7%
		4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4) 11.4%	4) 11.4%
		5) Construction	5) 7.3%	5) 5.3%
		6) Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	6) 7.0%	6) 8.4%
<b>RO5</b>	<b>Bedford Pop Rank = 26</b>	1) Retail trade	1) 18.7%	1) 12.0%
		2) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	2) 18.5%	2) 25.9%
		3) Manufacturing	3) 13.3%	3) 14.1%
		4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4) 9.6%	4) 5.8%
		5) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	5) 7.7%	5) 9.0%
		6) Other services (except public administration)	6) 7.4%	6) 6.5%
	<b>Campbell</b>	1) Retail trade	1) 25.5%	1) 12.4%

Geographic Area		Industries	Employees with Disabilities	Employees without Disabilities
	<b>Pop Rank = 33</b>	2) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	2) 16.8%	2) 27.9%
		3) Manufacturing	3) 12.2%	3) 14.8%
		4) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	4) 11.2%	4) 8.2%
		5) Construction	5) 9.8%	5) 7.8%
		6) Other services (except public administration)	6) 7.3%	6) 5.9%
	<b>Franklin County Pop Rank = 32</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 20.7%	1) 22.7%
		2) Retail trade	2) 15.9%	2) 12.1%
	3) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	3) 12.7%	3) 8.1%	
	4) Construction	4) 12.0%	4) 7.5%	
	5) Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5) 8.6%	5) 6.2%	
	6) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	6) 6.7%	6) 7.4%	
	<b>Henry Pop Rank = 37</b>	1) Manufacturing	1) 22.2%	1) 20.1%
		2) Retail trade	2) 17.2%	2) 13.5%
		3) Other services (except public administration)	3) 13.5%	3) 6.1%
		4) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	4) 12.7%	4) 23.9%
		5) Transportation and warehousing, and utilities	5) 10.7%	5) 3.9%
		6) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	6) 9.9%	6) 7.6%
	<b>Montgomery Pop Rank = 19</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 32.9%	1) 39.4%
		2) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	2) 20.0%	2) 11.8%
		3) Retail trade	3) 11.9%	3) 9.3%
		4) Manufacturing	4) 8.4%	4) 9.1%
		5) Construction	5) 7.1%	5) 4.5%
		6) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	6) 7.0%	6) 9.7%
	<b>Pittsylvania Pop Rank = 31</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 21.7%	1) 22.6%
		2) Manufacturing	2) 17.4%	2) 17.6%
		3) Retail trade	3) 12.2%	3) 12.5%
		4) Other services (except public administration)	4) 9.2%	4) 5.1%
		5) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	5) 8.1%	5) 6.1%
		6) Construction	6) 8.0%	6) 7.2%
	<b>Roanoke County</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 22.6%	1) 28.1%
		2) Retail trade	2) 14.0%	2) 10.5%



Geographic Area		Industries	Employees with Disabilities	Employees without Disabilities
	<b>Pop Rank = 21</b>	3) Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	3) 10.3%	3) 8.8%
		4) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	4) 9.4%	4) 9.3%
		5) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	5) 9.1%	5) 8.1%
		6) Manufacturing	6) 8.0%	6) 8.3%
	<b>Danville city Pop Rank = 43</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 29.8%	1) 28.5%
	2) Retail trade	2) 17.0%	2) 13.2%	
	3) Manufacturing	3) 11.6%	3) 16.9%	
	4) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	4) 9.3%	4) 8.5%	
	5) Construction	5) 8.7%	5) 5.2%	
	6) Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	6) 6.8%	6) 3.6%	
	<b>Lynchburg city Pop Rank = 24</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 31.3%	1) 35.9%
		2) Retail trade	2) 16.2%	2) 11.1%
		3) Manufacturing	3) 11.3%	3) 8.5%
		4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4) 8.8%	4) 12.6%
		5) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	5) 8.0%	5) 9.4%
		6) Other services (except public administration)	6) 6.3%	6) 4.6%
	<b>Roanoke city Pop Rank = 18</b>	1) Retail trade	1) 19.2%	1) 11.8%
		2) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	2) 17.7%	2) 24.3%
		3) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	3) 15.6%	3) 12.5%
		4) Manufacturing	4) 11.8%	4) 9.9%
		5) Other services (except public administration)	5) 7.8%	5) 4.6%
		6) Finance and insurance, and real estate and rental and leasing	6) 7.5%	6) 7.4%
<b>RO6</b>	<b>Albemarle Pop Rank = 16</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 29.8%	1) 36.2%
		2) Retail trade	2) 12.7%	2) 8.7%
		3) Other services (except public administration)	3) 11.8%	3) 5.2%
		4) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	4) 10.3%	4) 10.0%
		5) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	5) 8.8%	5) 13.1%
		6) Public administration	6) 5.6%	6) 4.5%
	<b>Augusta</b>	1) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	1) 17.4%	1) 26.4%

Geographic Area		Industries	Employees with Disabilities	Employees without Disabilities
	<b>Pop Rank = 28</b>	2) Manufacturing	2) 17.3%	2) 13.6%
		3) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	3) 14.6%	3) 6.3%
		4) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	4) 10.1%	4) 7.4%
		5) Retail trade	5) 8.5%	5) 13.4%
		6) Construction	6) 6.7%	6) 7.9%
	<b>Rockingham Pop Rank = 25</b>	1) Retail trade	1) 18.9%	1) 11.9%
		2) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	2) 16.1%	2) 25.9%
		3) Manufacturing	3) 13.5%	3) 13.1%
		4) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	4) 10.3%	4) 6.7%
		5) Agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting, and mining	5) 7.8%	5) 5.0%
		6) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	6) 6.7%	6) 8.6%
	<b>Spotsylvania Pop Rank = 14</b>	1) Public administration	1) 15.2%	1) 11.5%
		2) Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services	2) 14.8%	2) 9.1%
		3) Educational services, and health care and social assistance	3) 14.3%	3) 19.8%
		4) Retail trade	4) 12.1%	4) 14.2%
		5) Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services	5) 10.4%	5) 13.5%
		6) Construction	6) 9.4%	6) 7.8%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates and 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

Two industries (Retail trade, Educational services, and health care and social assistance) are ranked among the top six industries in each of the 31 counties and cities listed in Table 28. In 24 of Virginia’s counties and cities, higher percentages of employees with disabilities work in the Retail trade industry compared to those without disabilities working in Retail trade industry. In the Educational services, and health care and social assistance industry, twenty-three of the 31 counties and cities have lower percentages of employees with disabilities compared to those without disabilities except in Fairfax County. Fairfax County has an equal percentage rate of people with and without disabilities working in the Educational services, and health care and social assistance industry. Of the twenty-six counties and cities that provide a base for the Professional, scientific, and management, and administrative and waste management services industry, fifteen of the 26 counties and cities have higher percentages of employees with disabilities than those without disabilities. Twenty-four counties and cities rank Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services as one of their top 6 industries. One city, Richmond city, has an equal percentage of employees with disabilities working in Arts, entertainment, and recreation, and accommodation and food services when compared to employees without disabilities.

## United States Department of Labor Disability Employment Statistics

The U.S. Department of Labor provides monthly Disability Employment Statistics. The labor force participation rate refers to the percentage of non-institutionalized U.S. citizens who are in the labor force. The unemployment rate measures the percentage within the labor force who are currently without a job. The data indicates that labor force participation rates for individuals with disabilities is consistently one-third of the rate for individuals without disabilities. In addition, the unemployment rate for individuals with disabilities is consistently at least twice as high as those without disabilities.

Table 29 contains disability employment statistics for the last quarter of 2021 for those who are ages 16 and over. The data includes 2021 annual data.

Table 29

### *Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rates for PWD in the U.S.*

Group	Labor Force Participation Rates			
	21-Oct	21-Nov	21-Dec	Annual-21
People with Disabilities	22.4%	23.3%	22.3%	21.3%
People without Disabilities	67.1%	67.2%	67.2%	67.1%
Unemployment Rate				
People with Disabilities	9.1%	7.7%	7.9%	10.1%
People without Disabilities	4.0%	3.7%	3.5%	5.1%

Sources: <https://www.dol.gov/odep/> and <https://www.bls.gov/news.release/empsit.t06.htm>

## Cornell University Disability Employment Statistics

Cornell University provides online disability statistics. The following data is from the online resource regarding employment rates.

**Employment rate:** In 2018, an estimated 37% of non-institutionalized individuals with a disability, ages 16 to 64, regardless of ethnicity and education level, in the Nation were employed. In Virginia, the rate was estimated at 40.3%.

**Not working but actively looking for work:** In 2018, an estimated 7.3% of non-institutionalized individuals ages 21 to 64 years with a disability in the Nation who were not working, were actively looking for work. In Virginia, the estimate was 6.2%.

**Full-Time / Full-Year Employment:** In 2018, an estimated 24.3% of non-institutionalized individuals ages 21 to 64 years with a disability in the Nation were employed full-time / full-year. The estimate is 28.4% for Virginia, which is 4.1 percentage points higher than the Nation. Retrieved from Cornell University Disability Statistics website: [www.disabilitystatistics.org](http://www.disabilitystatistics.org)

Cornell University also provides online disability statistics regarding employment by disability type. The following data in Table 30 is from the online resource and contains the employment rates from 2018 for the Nation and the State by disability type. The categories are for non-institutionalized civilians ages 18 to 64, male and female, from all ethnic backgrounds and includes all education levels.

Table 30

*2018 Employment by Disability Type for Non-institutionalized Civilians Ages 18 to 64*

Disability Type	U.S. Percent Employed	Virginia Percent Employed
Any Disability	37.6%	41.0%
Visual Disability	45.1%	46.4%
Hearing Disability	53.3%	59.8%
Ambulatory Disability	25.5%	28.1%
Cognitive Disability	28.6%	33.5%
Self-Care Disability	16.1%	18.2%
Independent Living Disability	18.1%	27.1%

Source: <http://www.disabilitystatistics.org/>

Individuals ages 18 to 64 in Virginia with hearing and visual disabilities have higher employment rates (greater than 45%) than individuals with other disability types. Individuals with cognitive and ambulatory disabilities have employment rates ranging between 28.1 to 33.5%. Individuals with self-care disabilities have the lowest employment rates in Virginia.

### U.S. Census Bureau Statistics Labor Force Statistics

*The United States Census Bureau publishes a variety of statistics regarding people with disabilities and their participation in the labor force. The following three sets of statistics contain data regarding labor force participation and employment of people with disabilities by disability type.*

#### Labor Force Participation Rates (LFP)

*The labor force participation rate represents the proportion of the population that is in the labor force.*

Table 31 below provides data based on disability status and employment for ages 16 and over from the U.S. Census Bureau for the year 2019 for the Nation and the State.

Table 31

*LFP - Total Civilian Non-institutionalized Population (TCNP) Age 16 and Over: U.S. and State*

Labor Force Category	United States			Virginia		
	TCNP	With a Disability	No Disability	TCNP	With a Disability	No Disability
TCNP Age 16 and Over	258,478,337	38,438,308	220,040,029	6,650,578	945,943	5,704,635
Employed TCNP Age 16 and Over	158,739,032	9,487,038	149,251,994	4,228,958	259,305	3,969,653
Employed	61.4%	24.7%	67.8%	63.6%	27.4%	69.6%
Not in Labor Force	35.7%	72.7%	29.2%	33.8%	70.3%	27.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates

Of the total population age 16 years and older residing in the United States who report having a disability, 24.7% are employed and participating in the labor force, while approximately 72.7% are not in the labor force. Virginia's average for those who report a disability and are employed is 27.4% while 70.3% of those who report a disability are not engaged in the labor force.

### Employment to Population Ratio – People with Disabilities

*The employment-to-population ratio is a measure derived by dividing the civilian noninstitutional population 16 to 64 years who are employed by the total civilian noninstitutional population 16 to 64 years and multiplying by 100. The employment-to-population ratio indicates the ratio of civilian labor force currently employed to the total working-age population of the designated geographic area, which is different from the labor force participation rate because the labor force participation rate includes currently employed and those who are unemployed but actively looking for work.*

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics and the U.S. Census Bureau collect and analyze the employment-population ratio for people with disabilities by state, county and urban and rural geography. Table 32 contains the available 2019 1-year data for Virginia's counties and cities, including the State's urban and rural rates, for the population ages 18 to 64 years. No data is available for RO1.

Table 32

*Employment to Population Ratio for People with Disabilities Ages 18-64 Years*

<b>EMPLOYMENT TO POPULATION RATIO FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY</b>		
<b>State/ Urban – Rural/ County</b>		
<b>Geographic Area</b>		<b>Percent</b>
<b>United States</b>	<b>Total</b>	37.6
	<b>Urban</b>	38.5
	<b>Rural</b>	34.6
<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Total</b>	40.1
	<b>Urban</b>	43.7
	<b>Rural</b>	31.5
<b>Counties and Cities in Virginia</b>		
<b>RO2</b>	Arlington County	54.1
	Fairfax County	51.6
	Fauquier County	59.3
	Frederick County	54
	Loudoun County	58.2
	Prince William County	53.3
	Stafford County	50.5

<b>EMPLOYMENT TO POPULATION RATIO FOR PEOPLE WITH A DISABILITY</b>		
<b>State/ Urban – Rural/ County</b>		
<b>Geographic Area</b>		<b>Percent</b>
	Alexandria city	57.3
<b>RO3</b>	James City County	50.8
	York County	64.3
	Chesapeake city	37.7
	Hampton city	40
	Newport News city	48.3
	Norfolk city	34.2
	Portsmouth city	36.1
	Suffolk city	36.1
	Virginia Beach city	51.7
<b>RO4</b>	Chesterfield County	41.2
	Hanover County	35.7
	Henrico County	46.5
	Richmond city	36.7
<b>RO5</b>	Bedford County	26.1
	Danville (Micro Area)	21.3
	Lynchburg city	43.2
	Montgomery County	27.3
	Roanoke city	29
	Roanoke County	29.2
<b>RO6</b>	Albemarle County	35.9
	Augusta County	42.2
	Rockingham County	40.8
	Spotsylvania County	53.2

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates

The State's employment to population ratio for people with disabilities is 2.5 percent higher than the Nation's ratio. Virginia has a lower ratio of people with disabilities working in rural areas than urban and the difference is 12.2%. When compared to the Nation, Virginia's ratio of rural workers with disabilities is lower than the Nation's rural ratio by 3.1%. Danville in RO5 is considered a micro area in this data set and has the lowest employment to population ratio for

people with disabilities (21.3%). Note that Danville city ranks 43<sup>rd</sup> in the State for population and is 95.5 percent urban. Danville city's median household income ranks 123<sup>rd</sup> out of the 133 State counties and cities. Danville city's median earnings for people with disabilities ranks 119<sup>th</sup> out of 126 counties and cities (data is not available for all 133 county entities). York County in RO3, has the highest employment to population ratio for people with disabilities in the State and: 1) ranks 30<sup>th</sup> in population for the State; 2) ranks 13<sup>th</sup> for median household income; and 3) ranks 13<sup>th</sup> in the State for median earnings for people with disabilities.

### Employment Status by Disability Type

Employment status by disability type is estimated for the population ages 18 years to 64 years by the U.S. Census Bureau. The labor force participation rates among those reporting a visual disability in Virginia (including urban and rural areas), reflect the National averages. Table 33 contains one-year data from 2019 for the Nation and the State.

Table 33

*Employment Status by Disability Status and Type: U.S. and V.A.*

	US	US	US	VA	VA	VA
		Urban	Rural		Urban	Rural
<b>Total 18 - 64 years:</b>	197,503,214	161,149,453	36,353,761	5,117,865	3,943,265	1,174,600
<b>In labor force:</b>	78.0%	78.6%	75.5%	79.5%	80.5%	75.9%
<b>Employed:</b>	95.5%	95.4%	96.1%	96.0%	96.0%	96.2%
With a disability	5.4%	5.2%	6.2%	5.5%	5.2%	6.6%
With a vision disability	22.0%	22.0%	21.7%	22.2%	22.5%	21.5%
No disability	94.6%	94.8%	93.8%	94.5%	94.8%	93.4%
<b>Unemployed:</b>	4.5%	4.6%	3.9%	4.0%	4.0%	3.8%
With a disability	13.3%	13.0%	15.2%	12.3%	11.9%	13.6%
With a vision disability	17.6%	17.8%	16.9%	18.2%	16.4%	24.3%
No disability	86.7%	87.0%	84.8%	87.7%	88.1%	86.4%
<b>Not in labor force:</b>	22.0%	21.4%	24.5%	20.5%	19.5%	24.1%
With a disability	26.4%	25.3%	30.7%	25.2%	22.2%	33.4%
With a vision disability	16.2%	16.1%	16.6%	16.4%	15.4%	18.3%
No disability	73.6%	74.7%	69.3%	74.8%	77.8%	66.6%
LFP employed & unemployed w/ disability	5.7%	5.5%	6.6%	5.8%	5.4%	6.9%
LFP employed & unemployed w/o disability	94.3%	94.5%	93.4%	94.2%	94.6%	93.1%
Total Pop w/ disability	10.3%	9.8%	12.5%	9.7%	8.7%	13.3%
Total Pop w/o disability	89.7%	90.2%	87.5%	90.3%	91.3%	86.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates

Employment status by disability type statistics are available for five of the DBVI regional office areas. Table 34 details averages calculated from the available 2019 one-year county data. No data is available for RO1. This information is presented to help inform DBVI as it engages in strategic planning for the future.

Table 34

*Employment Status by Disability Status and Type: ROs*

	RO2	RO3	RO4	RO5	RO6
<b>Total 18 - 64 years:</b>	1,707,953	904,673	637,083	285,044	235,750
<b>In labor force:</b>	83.9%	79.1%	81.6%	71.8%	79.7%
<b>Employed:</b>	96.9%	94.7%	95.8%	96.3%	96.5%
With a disability	3.7%	6.6%	6.5%	4.8%	4.8%
With a vision disability	20.7%	26.4%	26.1%	21.4%	16.1%
No disability	96.3%	93.4%	93.5%	95.2%	95.2%
<b>Unemployed:</b>	3.1%	5.3%	4.2%	3.7%	3.5%
With a disability	10.0%	13.1%	15.4%	9.2%	6.2%
With a vision disability	12.5%	18.9%	26.0%	10.1%	0.0%
No disability	90.0%	86.9%	84.6%	90.8%	93.8%
<b>Not in labor force:</b>	16.1%	20.9%	18.4%	28.2%	20.3%
With a disability	15.3%	26.5%	25.4%	19.6%	22.6%
With a vision disability	11.9%	16.0%	21.7%	19.4%	8.9%
No disability	84.7%	73.5%	74.6%	80.4%	77.4%
LFP employed & unemployed w/ disability	3.9%	6.9%	6.9%	4.9%	4.9%
LFP employed & unemployed w/o disability	96.1%	93.1%	93.1%	95.1%	95.1%
Total Pop w/ disability	5.8%	11.0%	10.3%	9.1%	8.5%
Total Pop w/o disability	94.2%	89.0%	89.7%	90.9%	91.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates

The information noted above is offered as a glimpse into some general differences across the different Regions of Virginia. The data indicates that there are several areas where Virginia as a whole is outperforming the national average. However, there are Regions in Virginia that are below, and sometimes well below the national average. The project team is hopeful that DBVI will use the data to examine where they are allocating resources and align those with the areas of greatest need in the State.

The next section of the report includes agency-specific data obtained primarily from the case management system at DBVI. The 911 report from RSA and statistics from the Employment



and Training Administration (ETA) at the Department of Labor are also included in the proceeding section.

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***AGENCY-SPECIFIC DATA RELATED TO PERFORMANCE***

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In all of the areas related to the performance of DBVI that are presented in this report, it is important to recognize that the last quarter of PY 2019 and the entire period of PY 2020 was significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. All of the data on program performance must be interpreted through the lens of the impact on staff, consumers, community partners and businesses.

Table 35 below identifies various data elements that illustrate DBVI's overall program performance for the four-year period of this assessment.

Table 35  
*General Performance Data for DBVI 2015-2017*

Item	ALL CONSUMERS			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Applications	372	312	302	232
% of apps found eligible	89.3%	93.5%	95.4%	90.3%
Avg. time for eligibility determination	38.02	38.52	36.78	37.43
Significance of Disability				
Disabled	7	2	2	4
% of total	1.9%	0.6%	0.7%	1.7%
Significant	24	7	3	6
% of total	6.5%	2.2%	1.0%	2.6%
Most significant	341	303	297	222
% of total	91.7%	97.1%	98.3%	95.7%
% closed prior to IPE development	22.5%	7.7%	5.6%	15.5%
Plans developed	267	179	234	283
Avg. time from eligibility to plan (days) INCLUDING DELAYED STATUS IN OOS	192.79	264.51	224.8	97.11
Avg. time from eligibility to plan (days) excluding delayed status in OOS	81.45	42.79	46.74	23.12
Number of consumers in training by type				
Vocational	215	180	180	132

Item	ALL CONSUMERS			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Undergraduate	108	115	100	58
Graduate	37	16	22	28
Credential attainment rate	n/a	N/A	16.7%	61.8%
Measurable skill gain rate	19.5%	53.0%	82.6%	85.8%
Ave. length of open case (days) for cases closed other than rehabilitated	526.8	346.64	225.04	140.1
Ave. length of open case (days) for cases closed rehabilitated	345.65	275.43	319.46	213.3
Number of cases closed rehabilitated	135	140	103	89
Employment rate at exit	45.0%	47.0%	43.0%	44.0%
Employment rate in 2nd quarter after exit	n/a	42.2%	37.6%	39.9%
Employment rate in 4th quarter after exit	n/a	n/a	27.7%	30.2%
Median earnings of those closed as successfully rehabilitated	\$18.00	\$18.00	\$19.00	\$21.00
Total number of cases served	1138	1016	947	986
Avg. cost of cases closed rehabilitated	\$10,851.83	\$11,845.25	\$16,851.98	\$14,124.36
Avg. cost per case closed unsuccessful	\$3,860.90	\$3,874.09	\$5,340.54	\$4,168.89
Avg. cost per case closed prior to plan	\$370.83	\$149.93	\$72.74	\$26.83

The data indicates that the number of applications decreased by 38% from the highest point in PY 2017 to the lowest point in PY 2020. The sharpest decrease occurred from PY 2019-2020. This was unquestionably due to the pandemic which resulted in concern for personal and public safety, office closures, periods of limited access, and the shift to virtual service delivery. The 38% decrease that DBVI experienced was slightly less impactful than the 43% drop in applications experienced by all VR programs nationally during that same period.

Ninety percent of all applicants or more were found eligible for services in three of the four PYs under study and the average time for an eligibility determination was consistently between 36-38 days. Eligible individuals were almost exclusively determined to be individuals with most significant disabilities. The percent of individuals closed prior to IPE development increased by almost ten percent from PY 2019-2020, which is likely due to the impact of the pandemic. Interestingly, the number of plans developed during that same one-year period increased by 21%, reportedly due to an increased ability to serve individuals in delayed status due to the Order of Selection (OOS). The time from eligibility to plan was significant when factoring in the delay due to OOS, but when removing that delay, the time frame was one-third or less than the 90-days allowed by law.

DBVI reported that there were 218 participants in some type of training in PY 2020, which is a decrease of 84 from the prior year. This decrease is also likely due to the effect of the pandemic on participant engagement and school or training program interruption. For those participants in training, DBVI's credential attainment rate and measurable skill gains (MSG) rate were considerably higher than the national average. The credential attainment rate in PY 2020 was 61.8%, which is more than 38% higher than the national rate for all VR programs of 23.2%. The MSG rate was 85.8% in PY 2020, which was the highest of all VR programs in the country and 42.5% higher than the national average for all VR programs.

The employment rate at exit was consistent throughout the period covered by this assessment, ranging from a high of 47% in PY 2018 to a low of 43% in PY 2019. The exit rate of 44% in PY 2020 equaled the national employment rate at exit for all VR programs. An area of potential focus is the employment rate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit. The PY 2020 rate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit was 8.7% lower than the national average for all VR programs of 48.6%, and the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter after exit employment rate was 13.8% lower than the national average for all VR programs of 44%. It will be important for DBVI to determine if this data is valid as reported, and if so, determine why these employment rates are lagging behind the national averages for all VR programs. The average median earnings were at a high of \$21 per hour in PY 2021. The median earnings in the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter after exit for DBVI consumers in PY 2020 was \$5,540, which exceeds the national average for all VR programs by more than \$2,300 for the same time period. This is illustrative of the high-quality employment outcomes that DBVI consumers obtain as reported in the interviews completed for this assessment.

### Case Expenditures:

The project team examined the case service expenditures by category for DBVI for the four years under study. Table 36 below contains this information.

Table 36

#### *Case Service Expenditures*

<b>Expenditure by Service Category</b>				
<b>Service Category</b>	<b>Amount spent per year</b>			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Assessment	\$68,487	\$61,022	\$59,608	\$28,828
Clothing	\$1,428	\$789	\$744	\$1,110
Disability Related Augmentative Skills Training	\$210,669	\$43,385	\$59,082	\$23,231
Interpreter Services	\$70,069	\$13,497	\$22,199	\$1,777
Job Coach Training Services and Supported Employment	\$145,905	\$132,580	\$168,129	\$191,931
Job Readiness Training	\$8,110	\$5,103	\$5,900	\$5,975
Maintenance	\$615,425	\$558,333	\$359,725	\$265,857
Medical / Mental Health Treatment	\$86,811	\$24,185	\$25,357	\$34,231
On-the-Job Training	\$21,043	\$21,952	\$20,827	\$11,287

<b>Expenditure by Service Category</b>				
<b>Service Category</b>	<b>Amount spent per year</b>			
Other Goods and Services	\$213,061	\$102,012	\$82,840	\$130,872
Physical Restoration	\$30,687	\$20,023	\$10,016	\$20,422
Pre-ETS Cost Services	\$102,529	\$175,827	\$140,414	\$154,055
Reader Services	\$6,816	\$6,474	\$8,718	\$7,112
Rehabilitation Technology	\$233,772	\$156,734	\$219,053	\$276,715
Training - College and University	\$736,093	\$917,324	\$714,909	\$630,755
Training - Miscellaneous	\$59,553	\$57,876	\$30,422	\$17,078
Training - Occupational/Vocational	\$28,958	\$15,799	\$46,091	\$120,085
Transportation - Fuel/Travel	\$36,385	\$36,430	\$33,065	\$9,953
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$2,675,801</b>	<b>\$2,349,347</b>	<b>\$2,007,099</b>	<b>\$1,931,274</b>

The largest expenditure category for DBVI in all four years of the study was college and university training. This expenditure item ranged from 27.5% of all case service expenditures in PY 2017 to 39% in PY 2018. The rate in PY 2020 was 32.7%. Maintenance costs decreased from 23% of all expenditures in PY 2017 to 13.8% in POY 2020. Conversely, rehabilitation technology increased each year of the study, ranging from 8.7% of all expenditures in PY 2017 to 14.3% in PY 2020. This increase is very likely due to the cost of ensuring all DBVI participants had the AT and Internet access needed to participate in services remotely during the pandemic.

### Gender and Age:

The project team examined the age and gender of individuals served by DBVI. Table 37 contains the results of this analysis.

Table 37

#### *Gender and Age of Individuals Served by DBVI*

<b>Gender and Age of Individuals served</b>	<b>ALL CONSUMERS</b>			
	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
<b>Male</b>	50.4%	48.2%	47.7%	43.9%
<b>Female</b>	48.9%	49.0%	45.7%	43.8%
<b>24 and younger</b>	40.7%	43.2%	42.4%	42.8%
<b>25 - 64</b>	50.2%	47.7%	47.5%	47.2%
<b>65 and Older</b>	9.1%	9.1%	10.0%	10.0%

The data indicates that the ration of male to females served has been consistent for the four years of this study, with males receiving service at a slightly higher rate than females in every year except PY 2018. The rate of transition-age youth served by agency increased by more than two percent since PY 2017 and has remained steadily near 43% for the last three years. The rate of working-age adults served by DBVI has slightly decreased since PY 2018, while the rate of those

served that are 65 and over has slightly increased. Overall the rate of those served by age and gender have been very consistent for DBVI during the last four program years.

### Employment Outcomes:

An important measure of the performance of the organization is the type of employment outcomes obtained by the consumers served. The project team utilized RSA-911 data to examine agency employment outcomes by Standard Occupational Classification (SOC) code for DBVI compared to all other blind agency programs. The analyses are based upon cases closed with an employment outcome that also had a six-digit SOC code recorded for occupation at closure. Table 38 identifies these outcomes for 2020 by SOC categories and compares DBVI to all other blind agencies combined for the same year. In all of the areas marked with an asterisk, DBVI participants exited at a higher rate than the national average for Blind VR programs.

Table 38

#### *Employment Outcomes by SOC Code for 2020*

SOC Code Category	DBVI Frequency in 2020	All Blind VR Programs in 2020	Difference
* Management Occupations	8.0%	2.4%	5.6%
* Business and financial operations occupations	6.0%	1.4%	4.6%
* Computer and Mathematical Operations	6.0%	1.1%	4.9%
Architecture and engineering occupations	0.0%	0.7%	-0.7%
Life, physical and social science occupations	1.0%	0.5%	0.5%
Community and social science occupations	1.0%	2.9%	-1.9%
Legal occupations	2.0%	0.4%	1.6%
* Education, training and library occupations	8.0%	3.0%	5.0%
* Art, design, entertainment, sports and media occupations	3.0%	1.1%	1.9%
*Healthcare practitioners and technical occupations	8.0%	2.7%	5.3%
Healthcare support occupations	3.0%	4.1%	-1.1%
Protective service occupations	1.0%	1.6%	-0.6%
Food preparation and serving related occupations	10.0%	11.3%	-1.3%
Building and grounds cleaning and maintenance occupations	5.0%	9.3%	-4.3%

<b>SOC Code Category</b>	<b>DBVI Frequency in 2020</b>	<b>All Blind VR Programs in 2020</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Personal care and service occupations	3.0%	5.7%	-2.7%
Sales and related occupations	6.0%	8.5%	-2.5%
Office and administrative support occupations	12.0%	15.8%	-3.8%
Farming, fishing and forestry occupations	0.0%	0.6%	-0.6%
Construction and extraction occupations	1.0%	2.5%	-1.5%
Installation, maintenance, and repair occupations	1.0%	4.9%	-3.9%
Production occupations	4.0%	8.0%	-4.0%
Transportation and material moving occupations	0.0%	8.5%	-8.5%

The data indicates a higher percentage of DBVI participants exited in professional higher-skill jobs than the rate for all Blind VR programs. In the areas of management occupations, business and financial operations occupations, computer and mathematical operations education, training and library occupations and health care practitioners and technical occupations, DBVI exceeded the national average for all VR programs more than 4.5 %. This supports the data on earnings and the interview results that indicate DBVI consumers are getting career-level jobs.

The next section of the CSNA report includes the results of the surveys conducted for all of the different groups that participated in the assessment. The survey results include the findings for the questions that apply to each of the different sections of the report.

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### ***SURVEY RESULTS BY TYPE***

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## **INDIVIDUAL SURVEY RESULTS**

In the overall performance section of the report, we will present general information about the respondents to the individual survey. Results that are consistent with the other portions of the report will be reported in those sections.

Surveys were distributed electronically via Qualtrics, a web-based survey application. There were 96 individual surveys completed. In some cases, individual respondents chose not to answer select questions on the survey but did complete the entire survey and submit it. This accounts for the variance in survey responses in some questions.

### **Respondent Demographics**

Individual survey respondents were asked to identify their age.

The largest percentage of respondents were between the ages of 25 to 64 (80.2 percent) followed by individuals under 25 (11 percent). Table 39 identifies the age of respondents. A total of 91 respondents indicated their age.

Table 39

*Age of Respondents*

Age Range of Respondents	Number	Percent
25-64	73	80.2%
under 25	10	11.0%
65 and over	8	8.8%
<b>Total</b>	91	100.0%

Respondents were asked to identify the DBVI regional office they use to obtain services.

Slightly more than 26 percent of the respondents indicated that they are served by the Richmond Regional Office, which is ranked third highest in the State for population when compared to the other regional office areas. Results are detailed in Table 40.

Table 40

*Regional Office Served By*

RO Served By	Number	Percent
Richmond Region	24	26.1%
Fairfax Region	20	21.7%
Norfolk Region	19	20.7%
Roanoke Region	11	12.0%
Staunton Region	10	10.9%
I am not sure	5	5.4%
Bristol Region	3	3.3%
<b>Total</b>	92	100.0%

Individual survey respondents were presented with a checklist and asked to identify other disabilities they have in addition to blindness or visual impairment.

The majority of respondents (42.5 percent) indicated that they do not have any other disabling conditions. Mobility (13.8 percent) was the most frequently selected additional disability type indicated by respondents, followed by Deaf-Blind (12.3 percent). Five of the nine responses received in the category of “other” reported vision impairment or low vision as their additional disability and the four remaining responses cited specific disability and medical conditions. Table 41 summarizes the additional disabling conditions reported by the respondents.

Table 41

*Additional Disability of Respondents*

<b>Additional Disability</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
No impairment	34	42.5%
Mobility	11	13.8%
Deaf-Blind	10	12.3%
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	9	11.3%
Other (please describe)	9	11.3%
Mental Health	8	10.0%
Intellectual Disability (ID)	6	7.5%
Physical	5	6.3%
Traumatic Brain Injury	4	5.0%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	3	3.8%
Developmental Disability (DD)	2	2.3%
Alcoholism or substance abuse	1	1.3%
Communication	0	0.0%

**Association with DBVI**

Individuals who responded to the survey were presented with a question that asked them to identify the statement that best described their association with DBVI.

The majority of respondents (58.3 percent) indicated they were previous clients of DBVI, and their case had been closed. Nine individuals (9.4 percent of the 96 respondents) who selected “other” indicated that they were either a sister agency to DBVI, family members of past or current clients, employee of DBVI, previous client restarting the process, previous client unsure if their case has been closed, and one respondent cited unsure of their status with DBVI. The responses to this question appear in Table 42.



Table 42

*Respondent Association with DBVI*

Association with DVBI	Number	Percent
I am a previous client of DBVI, my case has been closed	56	58.3%
I am a current client of DBVI	29	30.2%
Other (please describe)	9	9.4%
I have never used the services of DBVI	2	2.1%
<b>Total</b>	96	100.0%

Individual survey respondents were presented with a question that asked them to identify the statement that best described their length of association with DBVI.

Although 31 percent of the respondents reported that they had been associated with DBVI for 2 to 5 years, almost 26.5 percent of the 87 respondents indicated that they have been associated with DBVI for 10 years or more. The responses to this question appear in Table 43.

Table 43

*Length of Association with DBVI*

Length of Association with DBVI	Number	Percent
2-5 years	27	31.0%
10 years or greater	23	26.4%
6-9 years	19	21.8%
Less than 1 year	10	11.5%
1 year	8	9.2%
<b>Total</b>	87	100.0%

**Relationship with Counselor**

Respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their relationship with their DBVI counselor.

Respondents were asked to indicate where they usually met with their counselor. According to the survey results, over 47 percent of the respondents do not have a DBVI counselor. This may be due to the fact that the respondents are served by DBVI outside of the VR program since the agency has numerous programs in addition to VR that serves individuals. The majority of meetings with counselors (roughly 30 percent) occur most frequently by phone and remote video conference. Table 44 details the meeting locations reported by respondents.

Table 44

*Meeting Location*

Meeting Location	Number	Percent
I don't have a DBVI counselor	35	47.3%
We meet remotely by phone	22	29.7%
I go to a DBVI office	11	14.9%
In my community/school	5	6.8%
We meet remotely by video conference	1	1.4%
<b>Total</b>	74	100.0%

A separate question asked respondents to indicate how many counselors they have had. Slightly more than 38 percent of the 76 respondents to the question reported that they have had one counselor. Respondents who either never had a counselor or have had three or more counselors make up 30.3 percent of the respondents (n=23). Table 45 includes the results from the survey.

Table 45

*Number of DBVI Counselors*

Number of DBVI Counselors	Number	Percent
1	29	38.2%
2	24	31.6%
3	15	19.7%
I have never had a DBVI counselor	4	5.3%
More than 4	3	4.0%
4	1	1.3%
<b>Total</b>	76	100.0%

Individual survey respondents were presented with a five-point response scale (with responses ranging from “usually” to “rarely”) and asked to indicate how often they were able to reach their counselor when they needed to. Roughly 63.5 percent of the respondents indicated that they were either always able to reach their counselor or they usually were able to reach their counselor when they needed to. The responses to this question are found in Table 46.

Table 46  
*Ability to Reach Counselor*

Ability to Reach Counselor	Number	Percent
Usually	24	33.8%
Always	21	29.6%
Sometimes	13	18.3%
Never	7	9.9%
Rarely	6	8.5%
<b>Total</b>	71	100.0%

Respondents were presented with another five-point response scale (with responses ranging from “excellent” to “terrible”) and asked to rate their ability to get along with their counselor. Slightly more than 72 percent of the 68 respondents selected either “excellent” or “good” when asked how well they get along with their counselor. The response results are identified in table 47.

Table 47  
*Getting along with Counselor*

Getting Along with Counselor	Number	Percent
Excellent	28	41.2%
Good	21	30.9%
So-so	13	19.1%
Poor	4	5.9%
Terrible	2	2.9%
<b>Total</b>	68	100.0%

### Remote DBVI Services

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, DBVI closed offices and modified service delivery for clients to include remote services. Individual survey respondents were asked two questions regarding the remote services.

Individual respondents were provided a list of services and asked to identify the types of services that were delivered to them remotely during to the Covid-19 pandemic. Almost 63 percent of the 75 respondents who answered the question indicated that they did not receive remote services during the pandemic. Roughly 38.5 percent (n=29) of respondents reported that they received remote services and identified a type of service. Individuals who selected the item “other” were given the opportunity to provide a narrative response. Three of the five narrative responses stated mobility training with two specifically addressing public transportation. One narrative response cited “Look for a job” and the other stated “None.” Table 48 summarizes the results regarding remote services.

Table 48  
*DBVI Services Delivered Remotely Since COVID*

<b>DBVI Services Delivered Remotely Since COVID</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
I have not received any services from DBVI remotely during the pandemic	47	62.7%
Assistive technology	13	17.3%
Career Counseling	11	14.7%
Job development and/or job placement	8	10.7%
Other (please describe)	7	9.3%
Benefits counseling	5	6.7%
Job support to keep a job	4	5.3%
<b>Total</b>	95	

The respondents who utilized remote services were asked to rate the effectiveness of the services that were delivered remotely. Twenty-four respondents answered the subsequent question.

The ratings for effectiveness of remote services is divided and suggests that remote services at DBVI may require additional improvements. Although roughly 29 percent of respondents indicated that remote services were either “extremely effective” or “effective,” about 29 percent of respondents indicated that remote services were not effective (less effective + not effective at all). Table 49 details the effectiveness ratings for remote services as cited by respondents.

Table 49  
*Effectiveness of Remote Services*

Effectiveness of Remote Services	Number	Percent
Extremely effective	7	29.2%
Effective	7	29.2%
Less effective	2	8.3%
Not effective at all	5	20.8%
Somewhat effective	3	12.5%
<b>Total</b>	24	100.0%

#### General Comments Related to Performance:

The final survey question presented to individual respondents asked if there was anything else that they would like to add to the survey regarding DBVI or its services. A total of 30 narrative responses were received. Five of the comments were positive, citing gratitude for DBVI services. Eight respondents wrote that they did not have anything additional to add by writing phrases such as “N/A” “No” or “None.” The remaining 17 comments provided suggestions for: improvement in communication, helpfulness, and relationships with clients; improving the knowledge of counselors regarding disability types and technology services; expanding services for those with higher degrees and transportation; hiring qualified counselors that skilled in the ability to provide appropriate job placement assistance that is tailored toward blindness and additional disabling conditions; and improving technology within DBVI.

#### STAFF SURVEY RESULTS:

A total of 59 valid staff surveys were completed. Questions appearing on the staff survey addressed four general areas:

- Services readily available to persons with disabilities
- Barriers to achieving employment goals
- Barriers to accessing DBVI services
- Desired changes in DBVI services

The results of the staff survey related to barriers to employment and access will be detailed in Section Two.

#### Staff Respondent Characteristics

Staff respondents were asked to identify where they primarily serve consumers from a list of six regional office areas (RO) and headquarters.

Each regional office area is represented in the survey. The majority of staff indicated that they primarily service the Richmond Region. Table 50 details the regional distribution of where staff respondents serve.

Table 50  
*Regional Office Area Primarily Served*

RO Primarily Serve	Number	Percent
Richmond Region	14	24.1%
Norfolk Region	10	17.2%
Roanoke Region	10	17.2%
Fairfax Region	8	13.8%
Staunton Region	6	10.3%
Headquarters	5	8.6%
Bristol Region	5	8.6%
<b>Total</b>	58	100.0%

Another survey question asked staff to indicate their job classification. A variety of staff positions are represented in the survey. Six staff respondents who selected the item “other,” provided narrative comments which specified their particular title. The quotes are:

- “*Business Relations Specialist*”
- “*Coordinator*”
- “*Rehab Teacher*”
- “*Rehab Tech Specialist*”
- “*Rehab Technology*”
- “*Visual Rehabilitation Teacher/Therapist*”

Table 51 clarifies the types of staff positions that are represented in the survey.

Table 51  
*Job Classification: Staff*

Job Classification	Number	Percent
Instructor	19	32.2%
Rehabilitation Counselor	12	20.3%
Supervisor, Manager or Administrator	9	15.3%
Other (please describe)	8	13.6%
Administration or Operations	6	10.2%
Support Staff	5	8.5%
<b>Total</b>	59	100.0%

### Staff Survey: Top Three Changes to Enable Staff to Better Serve DBVI Consumers

Staff were presented with a list of 12 options and asked to identify the top three changes that would enable them to better assist their consumers.

The top three changes identified by staff for the 2022 CSNA resembles the same results staff selected in the 2018 survey with one major change in ranking. In 2018 and 2022, staff identified smaller caseload, more streamlined processes, and more administrative support as the top three changes that would help them better serve consumers. “Better data management tools” was selected one time in 2018, making it the least ranking item staff cited that would help them better serve consumers. In 2022, “better data management tools” ranked in the fourth position, signifying a significant change in needs of staff members.

The item “increased outreach to clients in their community” dropped from the ninth position on the 2018 staff survey results list to the tenth position on the 2022 list. In 2018, the four least cited items were: increased outreach to clients in their community; decreased procurement time; more supervisor support; and better data management tools.

Five narrative responses were received in the category “other.” Quotes are:

- *“Better initial training for new staff”*
- *“Communication tool for texting”*
- *“COVID related issues have been the biggest impact with the inability to see clients”*
- *“Less data entry work, our day is consumed with clerical work”*
- *“More instructional staff at VRCBVI”*

Table 52 details the staff responses identifying the top three changes that would enable them to better serve DBVI consumers.

Table 52

*Top Three Changes That Would Enable Staff to Better Serve DBVI Consumers*

<b>Top Three Changes to Better Assist DBVI Consumers</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Smaller caseload	24	58.5%
More streamlined processes	24	58.5%
More administrative support	15	36.6%
Better data management tools	11	26.8%
Additional training	11	26.8%
Better assessment tools	7	17.1%
More effective community-based service providers	6	14.6%
Improved business partnerships	6	14.6%
Other (please describe)	5	12.2%
Increased outreach to clients in their communities	4	9.8%
Decreased procurement time	3	7.3%

Top Three Changes to Better Assist DBVI Consumers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
More supervisor support	3	7.3%
<b>Total</b>	119	

## PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

There were only 21 valid responses to the community partner survey in this iteration of the CSNA. It seems very likely that part of this low response rate is a result of the office closures due to the pandemic and the high turnover rate reported by many community partners at all levels.

### Partner Respondent Characteristics

The first survey question asked partner respondents to classify their organization. Fifty percent of respondents identified as an educational agency. One respondent identified as a workforce development system partner. None of the respondents indicated working for a state, federal or local agency that serves individuals with disabilities, nor did any respondents cite being a medical provider. The one respondent who selected “other, (please describe)” cited “employment services organization which is probably the same as community rehab program.”

Table 53 identifies the classifications indicated by the partner respondents.

Table 53

#### *Organization Type of Partner Survey Respondents*

Organization Type	Number	Percent
An educational agency	8	50.0%
A Community Rehabilitation Program	3	18.8%
I am an individual service provider	3	18.8%
A Workforce Development System partner	1	6.3%
Other (please describe)	1	6.3%
A health care provider	0	0.0%
Another State, Federal or local agency that serves individuals with disabilities	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	16	100.0%

The majority of the partner survey results are reserved for the other areas of this report and are included in the applicable sections.



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*INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS*

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**The following themes emerged on a recurring basis from the individual interviews and focus groups conducted for this assessment as it relates to overall program performance for DBVI:**

The COVID-19 pandemic dramatically affected DBVI as well as all VR programs nationally. There were multiple reports of the impacts of the pandemic (both negative and positive) reported from all of the groups interviewed for this assessment. These are reported throughout the report in the applicable areas but are summarized here because they impact the overall performance of the agency. Following are the recurring themes that emerged regarding the negative consequences of the pandemic:

1. The number of applications to DBVI and the number of employment outcomes experienced sharp declines during the pandemic;
2. Many consumers decided to put their rehabilitation plan on hold or asked to have their case closed due to concern for their health and fear of catching COVID-19 and becoming ill;
3. Consumer engagement with DBVI was adversely affected, especially in the first several months of the pandemic as some consumers were not set up for virtual functioning;
4. Several DBVI staff and partners, while successfully adapting to virtual service delivery, indicated that the quality of the counseling relationship in a virtual environment is not the same as in-person. Counselors and providers indicate that they are unable to establish the same “connection” or rapport with consumers remotely and that the assessment process that occurs from interacting with the person face-to-face is lost by distance;
5. Several participants indicated that virtual service delivery is very difficult for some services such as orientation and mobility training and independent living skills such as cooking. The inability to be in-person due to the pandemic significantly affected the quality of these services and all of the individuals interviewed in this area were very happy to be able to be back in-person with consumers for the delivery of these services; and
6. There are broadband and other connectivity issues prevalent in many rural areas, which limits the ability of some consumers to function remotely.

The following positive consequences of the shift to remote service delivery and telework as a result of the pandemic were cited by many participants:

1. One of the unanticipated positive consequences of the pandemic is that DBVI was able to clear all of the individuals off of the waiting list. The agency did not expend case service dollars at pre-pandemic levels because of the decline in the number of individuals served. This freed funding up to serve individuals on the OOS wait list;
2. DBVI was given high marks by all groups for the speed and efficiency with which they shifted to telework and remote service delivery. Considering the paradigm shift in the

way the agency operates, many people were complimentary of administration for effectively managing this change. DBVI did their best to ensure that staff had the technology and equipment to function remotely and implemented programs like electronic signatures to help the agency continue to serve consumers;

3. VRCBVI was especially praised for the speed and efficiency with which it shifted to remote service provision and training;
4. At the time of this assessment, DBVI staff were working a hybrid schedule because of the reduced COVID infection rates. Many staff expressed satisfaction with the ability to work from home and felt that it made them as or more productive than being in the office. Staff and providers expressed that they save time and money as a result of reduced travel costs;
5. Although applications have decreased during COVID, staff and partners indicate that business is starting to pick back up and they are optimistic about the future;
6. The pandemic forced DBVI to increase their online presence and capacity for consumers to virtually move through the rehabilitation process. This has been positive for many consumers, staff and partners; and
7. DBVI and VRCBVI were very creative in the development of virtual training, and the new platforms allowed the agency to reach many more individuals than they had when providing training in-person only. Outreach and training, especially for youth, increased significantly as a result of the shift to virtual training. DBVI has been recognized nationally among VR programs for the programs they have created during the pandemic.

In addition to themes related to the pandemic, the following areas emerged from the interviews and focus groups related to overall agency performance:

8. The community awareness of DBVI is lacking in many areas of the state and needs to increase. As the restrictions brought about by the pandemic wane, DBVI can refocus on effective outreach efforts;
9. Recruitment of qualified staff is a major need of the organization. It is difficult to find qualified individuals to hire, so the agency will need to examine ways to address this issue;
10. The administrative requirements for reporting by counselors were described as very time-consuming and burdensome, to such an extent that they directly affect the ability of staff to engage with consumers;
11. The quality of employment outcomes achieved by DBVI consumers was overwhelmingly noted as being very good. Consumers are prepared for in-demand jobs that are high in pay and career-level. These outcomes reflect the agency-wide belief in the abilities and capabilities of people with blindness. DBVI staff have high expectations for their consumers and work hard to convey those expectations to the individuals they serve; and
12. Although there have been some setbacks during the pandemic, the agency has improved the speed with which they are able to deliver services and technology to consumers since the previous CSNA.

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*RECOMMENDATIONS*

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**The following recommendations are offered to DBVI based on the results of the research in the Overall Agency Performance area:**

1. DBVI is encouraged to increase marketing and outreach efforts as the pandemic restrictions continue to be lifted throughout Virginia, while being cognizant of available fiscal and staff resources so that there is not a need to enter an order of selection again;
2. The agency is encouraged to actively recruit interns to help address the need for qualified counseling and instruction staff. DBVI is encouraged to embark on a “grow your own” program whereby consumers are supported to achieve their graduate degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and can serve as interns for the agency during their practicum requirements. This can result in a steady pipeline of qualified individuals to work for the agency upon graduation;
3. DBVI should continue the innovative work they are doing with virtual training and expand the opportunities in this area as resources allow;
4. DBVI is encouraged to identify and implement strategies and practices that can help reduce the administrative burden of gathering, tracking and reporting on counseling and direct service staff. The agency has considered participating in the SARA artificial intelligence pilot program with the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM). The agency should continue to pursue this possibility or look into programs or technology that may help in this area;
5. Where possible, DBVI should identify ways to streamline processes and reduce administrative duties of field staff; and
6. DBVI is encouraged to identify methods to ensure that the agency can gather and analyze data related to performance across multiple levels to support data-driven decision-making.

## **SECTION 2:**

### **NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT**

Section 2 includes an assessment of the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment. This section includes the rehabilitation needs of DBVI consumers as expressed by the different groups interviewed and surveyed. All of the general needs of DBVI consumers were included here, with specific needs identified relating to supported employment. Findings related to VRCBVI are included in this section.

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#### ***Recurring Themes Across all Data Collection Methods***

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The following themes emerged in the area of the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities including their need for supported employment:

1. Transportation and assistive technology were the two most commonly cited rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments. This need is consistent with other agency reports and past CSNAs and is common for this population.
2. Assistive technology is especially important for Deaf-Blind individuals.
3. Common recurring rehabilitation needs other than transportation and AT included training, soft-skills (especially for youth), benefits planning, self-advocacy training and work experience.
4. Individuals that receive either SSI or SSDI or both have significant fears about losing benefits due to work, especially medical insurance. This fear limits their return-to-work behavior, resulting in them looking for part-time work that keeps their earnings level below that which would remove them from support by SSA. Consequently, these individuals do not pursue self-sustaining employment and do not achieve desired levels of employment. This is a common issue for SSA beneficiaries served by all VR programs nationally. The importance of reaching these beneficiaries as youth and helping them strive for self-sufficiency was noted as critical.
5. The pandemic exposed the need for individuals to have available broadband Internet access.
6. It has become increasingly common for DBVI consumers to have a secondary mental health impairment in addition to blindness or a vision impairment. Staff and partners need training on how to effectively work with these individuals.
7. Supported and customized employment are not common strategies or practices utilized by DBVI.

8. VRCBVI was praised for providing excellent adjustment to blindness and independent living skills training to consumers. In addition, the center has worked to increase its vocational focus, though there is still room for growth in this area. They shifted to remote services and responded as effectively as possible to the pandemic's effect on a residential training program.

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***NATIONAL AND/OR AGENCY SPECIFIC DATA RELATED TO THE  
NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH THE MOST SIGNIFICANT  
DISABILITIES, INCLUDING THEIR NEED FOR SUPPORTED  
EMPLOYMENT:***

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In the course of this assessment there were numerous reports by staff and partners that there was an increasing number of individuals applying for and receiving services that had at least one secondary disability in addition to blindness or a vision impairment, and that many of these individuals have a mental health impairment that may or may not be diagnosed. The project team requested data from DBVI to examine this issue and Table 54 includes the available information related the number of applicants that report some type of secondary disability at the time they apply for services.

Table 54

*Secondary Disability of Applicants*

Secondary Disability Reported at Application	ALL CONSUMERS			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Physical impairment	183	79	266	205
<b>Percent of all applicants</b>	49.2%	25.3%	88.1%	88.4%
Communicative impairment	16	13	4	3
<b>Percent of all applicants</b>	4.3%	4.2%	1.3%	1.3%
ID/DD or other cognitive impairment	10	8	12	6
<b>Percent of all applicants</b>	2.7%	2.6%	4.0%	2.6%
Mental health impairment	16	13	18	18
<b>Percent of all applicants</b>	4.3%	4.2%	6.0%	7.8%

The data indicates that of the applicants that reported a secondary disability, more than 88% reported a physical disability in PY 2018 and 2019. Mental health impairments only constituted 7.8% of all reported secondary impairments. This seems like a very low rate compared to the frequency with which interview participants reported mental health issues those served. This issue warrants further investigation by DBVI to determine if mental health impairments are being under-reported and/or undiagnosed and untreated.

**Supported Employment:**

The project team requested information on individuals receiving supported employment (SE) services and those individuals that are Social Security Administration (SSA) disability beneficiaries. There was limited information available on these two populations of consumers, but DBVI was able to identify those individuals identified as receiving SSA benefits at the time of application and those anticipated to need SE services when a plan was developed for the project period. This information is contained in Table 55.

Table 55

*SE and SSA Beneficiaries Served by DBVI*

<b>Item</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Supported Employment	10	5	8	6
<b>Percent of all applicants</b>	2.7%	1.6%	2.6%	2.6%
SSA Beneficiary	185	190	146	102
<b>Percent of all applicants</b>	49.7%	60.9%	48.3%	44.0%

The data indicates that DBVI is serving very few individuals utilizing the SE service model. This data is consistent with the feedback received during the individual and focus group interviews. Almost half of all applicants indicated that they were SSA beneficiaries of some type when they applied for services in PY 2017. This rate increased to more than 60% in PY 2018 and decreased to 44% in PY 2020. The SSA beneficiary status is an important influencing factor on the return-to-work behavior of individuals served by DBVI. This issue will be addressed in the summary of the recurring themes from the individual and focus groups interviews.

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***SURVEY RESULTS BY TYPE***

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**INDIVIDUAL SURVEY – EMPLOYMENT RELATED NEEDS**

**Receipt of Social Security Disability Benefits**

Individual survey respondents were presented with a checklist and asked to indicate whether they received Social Security disability benefits. The total number of respondents who answered this question is 89. The most common response to the question regarding Social Security benefits was “I receive SSDI.” Results indicate that 31.5 percent do not receive Social Security benefits. Table 56 summarizes the responses to this question. It should be noted that 89 individuals responded to the question and respondents were allowed to select more than one response in the series of items (e.g., in the case of an individual who received both SSI and SSDI).

Table 56

*Social Security Benefit Status*

<b>Social Security Benefits Status</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
I receive SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance. SSDI is provided to individuals that have worked in the past and is based on the amount of money the individual paid into the system through payroll deductions)	34	38.20%
I do not receive Social Security disability benefits	28	31.50%
I have received benefits in the past, but no longer receive them	14	15.70%
I receive SSI (Supplemental Security Income. SSI is a means-tested benefit generally provided to individuals with little or no work history)	11	12.40%
I receive a check from the Social Security Administration every month, but I do not know which benefit I get	4	4.50%
I don't know if I receive Social Security disability benefits	1	1.10%
<b>Total</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Finances and Money Management**

Respondents of the individual survey were asked a series of questions regarding finances and money management.

Respondents were given a list of statements and asked to rate how well each of the statements describe their financial situation. For each statement, the item “somewhat” was selected most frequently by respondents. When analyzing the results for each item the following inferences are revealed:

- 1) Roughly one-third of the respondents believe they will never have the things they want in life while one-third believe they will obtain their wants;
- 2) Almost 38 percent of respondents do not believe they are getting by financially; and
- 3) Over 42 percent of respondents express concern that their money will not last

Table 57 details the ratings for each of the statements.

Table 57  
*Financial Situation*

Individual Survey: Financial Situation	Completely		Very Well		Somewhat		Very Little		Not at All		Number of Times Selected
	#	Percent of Total	#	Percent of Total	#	Percent of Total	#	Percent of Total	#	Percent of Total	
Because of my money situation, I feel like I will never have the things I want in life	12	18.50%	10	15.40%	21	32.30%	8	12.30%	14	21.50%	65
I am just getting by financially	12	18.20%	8	12.10%	21	31.80%	10	15.20%	15	22.70%	66
I am concerned the money I have, or will have, won't last	15	22.70%	13	19.70%	17	25.80%	10	15.20%	11	16.70%	66

Individual survey respondents were also presented a checklist of statements regarding money management and asked to indicate whether the item represents how they manage money.

Although the majority of respondents indicated they have monthly budgets in addition to savings and checking accounts, the majority of respondents indicated they do not invest money, nor do they want to learn more about managing money. Table 58 details the results.

Table 58  
*Managing Money*

Individual Survey: Managing Money	Yes		No		Number of Times Selected
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	
I have a checking account	61	98.4%	1	1.6%	62
I have a monthly budget	49	77.8%	14	22.2%	63
I have a savings account	48	78.7%	13	21.3%	61
I invest my money	22	38.6%	35	61.4%	57



Individual Survey: Managing Money	Yes		No		Number of Times Selected
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	
I would like to learn more about managing my money	16	28.1%	41	71.9%	57

Respondents were presented a five-point response scale (with responses ranging from “always” to “never”) and asked the question: “How often do you have money left over at the end of each month?” Of the 70 individuals who answered the question, the rating of “sometimes” was selected by more than 31 percent of respondents and 38.6 percent selected either “rarely” or “never”. Table 59 summarizes the details reported by respondents.

Table 59

*Money Left by the End of the Month*

Money Left by the End of the Month	Number	Percent
Sometimes	22	31.4%
Rarely	16	22.9%
Often	11	15.7%
Never	11	15.7%
Always	10	14.3%
<b>Total</b>	70	100.0%

The final survey question in the series regarding finances, individual survey respondents were presented a five-point response scale (with responses ranging from “always” to “never”) and asked to indicate how often they feel like finances control their life. About 53 percent of the respondents selected either “always” or “often” while slightly more than 24 percent selected “rarely” or “never.” Table 60 includes this information.

Table 60  
*Finances Control Life*

<b>Finances Control Life</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Often	20	28.6%
Always	17	24.3%
Sometimes	16	22.9%
Rarely	11	15.7%
Never	6	8.6%
<b>Total</b>	70	100.0%

### **Services from Virginia Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)**

Individual survey respondents were presented with a series of questions regarding their experience with Virginia Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI).

Seventy-one respondents answered the question whether or not they attended and completed the VRCBVI program. The majority of the respondents (84.5%) did not attend the program. Two respondents selected the item “Yes, but did not complete the program.” However, three survey respondents answered the subsequent question “Why did you not complete VRCBVI?” The narrative cited in the category “other” for the subsequent question indicated the respondent found a job within the organization.

Tables 61 and 62 detail the responses to the questions regarding attending and completing the VRCBVI program.

Table 62  
*Attending and Completing the VRCBVI Program*

<b>Attend and Complete VRCBVI Program</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No, I did not attend VRCBVI	60	84.5%
Yes, and I completed the program	9	12.7%
Yes, but I did not complete the program	2	2.8%
<b>Total</b>	71	100.0%

Table 62  
*Why VRCBVI Program Not Completed*

Why VRCBVI Program Not Completed	Number	Percent
The program was too long	2	66.7%
Other (please describe)	1	33.3%
Health issues	0	0.0%
I was dismissed from the program	0	0.0%
Family issues	0	0.0%
I was not pleased with the instruction	0	0.0%
I had difficulty getting along with others	0	0.0%
Mental health concerns prevented me from completing	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Individual survey respondents were asked to rate a series of questions regarding the quality and helpfulness of services at the Virginia Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired using a five-point scale (excellent, good, average, poor, did not receive the training). Tables 63–70 summarize the responses.

Table 63  
*Quality of Orientation and Mobility Training*

Quality of the Orientation and Mobility Training at VRCBVI	Number	Percent
Excellent	7	58.3%
Good	4	33.3%
Average	1	8.3%
Poor	0	0.0%
I did not receive Orientation and Mobility training	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 64  
*Quality of Braille Training*

Quality of the Braille Training at VRCBVI	Number	Percent
Excellent	5	41.7%
I did not receive Braille training	4	33.3%
Good	3	25.0%
Average	0	0.0%
Poor	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	12	100.0%

Table 65  
*Quality of the Computer, and Technology Training*

Quality of the Keyboarding, Computer, and Access Technology Training at VRCBVI	Number	Percent
Excellent	6	50.0%
Good	4	33.3%
I did not receive keyboarding, computers and access technology training	2	16.7%
Average	0	0.0%
Poor	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	12	100.0%

Table 66  
*Quality of the Personal Home Management/Cooking Training*

Quality of the Personal Home Management/Cooking Training at VRCBVI	Number	Percent
Excellent	6	50.0%
Good	4	33.3%
Average	1	8.3%

<b>Quality of the Personal Home Management/Cooking Training at VRCBVI</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
I did not receive personal home management/cooking training	1	8.3%
Poor	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	12	100.0%

Table 67

*Quality of the Adult Basic Education Training*

<b>Quality of the Adult Basic Ed Training at VRCBVI</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	7	58.3%
Good	2	16.7%
I did not receive adult basic education training	2	16.7%
Average	1	8.3%
Poor	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	12	100.0%

Table 68

*Quality of the Wellness Instruction and Recreation Training*

<b>Quality of the Wellness Instruction and Recreation Training at VRCBVI</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	5	41.7%
Good	4	33.3%
I did not receive wellness instruction and recreation training	3	25.0%
Average	0	0.0%
Poor	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	12	100.0%

Table 69  
*Quality of the Health Services Training*

Quality of the Health Services Training at VRCBVI	Number	Percent
Excellent	5	41.7%
Good	3	25.0%
I did not receive health services training	3	25.0%
Average	1	8.3%
Poor	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	12	100.0%

Table 70  
*Quality of the Vocational Services*

Quality of the Vocational Services Training at VRCBVI	Number	Percent
Excellent	5	41.7%
Good	3	25.0%
Average	2	16.7%
I did not receive vocational services training	2	16.7%
Poor	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	12	100.0%

The sample size is small (n=12) for rating the VRCBVI training and is consistent for all eight training courses offered. The item choice “poor” was not selected by respondents when answering the questions related to the eight training courses offered at VRCBVI.

Of all the training courses offered at the VRCBVI, two courses (orientation and mobility training, adult basic education training) received the highest “excellent” rating (over 58%). Note that all twelve respondents attended the orientation and mobility training course, and ten of the 12 respondents attended the adult basic education course.

When analyzing the ratings of “excellent” and “good” combined, slightly more than 91.5 percent of 12 respondents that participated in the orientation and mobility training found the quality of

the class to be either “excellent” or “good.” An equal percentage of respondents (83.3%) found the quality of the personal home management/cooking training and the quality of keyboarding, computer, and access technology training to be either “excellent” or “good.” The personal home management/cooking training course was the second highest attended course (n=11) by survey respondents and the technology training was attended by ten of the twelve respondents.

The majority of respondents that answered the question regarding the quality of the Braille training at the VRCBVI indicated the training was “excellent.” The choice “I did not receive Braille training” received the second highest rating (33.3%). The Braille training was attended by eight of the 12 survey respondents, the lowest attended course by survey respondents.

Nine survey respondents attended the wellness instruction and recreation training and the health services training provided by the VRCVBI. The “excellent” rating for each training was slightly less than 42 percent. The vocational services training course was attended by ten of 12 respondents and received the highest “average” quality rating (16.7%).

Individual survey respondents were asked two questions regarding the preparedness they experienced as a result to the training they received at VRCBVI. Tables 71-72 detail the results.

Table 71

*Preparedness to Live Independently*

<b>Preparedness to Live Independently as a Result of Training Received</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very prepared	8	72.7%
Moderately prepared	2	18.2%
Not at all prepared	1	9.1%
Minimally prepared	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	11	100.0%

Table 72

*Preparedness to Go to Work*

<b>Preparedness to Go To Work as a Result of Training Received</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very prepared	7	63.6%
Moderately prepared	3	27.3%
Not at all prepared	1	9.1%
Minimally prepared	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

The sample size is small (n=11) for rating the preparedness to live independently and preparedness to go to work after receiving VRCBVI training. The item choice “minimally prepared” was not selected by respondents when answering the questions related to preparedness.

The majority of respondents selected “very prepared” when rating the level of preparedness they experienced after completing training to live independently (72.7%) and go to work (63.6%). The information reflects the responses received regarding the eight training courses as the orientation and mobility, adult education, and the personal home management/cooking training courses each had quality ratings of “excellent” of 50 percent or more. Technology and vocational trainings had “excellent” ratings between 40 to 50 percent.

### **Barriers to Employment**

Individual survey respondents were asked a series of questions to identify barriers to employment and to accessing DBVI services.

Respondents were presented with a list of 19 potential barriers to getting a job and asked to indicate whether or not the item had been a barrier that impacted their ability to obtain a job. There was no limit to the number of barriers that an individual survey respondent could choose.

“Employer concerns about my ability to do the job due to my disability” was the most frequently chosen item as a barrier to employment, selected by roughly 69 percent of the respondents.

“Lack of reliable transportation” was selected by 64 percent of the respondents as a barrier to getting a job. The margin between lack of available jobs as a barrier or not a barrier for obtaining employment (16.6 percent) signals that a large number of respondents have experienced difficulty finding work due to the number of jobs available despite. The margin between mental health concerns as a barrier or not a barrier for obtaining employment (63.8 percent) signals that a large number of respondents do not believe they experienced difficulty finding work due to mental health. The five items that received a seven percent response rate or less as being a barrier



to getting a job include: lack of housing, criminal record, limited English skills, substance abuse, and lack of childcare. Table 73 summarizes the barriers and the impact on getting a job.

Table 73

*Individual Survey: Identifying Barriers to Getting a Job*

Individual Survey: Barriers to Getting a Job	Yes, has been a Barrier		Not a Barrier		Number of Times Selected
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	
Employer concerns about my ability to do the job due to my disability	51	68.9%	23	31.1%	74
Lack of reliable transportation	48	64.0%	27	36.0%	75
Employers hesitant to hire people with disabilities	46	60.5%	30	39.5%	76
Lack of available jobs	30	41.7%	42	58.3%	72
Lack of training	27	37.5%	45	62.5%	72
Lack of assistive technology	25	33.3%	50	66.7%	75
Lack of job skills	23	32.4%	48	67.6%	71
Lack of job search skills	23	31.9%	49	68.1%	72
Concern over loss of Social Security benefits due to working	21	28.8%	52	71.2%	73
Lack of reliable Internet access	17	24.3%	53	75.7%	70
Lack of education	15	21.1%	56	78.9%	71
Mental health concerns	13	18.1%	59	81.9%	72
Lack of attendant care	11	15.3%	61	84.7%	72
Age	8	11.1%	64	88.9%	72
Lack of housing	5	7.0%	66	93.0%	71

Individual Survey: Barriers to Getting a Job	Yes, has been a Barrier		Not a Barrier		Number of Times Selected
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	
Criminal Record	3	4.2%	68	95.8%	71
Limited English skills	3	4.3%	67	95.7%	70
Substance abuse	1	1.4%	71	98.6%	72
Lack of childcare	1	1.4%	72	98.6%	73

Respondents were presented with a list and were asked to identify the top three barriers that they have faced specifically toward getting a job. A total of 66 respondents answered the question. Lack of reliable transportation, employer concerns about my ability to do the job due to my disability, and employers hesitant to hire people with disabilities were the three top items selected by respondents, matching the top three responses in the Table 73. The last three items on this list also resemble the last three items on the list in the previous table. Table 74 contains a summary of the responses to the question.

Table 74

*Individual Survey: Top Three Barriers to Getting a Job*

Top Three Barriers to Getting a Job	Times identified as a barrier	Percent of number of respondents
Lack of reliable transportation	33	50.0%
Employer concerns about my ability to do the job due to my disability	28	42.4%
Employers hesitant to hire people with disabilities	25	37.9%
Concern over loss of Social Security benefits due to working	15	22.7%
Lack of assistive technology	14	21.2%
Lack of available jobs	13	19.7%

<b>Top Three Barriers to Getting a Job</b>	<b>Times identified as a barrier</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Lack of education	10	15.2%
Lack of training	10	15.2%
Lack of job skills	8	12.1%
Lack of job search skills	6	9.1%
Mental health concerns	5	7.6%
Lack of reliable Internet access	4	6.1%
Criminal Record	2	3.0%
Lack of attendant care	2	3.0%
Lack of housing	2	3.0%
Limited English skills	1	1.5%
Substance abuse	1	1.5%
Lack of childcare	0	0.0%

Respondents were presented with an open-ended question asking them to identify other barriers that they may have experienced that prevented them from getting a job. There were 17 individuals that provided a narrative response to this question and three comments cited no other barriers. Content analysis of the remaining responses indicated a variety of specific circumstances that prevented respondents from obtaining a job including: lack of work from home options; inability to drive; social security suspended and not working because sight has gotten worse; college student without time to work; inability to complete education that is needed for career; and lack of job coaches. The Covid pandemic was noted by one respondent. Two narrative comments detailed that the respondent was employed but had experienced barriers to either getting another job, or, barriers kept the respondent from keeping a job. Disability discrimination was reported in three narrative comments, and assistive technology issues were reported in two comments.

### Barriers to Accessing DBVI Services

Individual survey respondents were presented with a list describing potential barriers to accessing DBVI services and asked to indicate whether or not the barriers had made it difficult to access the services. There was no limit to the number of barriers the respondent could choose.

Analysis of the responses indicate a small number of individuals experience barriers to accessing DBVI services. Each item on the list was cited as “not a barrier” by more than half of respondents.

“Lack of information about available jobs” was the most frequently cited barrier to accessing DBVI services by the minority of respondents. The margin between lack of information about available services as a barrier or not a barrier for obtaining employment (27.6 percent) signals that a significant number of respondents have experienced difficulty finding work due to the lack of information regarding job availability.

Two items were cited as barriers to accessing DBVI services with percentage rates between 20 and 21 percent. The least common barriers chosen by respondents, receiving less than a 6.5% rate, were: DBVI's hours of operation; difficulties completing the DBVI application; and language barriers. Table 75 contains a summary of the responses to the question.

Table 75

*Individual Survey: Barriers to Accessing DBVI Services*

Individual Survey: Barriers to Accessing DBVI Services	Yes, has been a Barrier		Not a Barrier		Number of Times Selected
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	
Lack of information about available services	25	36.2%	44	63.8%	69
The DBVI office is not on a public bus route	13	20.3%	51	79.7%	64
Other difficulties with DBVI staff	13	21.0%	49	79.0%	62
Lack of disability-related accommodations	12	17.9%	55	82.1%	67
Difficulties scheduling meetings with my counselor	12	18.5%	53	81.5%	65
Difficulty reaching DBVI staff	12	18.5%	53	81.5%	65

Individual Survey: Barriers to Accessing DBVI Services	Yes, has been a Barrier		Not a Barrier		Number of Times Selected
	Number	Percent of Total	Number	Percent of Total	
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)	10	16.1%	52	83.9%	62
Reliable Internet access	10	16.1%	52	83.9%	62
DBVI's hours of operation	4	6.4%	59	93.7%	63
Difficulties completing the DBVI application	3	4.6%	62	95.4%	65
Language barriers	2	3.1%	62	96.9%	64

Individual survey respondents were presented a subsequent question with a list and asked to identify the three top barriers to accessing DBVI services. The most frequently selected item on the list, chosen by roughly 43 percent of the 65 individuals who answered the question, was the phrase “I have not had any barriers to accessing DBVI services.” The barriers that were identified in table 75 below are in a different ranking order from table 74 above with the exception of the top barrier cited. The difference in ranking order may be due to the varying number of respondents who answered each question. Table 76 lists the barriers along with the number of times each barrier was cited.

Table 76

*Individual Survey: Top Three Barriers to Accessing DBVI Services*

Top Three Barriers to Accessing DBVI Services	Times identified as a barrier	Percent of number of respondents
I have not had any barriers to accessing DBVI services	28	43.1%
Lack of information about available services	25	38.5%
Difficulty reaching DBVI staff	11	16.9%
Lack of disability-related accommodations	8	12.3%
Other difficulties with DBVI staff	7	10.8%

<b>Top Three Barriers to Accessing DBVI Services</b>	<b>Times identified as a barrier</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
The DBVI office is not on a public bus route	6	9.2%
Difficulties scheduling meetings with my counselor	6	9.2%
Reliable Internet access	6	9.2%
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)	5	7.7%
Difficulties completing the DBVI application	2	3.1%
Language barriers	1	1.5%
DBVI's hours of operation	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	105	

Respondents were presented with a “yes-no” question asking them if there was any other challenges or barriers not already mentioned that made it difficult to access DBVI services. Seventy-two respondents answered the question and 14 individuals indicated “yes.” Thirteen narrative responses were received. Content analysis of the narrative responses revealed the following: concern over the lack of communication/responsiveness, lack of assistance from of DBVI counselors; lack of local support; problems related to transportation; DBVI website not section 508 compliant; lack of knowledge on the part of other professionals regarding the existence of DBVI services; lack of education assistance and IEP issues; and limited career options. The Covid pandemic was mentioned in one narrative comment.

### **Employment Goals**

Individual survey respondents were asked a series of questions regarding their employment goals and their future plans.

Respondents were asked an open-ended question asking them to identify their current employment goal. A total of 53 survey participants responded to the question. Content analysis of the narrative responses cited a wide variety of occupations, from items requiring 4-year college or university level education such as becoming a counselor or licensed therapist, teacher for Deaf-Blind, or working for the federal government. Non-university level careers also appeared in the narrative responses such as becoming an administrative assistant and becoming a cleaning captain. Other responses included items such as finding a job, finding part time employment and work from home jobs, desiring a career, improving the personal financial

situation, finishing education, owning a business, finding a better paying job, moving up the career ladder, and retaining the present job.

Respondents answered a follow-up yes-no question: “Has DBVI helped you to progress towards your employment goal?” The majority of respondents indicated that DBVI helped them make progress towards their employment goal. Table 77 details the number of times a response choice was selected, and the percentage rate based on the number of respondents who answered the question.

Table 77

*DBVI Helped Progress to Employment Goal*

<b>DBVI Helped Progress to Employment Goal</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	45	60.0%
No	24	32.0%
I have not worked with DBVI	6	8.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Individual survey respondents were asked a yes-no question requesting them to indicate whether or not they had received services from an organization or individual that DBVI referred them to. The majority of respondents indicated that they did not receive services as the result of a DBVI referral. Table 78 details the results.

Table 78

*Use of DBVI Referral*

<b>Use of DBVI Referral</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	41	58.6%
Yes	22	31.4%
I am not sure	7	10.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they had thought about what their next job would be once they attained their current employment goal. The difference between the number of “yes” responses compared to the number of “no” responses is one (n=1). Table 79 summarizes the results.

Table 79  
*Thought Towards Next Job*

Thought Towards Next Job	Number	Percent
No	27	39.1%
Yes	26	37.7%
I don't know	16	23.2%
<b>Total</b>	69	100.0%

Individual survey respondents were asked to indicate whether or not they will need more training or help to obtain their next job. Twenty-eight respondents answered the question and five indicated that they would not require additional training nor assistance to obtain their next job. Table 80 contains the results to the question.

Table 80  
*Need More Training or Help to Get Next Job*

Need More Training or Help to Get Next Job	Number	Percent
Yes	13	46.4%
I don't know	10	35.7%
No	5	17.9%
<b>Total</b>	28	100.0%

Individual respondents were asked an open-ended question asking them to provide suggestions on how DBVI could change their services to help get a job, keep the current job or get a better job. A total of 46 survey participants responded to the question. Five comments provided positive affirmations of DBVI services, five comments detailed negative feedback, and six narrative comments expressed no recommendations due to uncertainty or not applicable. Content analysis of the remaining 30 comments include: hiring qualified counselors, treating people with kindness, actively listen and be actively involved, provide more than one way to access services and to message or contact someone, follow-up with clients regularly, improve transportation options, provide job options that are tailored to the client's qualifications, provide job options that are above entry level positions.



## PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

### **Partner Survey: Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – General DBVI Consumers**

Partner survey respondents were given a list of 19 reasons why a consumer may find it difficult to achieve employment goals. Respondents were asked to identify if the reason was a barrier that prevents consumers from achieving their employment goals. If the item was identified as a barrier, respondents were also asked to identify whether or not the barrier is being adequately addressed by DBVI. There was no limit to the number of barriers that a respondent could choose.

Partner and individual survey respondents were presented a similar question for identifying barriers to achieving employment goals and had slightly different item lists to choose barriers from. A smaller sample size is noted for partner respondents. For about one-half of the list items (10 out of 19), partner respondents did not know if the item was a barrier for consumers. One item the majority of partners cited “Don’t know” was the item “other transportation issues.” “Other transportation issues” is comparable to the item presented to individual respondents “lack of reliable transportation.” “Lack of reliable transportation” is the second most frequently identified barrier by the individual respondents in the similar individual survey question and cited as the top barrier to achieving employment goals by individuals in a follow-up question. Partners cited items that related to the lack of consumer skills and lack of disability-related accommodations most frequently as barriers to achieving employment goals. Conversely, individual respondents most frequently selected the items related to employers’ perceptions about the employee’s abilities and employers’ hesitation to hire people with disabilities from the list of potential barriers. About one-half of partner respondents (n=6) do not believe DBVI is addressing social skills nor disability-related transportation barriers adequately. Table 81 lists the items presented to partner respondents along with the number of times each of the items was cited as a barrier, and the percentage rates of the number of respondents who selected the item.

Table 81

*Partner Survey: Identifying Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals*

Potential Reason	Times chosen as a Barrier		Barrier, adequately addressed	Barrier, NOT adequately addressed	Not a barrier	Don't know	Total
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	
Not having job search skills	11	84.6%	69.2%	15.4%	7.7%	7.7%	13
Not having disability-related accommodations	11	84.6%	46.2%	38.5%	7.7%	7.7%	13
Not having education or training	10	76.9%	46.2%	30.8%	7.7%	15.4%	13
Not having job skills	10	76.9%	46.2%	30.8%	15.4%	7.7%	13
Poor social skills	9	69.2%	23.1%	46.2%	15.4%	15.4%	13
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	9	69.2%	46.2%	23.1%	0.0%	30.8%	13
Disability-related transportation issues	9	69.2%	23.1%	46.2%	7.7%	23.1%	13
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	7	53.9%	23.1%	30.8%	7.7%	38.5%	13
Language barriers	6	46.2%	23.1%	23.1%	15.4%	38.5%	13
Other transportation issues	5	41.7%	8.3%	33.3%	8.3%	50.0%	12
Not enough jobs available	4	30.8%	7.7%	23.1%	15.4%	53.9%	13

Potential Reason	Times chosen as a Barrier		Barrier, adequately addressed	Barrier, NOT adequately addressed	Not a barrier	Don't know	Total
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	
Lack of help with disability-related personal care	4	30.8%	23.1%	7.7%	15.4%	53.9%	13
Housing issues	4	30.8%	7.7%	23.1%	7.7%	61.5%	13
Substance abuse issues	3	23.1%	7.7%	15.4%	15.4%	61.5%	13
Other health issues	3	23.1%	15.4%	7.7%	15.4%	61.5%	13
Childcare issues	3	23.1%	0.0%	23.1%	7.7%	69.2%	13
Convictions for criminal offenses	2	15.4%	15.4%	0.0%	15.4%	69.2%	13
Mental health issues	2	16.7%	8.3%	8.3%	16.7%	66.7%	12
Other (please describe)	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0

### Partner Survey: Top Three Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – General DBVI Consumers

Partner survey respondents were given a list of 19 barriers, including an option for “other”, and were asked to identify the top three barriers that prevent the general population of DBVI consumers from achieving their employment goals. There was no limit to the number of barriers that a respondent could choose.

The CSNA survey results reveal that although transportation is the number one barrier to employment for DBVI consumers, there is a distinct difference between consumer perceptions and the partner perceptions on what type of transportation is the biggest barrier. Both partners and individual survey respondents selected transportation issues as the top barrier to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers. Partners selected “disability-related transportation” while individuals selected “lack of reliable transportation,” which are different items.

“Disability-related transportation” is the need for accessible transportation resulting or related to the disability. “Other transportation,” for the purposes of this survey, is defined as lack of a car, lack of public transportation or lack of reliable transportation. Individual survey respondents selected “lack of reliable transportation” which is comparable to the eighth ranking item “other transportation issues” on the partner survey.

“Employers’ perceptions/employers hesitant to hire people with disabilities” ranked third on the individual respondent and on the partner respondent result lists. Partners agree with the individual survey respondents on the six lowest ranking barriers to achieving employment goals.

Table 82 lists the barriers along with the number of times a barrier was cited by partner survey respondents.

Table 82

*Partner Survey: Top Three Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals - General DBVI Consumers*

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - General DBVI</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Disability-related transportation issues	8	57.1%
Not having job skills	6	42.9%
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	6	42.9%
Not having education or training	5	35.7%
Not having disability-related accommodations	5	35.7%
Not enough jobs available	3	21.4%

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - General DBVI</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Poor social skills	3	21.4%
Other transportation issues	2	14.3%
Not having job search skills	1	7.1%
Lack of help with disability-related personal care	1	7.1%
Mental health issues	1	7.1%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	1	7.1%
Language barriers	0	0.0%
Substance abuse issues	0	0.0%
Other health issues	0	0.0%
Childcare issues	0	0.0%
Housing issues	0	0.0%
Other (please describe)	0	0.0%
Convictions for criminal offenses	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	42	

### **Partner Survey: Barriers to Employment Goals - Supported Employment**

Partners were asked two questions related to barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers that also require supported employment.

Partners were asked whether or not the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers that required supported employment were different from the general population of DBVI consumers. The sample size was 13 respondents. Seven of the respondents indicated that the barriers to achieving employment goals were different for DBVI consumers that require supported employment. Table 83 details the narrow margin results to the question from the survey.

Table 83

*Partner Survey: Different Barriers – DBVI Consumers Supported Employment*

<b>Barriers To Goals Different for Consumers Requiring Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	7	53.9%
No	6	46.2%
<b>Total</b>	13	100.0%

Partner respondents were presented a subsequent question asking them to identify the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who require supported employment. Seven respondents ranked the barriers.

Two of the three top barriers to achieving employment goals that partners selected for DBVI consumers requiring supported employment were also listed in the top three barriers partners selected for the general population. “Not enough jobs available” tied for ranking in the second position on the list for DBVI consumers requiring supported employment and ranked in a tie for the sixth position on the general consumer list.

Note that the sample size for this question is small. Caution is used when analyzing the results and making inferences. The results indicate that general DBVI consumers and DBVI consumers that require supported employment do not experience different barriers to achieving employment goals. Table 84 summarizes the results.

Table 84

*Partner Survey: Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals – DBVI Consumers Supported Employment*

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	4	57.1%
Not enough jobs available	3	42.9%
Disability-related transportation issues	3	42.9%
Not having job skills	2	28.6%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	2	28.6%

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Not having education or training	1	14.3%
Not having job search skills	1	14.3%
Not having disability-related accommodations	1	14.3%
Other (please describe)	1	14.3%
Language barriers	0	0.0%
Lack of help with disability-related personal care	0	0.0%
Other transportation issues	0	0.0%
Mental health issues	0	0.0%
Substance abuse issues	0	0.0%
Other health issues	0	0.0%
Childcare issues	0	0.0%
Housing issues	0	0.0%
Poor social skills	0	0.0%
Convictions for criminal offenses	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	18	

### **Difficulties Accessing DBVI Services**

Partner survey respondents were asked a series of questions related to accessing DBVI services for the general population of DBVI consumers and for DBVI consumers who require supported employment. Thirteen partner respondents participated in this section of the survey.

### **Partner Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – General Population**

Respondents were presented with a question that prompted them to indicate the top three reasons that the general population of DBVI consumers might find it difficult to access DBVI services. Twelve response options were provided.

“Slow service delivery” and “Difficulties accessing training or education programs” were identified by partners as the top two reasons why the general population of DBVI consumers find it difficult to access services. Partners were divided on the third reason why consumers may have difficulty accessing services. Table 85 details the partner results.

Table 85

*Partner Survey: Top Three Reasons Difficulty Accessing DBVI Services - General Consumers*

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Slow service delivery	8	61.5%
Difficulties accessing training or education programs	5	38.5%
Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation	4	30.8%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office	4	30.8%
Inadequate disability-related accommodations	4	30.8%
Inadequate assessment services	3	23.1%
Difficulties completing the application	2	15.4%
Other (please describe)	1	7.7%
DBVI staff are not responsive to communication from clients or potential clients	1	7.7%
Language barriers	0	0.0%
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment	0	0.0%
DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>32</b>	

### **Partner Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – Supported Employment**

Partner respondents were presented a “yes-no” question asking them to identify whether or not the difficulties to accessing DBVI services is different for DBVI consumers requiring supported



employment compared to the general population of DBVI consumers. The majority of the partners indicated that the difficulties accessing DBVI services is not different for DBVI consumers requiring supported employment. Table 86 summarizes the results.

Table 86

*Partner Survey: Difficulty To Access DBVI Services Different for Supported Employment*

<b>Difficulty To Access DBVI Different for Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	10	76.9%
Yes	3	23.1%
<b>Total</b>	13	100.0%

Partner respondents were presented with a subsequent question asking them to identify the top three reasons DBVI consumers who require supported employment have difficulty accessing services. Three respondents answered the question, making the sample size too small for making inferences. The top reason partners selected for why DBVI consumers requiring supported employment have difficulty accessing services is different from the item partners selected for general consumers. Table 87 details the reasons partners selected as why accessing DBVI services might be difficult for consumers requiring supported employment.

Table 87

*Partner Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – DBVI Consumers Supported Employment*

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services - Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation	2	66.7%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office	1	33.3%
Inadequate disability-related accommodations	1	33.3%
Slow service delivery	1	33.3%
Difficulties accessing training or education programs	1	33.3%
Other (please describe)	1	33.3%
Language barriers	0	0.0%

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services - Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Difficulties completing the application	0	0.0%
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment	0	0.0%
Inadequate assessment services	0	0.0%
DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live	0	0.0%
DBVI staff are not responsive to communication from clients or potential clients	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	7	

### STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

#### Services from Virginia Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)

Staff survey respondents were presented with a series of questions regarding their experience with Virginia Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI).

Eighteen staff survey respondents initially participated in this section of the survey as 18 respondents answered the question regarding referrals to the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired. Sixteen of the staff respondents referred consumers to the VRCBVI. The majority of the staff respondents (n=14, 87.5%) indicated that the VRCBVI very effectively prepares the consumer to live independently. An equal minority of respondents indicated that the consumer is either “very prepared” or “not prepared at all” for work upon completing the VRCBVI program. Tables 88-90 detail the staff opinion of the VRCBVI services to consumers.

Table 88

*Staff Referral to the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)*

<b>Attend VRCBVI</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	16	88.9%
No	2	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	18	100.0%

Table 89

*Effectiveness of VRCBVI to Prepare Consumers to Live Independently*

<b>Preparedness to Live Independently as a Result of Training Received</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Very effectively	14	87.5%
Somewhat effectively	2	12.5%
Not effectively	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	16	100.0%

Table 90

*Consumer Preparedness for Work Upon Completing VRCBVI Program*

<b>Preparedness to go to Work as a Result of Training Received</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Somewhat prepared	12	75.0%
Very prepared	2	12.5%
Not at all prepared	2	12.5%
I do not send my consumers to VRCBVI to prepare for employment	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	16	100.0%

Staff respondents were presented with a final open-ended question regarding the VRCBVI that asked them to identify at least two ways VRCBVI can improve their services to DBVI consumers. A total of 14 narrative responses were received. Content analysis indicated four themes. The themes with quotes are provided in Table 91.

Table 91

*Ways VRCBVI Can Improve Services*

<b>Ways VRCBVI Can Improve Services for DBVI Consumers</b>
<b>Service-Related Changes-Vocational Preparation and Skills</b>
<i>“More career information and beginning credentials that are general”</i>
<i>“Voc. assessment, more career exploration, address mental health concerns instead of sending consumers home”</i>
<i>“Provide direct employment related services such as vocational evaluation or job search skills”</i>
<i>“Assist them setting up work experiences”</i>
<i>“More opportunities need to be available for folks to work on interview skills as personal skills. Also, additional job shadowing should be available.”</i>
<i>“Have additional opportunities to work on interviewing and also have more opportunity to shadow successful workers”</i>
<i>“Provide short-term training for areas such as customer service and food services”</i>
<i>“I would like to see more specific, career-related training available at the center, if possible. They do a great job with AT, but if they could have short-term training in careers like WWRC has that would be wonderful.”</i>
<i>“#1 - Allow students to stay longer to get the Keyboarding and AT training even when they have completed all other classes. This leads into #2 focus more on writing resumes and completing applications.”</i>
<i>“More focus on building computer skills, job searches, interviewing, writing resumes, soft skills and personal hygiene”</i>
<b>Agency Mission</b>
<i>“Be more consumer-driven”</i>
<i>“Increase willingness to work with clients with all types of disabilities, not only the ones with “just blindness.”</i>
<i>“Be more flexible with clients who cannot do 6-9 months of training away from home”</i>

*“More recreational activities for students outside of the class day. More one on one instruction.”*

### **Increasing Staff**

*“By having more staff to provide services, particularly in technology”*

### **Staff Survey: Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals**

Staff survey respondents were given a list of 19 reasons describing why a consumer may find it difficult to achieve employment goals. Respondents were asked to identify if the reason was a barrier that prevents consumers from achieving their employment goals. If the item was identified as a barrier, respondents were also asked to identify whether or not the barrier is being adequately addressed by DBVI. There was no limit to the number of barriers that a respondent could choose.

Staff agreed with partners that “not having job search skills” and agreed with individual survey respondents that “employers’ perceptions/hesitant about employing persons with disabilities” are two barriers that make it difficult for consumers with visual impairments to achieve employment goals. Staff selected “not having job skills” as a barrier more frequently than any of the other reasons.

Over 27 percent of staff and almost 54 percent of partners did not know if the item “not enough jobs available” was a barrier preventing consumers with visual impairments from achieving employment goals. Individual survey respondents selected “lack of available jobs” as not a barrier with a narrow margin of difference (yes = 41.7%, no = 58.3%). This is a significant finding as this may translate that staff, partners, and individuals are not aware of the local job market’s available options.

Substance abuse issues, convictions for criminal offenses, other health issues, and mental health issues, were selected by large percentages of staff and partners as items they were uncertain were barriers that prevent consumers from achieving their goals. However, over 81.5 percent of individual respondents cited three of the items, (mental health, substance abuse, criminal record) as not barriers to achieving employment goals. Table 92 lists the items presented to staff respondents along with the number of times each of the items was cited as a barrier, and the percentage rates of the number of respondents who selected the item.

Table 92

*Staff Survey: Identifying Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals*

Potential Reason	Times chosen as a Barrier		Barrier, adequately addressed	Barrier, NOT adequately addressed	Not a barrier	Don't know	Total
	Number	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	Percent	
Not having job skills	38	84.4%	62.2%	22.2%	4.4%	11.1%	45
Not having job search skills	37	82.2%	68.9%	13.3%	4.4%	13.3%	45
Disability-related transportation issues	37	84.1%	45.5%	38.6%	4.6%	11.4%	44
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	36	81.8%	61.4%	20.5%	0.0%	18.2%	44
Poor social skills	34	81.0%	35.7%	45.2%	0.0%	19.1%	42
Not having disability-related accommodations	34	77.3%	75.0%	2.3%	2.3%	20.5%	44
Not having education or training	33	75.0%	65.9%	9.1%	9.1%	15.9%	44
Language barriers	31	73.8%	54.8%	19.1%	11.9%	14.3%	42
Other transportation issues	31	72.1%	39.5%	32.6%	9.3%	18.6%	43
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	31	72.1%	60.5%	11.6%	0.0%	27.9%	43
Housing issues	30	68.2%	13.6%	54.6%	4.6%	27.3%	44
Other health issues	29	67.4%	25.6%	41.9%	0.0%	32.6%	43
Mental health issues	28	65.1%	18.6%	46.5%	2.3%	32.6%	43
Childcare issues	28	63.6%	22.7%	40.9%	6.8%	29.6%	44
Lack of help with disability-related personal care	26	59.1%	43.2%	15.9%	13.6%	27.3%	44
Substance abuse issues	25	56.8%	15.9%	40.9%	4.6%	38.6%	44
Convictions for criminal offenses	23	54.8%	23.8%	31.0%	7.1%	38.1%	42
Not enough jobs available	18	40.9%	22.7%	18.2%	31.8%	27.3%	44
Other (please describe)	0	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	3

### Staff Survey: Top Three Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – General DBVI Consumers

Staff respondents were presented with a list of 19 barriers, including an option for “other”, and were asked to identify the top three barriers that prevent the general population of DBVI consumers from achieving their employment goals. There was no limit to the number of barriers that a respondent could choose.

The top three barriers selected by staff are the same three barriers selected by partners and are slightly different than the 2018 staff survey and the current individual survey results. Individual results indicated that consumers are less concerned over their skills to perform their job and more concerned about other barriers they experience when working toward achieving their employment goals such as transportation and employer attitudes. The item “not having job skills” was ranked as one of the top three barriers on staff and partner result lists and ranked in the ninth position on the individual result list for the top three barriers to achieving employment goals. Staff and individual respondents selected concerns over Social Security benefits more frequently than partners. Staff and partners held different perspectives regarding disability-related accommodations as staff cited the item less frequently than partners. Table 93 lists the barriers along with the number of times a barrier was cited by the staff respondents.

Table 93

*Staff Survey: Top Three Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals - General DBVI Consumers*

<b>Top 3 Barriers to Employment Goals – General DBVI Consumers</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Not having job skills	19	45.2%
Disability-related transportation issues	19	45.2%
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	15	35.7%
Not having education or training	10	23.8%
Other transportation issues	8	19.0%
Poor social skills	8	19.0%
Not having job search skills	7	16.7%
Mental health issues	7	16.7%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	7	16.7%

<b>Top 3 Barriers to Employment Goals – General DBVI Consumers</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Convictions for criminal offenses	7	16.7%
Not enough jobs available	4	9.5%
Other health issues	4	9.5%
Housing issues	4	9.5%
Language barriers	2	4.8%
Not having disability-related accommodations	2	4.8%
Other (please describe)	2	4.8%
Childcare issues	1	2.4%
Lack of help with disability-related personal care	0	0.0%
Substance abuse issues	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>126</b>	

### **Staff Survey: Barriers to Employment Goals - Supported Employment**

Staff respondents were asked two questions related to barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers that also require supported employment.

Staff were asked whether or not the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers that required supported employment were different from the general population of DBVI consumers. The results were vastly different than partners as a large majority of staff indicated that the barriers to achieving employment goals were different for DBVI consumers that require supported employment. Table 94 details the results to the question from the survey.



Table 94

*Staff Survey: Different Barriers – DBVI Consumers Supported Employment*

<b>Barriers To Goals Different for Consumers Requiring Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	40	88.9%
No	5	11.1%
<b>Total</b>	45	100.0%

Staff respondents were presented a second question asking them to identify the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who require supported employment.

Staff and partners did not select the same barriers in response to this question. Two of the three top barriers to achieving employment goals that staff selected for DBVI consumers requiring supported employment were not listed in the top three barriers staff selected for the general population. However, the item “Not having jobs skills” was the most frequently selected barrier by staff for DBVI consumers requiring supported employment and for general consumers. The two phrases found in the narrative comments for the item “other” were: “cognitive disabilities” and “parents hesitant to let go of benefits.” Table 95 summarizes the staff survey results.

Table 95

*Staff Survey: Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals – DBVI Consumers Supported Employment*

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Not having job skills	26	65.0%
Not having education or training	13	32.5%
Not having job search skills	11	27.5%
Disability-related transportation issues	10	25.0%
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	9	22.5%
Mental health issues	9	22.5%
Poor social skills	9	22.5%

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Convictions for criminal offenses	6	15.0%
Language barriers	4	10.0%
Not enough jobs available	4	10.0%
Not having disability-related accommodations	3	7.5%
Lack of help with disability-related personal care	3	7.5%
Other health issues	3	7.5%
Other transportation issues	2	5.0%
Housing issues	2	5.0%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	2	5.0%
Other (please describe)	2	5.0%
Substance abuse issues	1	2.5%
Childcare issues	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	119	

### **Staff Survey: Most Important Change DBVI Could Make to Support Consumer Efforts to Achieve Employment Goals**

Staff respondents were presented with an open-ended question and asked to identify the most important change that DBVI could make to support consumers' efforts to achieve their employment goals. Twenty-eight narrative comments were received.

Content analysis of staff suggestions for change included a variety of service delivery components. Suggestions included the following items: DBVI to incorporate internal vocational assessment services and provide comprehensive assessments that address the 9 domains; reduce the AWARE documentation time; increase the number of staff and decrease caseload numbers; trainings that provide practical work related tools rather than being “talked at”; streamline data management; improve speed of application and service delivery model; improve internal teamwork with VR counselors; become more employment focused and not just emphasize

independent living skills; training VR staff and vendors in vision disabilities and what tools consumers need for success in the workplace; make information more accessible; and setting realistic job goals.

Suggestions for change also included consumer specific items: increased flexibility with trainings for younger clients who do not want to participate in lengthy center-based trainings and offer short term programs similar to the WWRC; increase variety of programs to help consumers build skills and confidence; change policies to increase consumer engagement; provide additional technology training to all DBVI clients; increase the number of face to face visits; and bring a satellite training center to Northern Virginia.

### **Difficulties Accessing DBVI Services**

Staff survey respondents were asked a series of questions related to accessing DBVI services for the general population of DBVI consumers and for DBVI consumers who require supported employment.

#### **Staff Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – General Population**

Staff were presented with a question that prompted them to indicate the top three reasons that the general population of DBVI consumers might find it difficult to access DBVI services. Eleven response options were provided.

The two reasons staff identified most frequently as why the general population of DBVI consumers find it difficult to access services (slow service delivery and difficulties accessing training or education programs) were also the two most frequently selected items found in the partner survey results. Similarly, staff and partners cited the items related to difficulties completing the IPE and not meeting clients in their residential community least frequently. Table 96 lists the staff respondent selection of reasons why accessing DBVI services may be difficult for the general population of DBVI consumers.

Table 96

*Staff Survey: Top Three Reasons Difficulty Accessing DBVI Services - General Consumers*

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Difficulties accessing training or education programs	19	38.8%
Slow service delivery	18	36.7%
Other (please describe)	13	26.5%
Difficulties completing the application	12	24.5%
Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation	11	22.4%
Language barriers	10	20.4%
Inadequate assessment services	10	20.4%
Inadequate disability-related accommodations	7	14.3%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office	4	8.2%
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment	4	8.2%
DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live	3	6.1%
<b>Total</b>	111	

### **Staff Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – Supported Employment**

Staff respondents were presented a “yes-no” question asking them to identify whether or not the difficulties to accessing DBVI services is different for DBVI consumers requiring supported employment compared to the general population of DBVI consumers. The results are similar to the partner results as staff also indicated that the difficulties accessing DBVI services is not different for DBVI consumers requiring supported employment. Table 97 contains the results.

Table 97

*Staff Survey: Difficulty To Access DBVI Services Different for Supported Employment*

<b>Difficulty To Access DBVI Different for Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	27	62.8%
Yes	16	37.2%
<b>Total</b>	43	100.0%

Staff were presented with a subsequent question asking them to identify the top three reasons DBVI consumers who require supported employment have difficulty accessing services. Contrary to the results in table 96 above, two of the top three reasons staff selected for why DBVI consumers requiring supported employment have difficulty accessing services match the items staff selected for general consumers. Table 98 details the reasons staff identified as why accessing DBVI services might be difficult for consumers requiring supported employment.

Table 98

*Staff Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – DBVI Consumers Supported Employment*

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services - Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Difficulties accessing training or education programs	8	44.4%
Inadequate assessment services	6	33.3%
Slow service delivery	6	33.3%
Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation	5	27.8%
Language barriers	5	27.8%
Difficulties completing the application	5	27.8%
Inadequate disability-related accommodations	4	22.2%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office	3	16.7%
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment	3	16.7%

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services - Supported Employment</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Other (please describe)	2	11.1%
DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live	1	5.6%
<b>Total</b>	48	

Staff respondents were presented with a final question in this section asking them if there was anything else they felt DBVI should know in regard to why individuals have difficulty accessing DBVI services. Five out of the ten narrative responses received contained feedback. The recurring theme in the narrative feedback was that the lack of information about DBVI and available services was the greatest access issue. Respondents recommended that DBVI increase its marketing efforts to ensure that the community knows who they are and what they do.

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*INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS*

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**The following themes emerged on a recurring basis from the individual interviews and focus groups conducted for this assessment regarding the needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment:**

1. Transportation was the most frequently cited rehabilitation need for individuals with blindness and vision impairments, especially in the rural areas of the State where there are very limited or no public transportation options. In some of Virginia's more densely populated areas transportation options are available, but there are many places throughout the State where the lack of transportation is a significant barrier to employment.
2. The need for assistive technology (AT) to live and work independently was cited as a common need for individuals with blindness and vision impairments as they prepare for or begin work. The need for training in the use of AT was directly associated with this need.
3. The need for training in the use of AT was especially noted once an individual leaves VRCBVI and returns home. The AT is provided for the individual to use at home, but there is a need for the individual to receive more training in the use of the technology at their home.
4. The need for AT was cited as especially important for deaf-blind individuals.
5. Common recurring rehabilitation needs other than transportation and AT included training, soft-skills (especially for youth), benefits planning, self-advocacy training and work experience.
6. Individuals that receive either SSI or SSDI or both have significant fears about losing benefits due to work, especially medical insurance. This fear limits their return-to-work behavior, resulting in them looking for part-time work that keeps their earnings level below that which would remove them from support by SSA. Consequently, these individuals do not pursue self-sustaining employment. The importance of reaching these beneficiaries as youth and helping them strive for self-sufficiency was noted as critical. Interestingly, while benefits planning is widely available, the impact on increasing the drive towards self-sufficiency was questionable. Tied closely to this need is the need for financial literacy and financial empowerment generally. This emerged as a need in this assessment and is supported by the results of the surveys.
7. The pandemic exposed the need for individuals to have access to broadband Internet access. The connectivity of individuals with blindness and vision impairments has to be a paramount concern for DBVI in today's world. Participants indicated that there are still many individuals that struggle with access to DBVI services because of their inability to get a laptop or to connect with the agency remotely.
8. It has become very common for DBVI consumers to have a secondary mental health impairment in addition to blindness or a vision impairment. Although the data does not indicate that mental health impairments are common as a secondary disability, the

feedback from staff and partners is that this is an increasingly common issue and that staff and partners need training on how to effectively work with these individuals.

9. The lack of affordable housing emerged as a significant barrier to employment during this CSNA. The cost of housing rose sharply during the pandemic in Virginia and this directly affected DBVI consumers in many areas.
10. Interview participants indicated, and the data shows, that supported employment is not a common strategy or practice utilized by DBVI. In addition, customized employment is not used by staff.
11. VRCBVI was praised for providing excellent adjustment to blindness and independent living skills training to consumers. In addition, the center has worked to increase its vocational focus. They shifted to remote services and responded as effectively as possible to the pandemic's effect on a residential training program.



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## *RECOMMENDATIONS*

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**The following recommendations are offered to DBVI based on the results of the research in the Needs of Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities, including their need for Supported Employment area:**

1. DBVI is encouraged to ensure that follow-up training on the use of AT is provided in the individual's home once they leave VR CBVI and return to their living environment. This training should include an initial set-up and training until the individual demonstrates independence in using the technology;
2. DBVI is encouraged to provide training to all staff on how to effectively work with individuals with mental health impairments. This training should be ongoing and is an area where the continued partnership with the General agency can be beneficial;
3. Since a large percentage of DBVI consumers are SSA beneficiaries whose fear of benefit loss affects their return-to-work behavior, it would be helpful for DBVI to augment benefits planning services with training for staff and providers on strategies that contribute to the pursuit of work above the level of SGA, including self-sufficiency.

These interventions and strategies include:

- h. Establishing and reinforcing high expectations for the individual;
  - i. Identifying role models, or peer mentors that will model positive behavior and provide a positive "push" for the individual to achieve their maximum potential (in many instances, the positive push can come from the rehabilitation counselor if there are no family members, friends or mentors available);
  - j. Maximizing the individual's ability to live and function independently;
  - k. Reinforcing the need for tenacity and persistence by the individual by helping them develop resiliencies, and then providing constant support and positive feedback;
  - l. Benefits planning that is ongoing and plans for overpayments when work occurs. Overpayments are planned for and the individual or the Benefits Planner is aware enough to calculate the effect of wages on benefits by themselves and set aside dollars that will likely occur as a result of overpayments for future payback to SSA;
  - m. Pursuit of higher education at the highest possible level for the individual; and
  - n. Work experience, internships or any exposure to work in the beneficiary's field of choice;
4. Training in supported and customized employment strategies should be a regular and ongoing for DBVI staff;
  5. DBVI is encouraged to continue to develop resources and training that promote financial literacy and empowerment for their consumers. It is recommended that DBVI avail themselves of the resources available through the National Disability Institute at <https://www.nationaldisabilityinstitute.org/>;

6. DBVI is encouraged to conduct connectivity assessments for all consumers that are engaged in the comprehensive assessment process for plan development. When needed, DBVI should purchase the necessary equipment and service to ensure their participants are able to effectively access and function in the digital world. This includes broadband Internet where available and laptops, cell phones and hotspots in cellular service plans. One possibility for adaption is the BPD Technology Assessment Checklist created by the Technology Committee for the Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors. The tool is available in Appendix F. DBVI should adapt the tool for their own needs if they decide to use it.
7. DBVI is encouraged to market the services of VRCBVI in order to increase enrollment. The center has had low enrollment due to COVID, and as Virginia emerges from the pandemic, it will be important to ensure that individuals with blindness and vision impairments, especially youth and students, are aware of VRCBVI.

## **SECTION 3**

# **NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH BLINDNESS OR VISION IMPAIRMENTS FROM DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS, INCLUDING NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WHO HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR UNDERSERVED BY THE VR PROGRAM**

Section 3 includes an identification of the needs of individuals with blindness or vision impairments from different ethnic groups, including needs of individuals who have been unserved or underserved by DBVI.

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### ***Recurring Themes Across all Data Collection Methods***

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The following themes emerged in the area of the needs of individuals with blindness or vision impairments from different ethnic groups, including individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the DBVI:

1. As was the case in the last CSNA, the interview participants did not generally feel that any specific groups of individuals were underserved or unserved by the agency. They indicated that DBVI works with whomever is interested in services without regard to race.
2. Hispanic and Asian individuals were cited most commonly as the two ethnic groups that do not access DBVI services as frequently as others. Lack of knowledge about the program and available services, fear or mistrust of government agencies, lack of representative staff, language barriers and cultural factors were commonly cited as possible reasons for this lack of access. The data supports that Hispanic individuals appear less in the DBVI consumer population than in Virginia's overall population.
3. Individuals with intellectual disabilities in addition to vision loss were cited as possibly being underserved.
4. The rural areas of Virginia were commonly mentioned as an underserved geographic area primarily due to the lack of transportation and Internet access. The lack of Internet access was especially noted as problematic for rural areas during the pandemic when services were delivered virtually.
5. The barriers to employment experienced by minority populations are similar to those experience by all other populations of DBVI consumers except that they face language barriers when looking for employment and when trying to access DBVI services.

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***NATIONAL AND/OR AGENCY SPECIFIC DATA RELATED TO THE  
NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH BLINDNESS OR VISION  
IMPAIRMENTS FROM DIFFERENT ETHNIC GROUPS, INCLUDING  
NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS THAT HAVE BEEN UNSERVED OR  
UNDERSERVED BY DBVI***

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### **Ethnicity**

*An understanding of the local population's ethnic diversity is needed in order to better serve the needs of individuals with disabilities from different ethnic groups residing in the community.*

*For the purposes of this report, definitions for race and ethnicity are provided. The definitions are taken from the U.S. Census Bureau glossary.*

***Race:*** *“The U.S. Census Bureau collects race data in accordance with guidelines provided by the U.S. Office of Management and Budget (OMB). The data is collected from respondent self-identification. The racial categories included in the census questionnaire reflect a social definition of race and is not an attempt to define race biologically, anthropologically, or genetically. The categories of the race question include race and national origin or sociocultural groups. The OMB requires that race data be collected for a minimum of five groups: White, Black or African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander. The OMB permits the Census Bureau to use a sixth category - Some Other Race. Respondents may report more than one race.”*

***Ethnicity:*** *“The U.S. Census Bureau adheres to the OMB's definition of ethnicity. There are two minimum categories for ethnicity: Hispanic or Latino and Not Hispanic or Latino. OMB considers race and Hispanic origin to be two separate and distinct concepts. Hispanics and Latinos may be of any race.”* <https://www.census.gov/glossary/>

### **Ethnicity for the General Population**

Data for ethnicity rates for the general population is obtained from 2019 American Community Survey one-year Estimates and the 2014-2019 American Community Survey five-year Estimates. The ethnic demographic averages for each region are calculated by adding population totals for each ethnic group and dividing by the total population.

The State's averages for ethnic diversity in the categories of Hispanic/Latino, American Indian and Alaskan Native, and Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander are below the National averages.

Whites comprise the largest ethnic group in the state as the averages for Whites exceed all other ethnic category rates by more than 20 percent in each RO. Black or African Americans comprise the second largest ethnic group in the State (19.0%), with an average that is 6.6% higher than the National average.

RO2 is the most ethnically diverse RO in the State as the percentage rates of Black Americans, Hispanics, and Asians that reside in RO2 exceed 10%. Conversely, RO1 is comprised of primarily of Whites as all other ethnic category averages in RO1 are lower than 3 percent.

American Indian and Alaska Natives comprise less than one percent of Virginia's population and the averages are identical for the State and in each RO. Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islanders residing Virginia comprise less than one percent of the State's population and the rates are lower than the averages for American Indians and Alaska Natives.

Table 99 contains detailed information on the ethnic make-up of Virginia.

Table 99

*Ethnicity*

Area	Total population	Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	White alone	Black or African American alone	American Indian and Alaska Native alone	Asian alone	Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	Two or more races
US	328,239,523	18.4%	60.0%	12.4%	0.7%	5.6%	0.2%	2.5%
VA	8,535,519	9.7%	61.1%	19.0%	0.2%	6.6%	0.1%	3.1%
RO1	382,636	1.9%	93.7%	2.7%	0.2%	0.5%	0.0%	1.1%
RO2	3,035,544	16.2%	55.6%	11.4%	0.2%	12.6%	0.1%	3.7%
RO3	1,868,656	6.8%	54.9%	30.4%	0.2%	3.6%	0.1%	3.7%
RO4	1,417,713	5.9%	57.7%	29.8%	0.2%	3.4%	0.0%	2.7%
RO5	1,008,731	3.3%	76.3%	15.9%	0.2%	1.9%	0.0%	2.2%
RO6	741,183	6.9%	76.8%	10.9%	0.2%	2.4%	0.1%	2.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates and 2014-2019 5-Year Estimates

### **Ethnicity and Disability**

The U.S. Census Bureau collects data on disability among ethnic categories for the total civilian noninstitutionalized population. Note the ethnic groups with smaller population sizes and higher percentages of disability.

Table 100 identifies the estimated rates of disability among ethnic categories for the Nation and the State. Table 101 contains data for the ROs.

Table 100

*Disability and Ethnicity: US and VA, including Urban and Rural Averages*

<b>Disability and Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percent with a disability</b>					
<b>Ethnic Categories</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>United States</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Virginia</b>	<b>Virginia</b>
		<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>		<b>Urban</b>	<b>Rural</b>
White alone	13.2%	12.7%	15.0%	12.8%	11.2%	16.3%
Black or African American alone	14.1%	13.8%	17.1%	13.5%	12.7%	18.0%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	17.2%	17.1%	17.4%	17.0%	14.8%	22.4%
Asian alone	7.2%	7.2%	7.9%	6.5%	6.5%	6.7%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	10.6%	10.2%	14.8%	N	N	N
Two or more races	11.0%	10.6%	14.1%	8.5%	8.1%	11.0%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	9.1%	9.0%	9.6%	6.7%	6.5%	8.5%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 ACS 1-Year Estimates

Table 101

*Disability and Ethnicity: ROs*

<b>Disability and Ethnicity</b>	<b>Percent with a disability</b>					
<b>Ethnic Categories</b>	<b>RO1</b>	<b>RO2</b>	<b>RO3</b>	<b>RO4</b>	<b>RO5</b>	<b>RO6</b>
White alone	23.4%	8.7%	13.1%	12.0%	14.8%	12.4%
Black or African American alone	22.1%	8.2%	14.3%	16.1%	15.8%	13.2%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	30.3%	12.1%	21.5%	15.1%	21.8%	25.4%
Asian alone	8.6%	5.5%	10.1%	5.9%	5.6%	5.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	15.2%	10.9%	12.7%	10.3%	4.5%	15.7%
Two or more races	24.3%	6.5%	8.7%	10.9%	13.7%	9.5%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	10.6%	5.1%	8.6%	8.1%	9.5%	6.7%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2014-2019 ACS 5-Year Estimates

### **Ethnicity and Disability Type Prevalence Rates**

Cornell University online disability statistics provides data on disability prevalence rates by ethnicity and disability type.

Less than one percent of working age Asians residing in Virginia reported a visual disability while visual disabilities were reported by over 5.5 percent of the American Indian and Alaskan

Natives residing in Virginia. Note that Asians comprise roughly 6.5 percent of Virginia's population and American Indian and Alaskan Natives account for less than one percent of the state's population. Table 102 details Virginia's disability prevalence rates categorized by ethnicity, ages 18 to 64, and disability type.

Table 102

*Ethnicity and Disability Type: Ages 18 to 64*

<b>Virginia 2018 Prevalence Rates</b>	<b>Visual Disability</b>	<b>Hearing Disability</b>	<b>Ambulatory Disability</b>	<b>Cognitive Disability</b>	<b>Self-care Disability</b>	<b>Independent Living Disability</b>
<b>White, non-Hispanic</b>	1.4%	1.9%	4.4%	3.9%	1.4%	3.4%
<b>Black/African American, non-Hispanic</b>	2.7%	1.4%	5.9%	4.8%	2.6%	4.5%
<b>American Indian and Alaskan Native, non-Hispanic</b>	5.7%	2.7%	4.8%	5.8%	1.7%	1.9%
<b>Asian, non-Hispanic</b>	0.9%	0.7%	1.3%	1.3%	0.7%	0.9%
<b>Some Other Race, non-Hispanic</b>	1.9%	2.2%	5.1%	4.7%	3.1%	4.1%
<b>Hispanic/Latino, all races</b>	1.6%	1.0%	2.3%	2.5%	0.8%	1.8%

Source: <https://disabilitystatistics.org/>

### **Ethnicity, Disability Type and Employment Rates**

Cornell University publishes online disability statistics for National and State employment by disability type and ethnicity. The categories include non-institutionalized civilians ages 16 to 64, male and female, from all education levels. No data was available for Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islanders.

Asians comprise the fourth largest ethnic group in Virginia (6.6% of the population) and has the highest rate of employment for those reporting a visual disability, exceeding the rates for Whites (the largest ethnic group in the State) by roughly 18 percent. The ethnic category of Some Other Race, non-Hispanic, has the second highest employment rate for those reporting visual disabilities. Black/African Americans comprise the second largest ethnic population in Virginia and has the lowest employment rate for those reporting a visual disability. The data in table 103 is from the Cornell University online resource, dated 2018.

Table 103

*Employment by Ethnicity and Disability Type: Non-institutionalized Population Ages 16 -64*

Virginia 2018 Employment by Disability Type and Ethnicity Ages 16 to 64	Percent Employed by Disability Type						
	Any	Visual	Hearing	Ambulatory	Cognitive	Self-care	Independent Living
White, non-Hispanic	39.5%	45.8%	58.8%	25.3%	30.9%	12.3%	20.5%
Black/African American, non-Hispanic	35.8%	36.1%	45.3%	28.9%	30.0%	19.7%	18.9%
American Indian and Alaskan Native, non-Hispanic	41.8%	N	N	N	12.9%	N	N
Asian, non-Hispanic	57.4%	64.1%	70.0%	40.5%	57.1%	53.3%	37.9%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, non-Hispanic	N	N	N	N	N	N	N
Some Other Race, non-Hispanic	44.9%	57.1%	69.8%	30.6%	39.6%	33.1%	33.8%
Hispanic/Latino	56.5%	55.7%	78.5%	51.2%	47.7%	30.6%	29.4%

Source: <https://disabilitystatistics.org/>


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*Agency Specific Data on Ethnicity:*

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There was limited data available from DBVI on services and outcomes for individuals served by the agency based on race or ethnicity. The project team gathered as much information as possible, but the ability to pull data and analyze that data based on race is an area for future development by DBVI. The vast majority of need for the different populations stems from the survey results and the interviews conducted for this assessment.

The project team analyzed the rate of individuals by race served by DBVI for the four years of this study. Table 104 contains this information.



Table 104  
*Percent of DBVI Consumers by Race for PY 2017-2020*

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of all DBVI Consumers Served by Program Year			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
White	59.3%	56.1%	55.3%	54.8%
American Indian	0.5%	0.2%	0.2%	0.3%
Asian	5.0%	5.7%	6.5%	6.4%
Black	36.6%	39.5%	39.3%	38.7%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.6%	0.6%	0.7%
Hispanic	4.8%	5.0%	5.8%	5.7%
Multi-race	1.8%	2.1%	2.3%	2.1%

The data indicates that White individuals constituted the largest portion of individuals served by DBVI for every year of the study, though the percentage for this group declined each year of the study. Blacks or African-Americans were the second largest group served remaining at or near 39% of all consumers from PY 2018-2020. The rate of Asian individuals served constituted more than 6% in PY 2019 and 2020, while Hispanic individual rose from 4.8% in PY 2017 to 5.7% in PY2020.

The project team then examined the rate of individuals served by race to how these rates compared to the rate of each population in Virginia overall. Table 105 contains the results of this analysis.

Table 105  
*Rate of DBVI Consumers Served by Race Compared to Virginia Overall*

Race/Ethnicity	Virginia Overall	All DBVI Consumers	Difference in PY 2020
White	61.1%	54.8%	-6.3%
American Indian	0.2%	0.3%	0.1%
Asian	6.6%	6.4%	-0.2%
Black	19.0%	38.7%	19.7%
Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0.1%	0.7%	0.6%
Multi-Race	3.1%	3.3%	0.2%
Hispanic	9.7%	5.7%	-4.0%

The data indicates that White individuals are underrepresented in the overall DBVI population compared to their rate overall in Virginia. In addition, Hispanic individuals appear at a rate 4% lower than their rate in Virginia. African-Americans are overrepresented in the overall DBVI population by almost 20% from their rate in Virginia overall. It should be noted that there are many factors to consider when comparing the population of DBVI consumers to Virginia's population overall. A primary consideration is the socioeconomic status of each group, and one

would expect that individuals that are in greater need would constitute a higher percentage of individuals receiving assistance from the agency. All results should be interpreted through this lens.

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### ***SURVEY RESULTS BY TYPE***

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#### **INDIVIDUAL SURVEY RESULTS**

Individuals were asked to report their primary race or ethnic group. There was no limit to the number of items a respondent could choose.

The ranking order of the results in table 105 that represents ethnicity of the respondents is similar to the ranking order of the State's ethnic demographic category ranking based on the U.S. Census Bureau data with one exception. There are more Hispanic/Latinos residing in Virginia than Asians yet more survey respondents identified as Asian as compared to Hispanic/Latinos. Responses to this question are detailed in Table 106.

Table 106  
*Ethnicity of Respondents*

<b>Primary Race or Ethnic Group</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Caucasian/White	52	61.9%
African American/Black	18	21.4%
Asian	7	8.3%
Hispanic/Latino	4	4.8%
Other (please describe)	3	3.6%
American Indian or Alaska Native	1	1.2%
Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	1	1.2%
<b>Total</b>	86	

Individual survey respondents were asked a series of questions regarding cultural identity.

Respondents were asked a yes-no question about whether or not DBVI honors and respects their cultural identity. Less than 5.5 percent of the 92 respondents who answered the question

indicated that DBVI does not honor and respect their cultural identity while almost 23 percent did not know whether or not their cultural identity was honored and respected. The results are found in Table 107.

Table 107  
*Honor and Respect Cultural Identity*

Honor Respect Cultural ID	Number	Percent
Yes	66	71.7%
I don't know	21	22.8%
No	5	5.4%
<b>Total</b>	92	100.0%

## PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

### Partner Survey: Barriers to Employment Goals - Minorities

Partners were asked two questions related to barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are from ethnic groups that are considered minority groups.

Partners were asked whether or not the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are minorities were different from the general population of DBVI consumers. The sample size was 13 respondents. Eight of the respondents indicated that the barriers to achieving employment goals were not different for minorities. Table 108 details the results to the question.

Table 108  
*Partner Survey: Different Barriers – Ethnic Minorities*

Barriers To Goals Different for Minorities	Number	Percent
No	8	61.5%
Yes	5	38.5%
<b>Total</b>	13	100.0%

Partner respondents were presented a subsequent question asking them to identify the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who belong to minority groups. Five respondents ranked the barriers.

The top three barriers to achieving employment goals that partners selected for DBVI consumers who are minorities were also listed in the top three barriers selected for the general population. “Not having job search skills” ranked in a tie for the second position on the minority group list and ranked in a tie for the ninth position on the general consumer list. Caution is used to analyze the results and making the inference that general consumers and DBVI consumers who are from minority ethnic groups do not experience different barriers to achieving employment goals because the sample size is small. Table 109 summarizes the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for minority groups.

Table 109

*Partner Survey: Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals – Minorities*

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - Minorities</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	3	60.0%
Not having job skills	2	40.0%
Not having job search skills	2	40.0%
Disability-related transportation issues	2	40.0%
Not having education or training	1	20.0%
Language barriers	1	20.0%
Not enough jobs available	1	20.0%
Not having disability-related accommodations	1	20.0%
Poor social skills	0	0.0%
Convictions for criminal offenses	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	13	

### **Difficulties Accessing DBVI Services**

Partner survey respondents were asked two questions related to difficulties accessing DBVI services for the population of DBVI consumers that belong to ethnic minority groups. Thirteen partner respondents participated in this section of the survey.

### Partner Survey: Accessing DBVI Services - Minorities

Partner respondents were presented a “yes-no” question asking them to identify whether or not the difficulties to accessing DBVI services is different for minorities compared to the general population of DBVI consumers. The majority of the partners indicated that the difficulties accessing DBVI services is not different for minorities. Table 1110 details the partners’ responses.

Table 110

*Partner Survey: Difficulty To Access DBVI Services Different for Minorities*

<b>Difficulty To Access DBVI Different for Minorities</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	11	84.6%
Yes	2	15.4%
<b>Total</b>	13	100.0%

Partner respondents were asked a subsequent question asking them to identify the top three reasons DBVI consumers who belong to minority groups have difficulty accessing DBVI services. Two respondents answered the question. Due to the limited sample size that divides the results equally, inferences cannot be generalized.

Table 111

*Partner Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – Minorities*

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation	1	50.0%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office	1	50.0%
Language barriers	1	50.0%
Difficulties completing the application	1	50.0%
Inadequate accessing assessment services	1	50.0%
Slow service delivery	1	50.0%

## STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

### Staff Survey: Barriers to Employment Goals - Minorities

Similar to partner respondents, staff were asked two questions related to barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are from ethnic groups that are considered minority groups.

Staff were asked whether or not the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are minorities were different from the general population of DBVI consumers. Staff agreed with partners that the barriers to achieving employment goals were not different for minorities. The percentage rates noted in staff and partner results in response to this question were very similar (partners = 61.5% yes, 38.5% = no). Table 112 details the staff survey results to the question.

Table 112

*Staff Survey: Different Barriers – Ethnic Minorities*

Barriers To Goals Different for Minorities	Number	Percent
No	27	62.8%
Yes	16	37.2%
<b>Total</b>	43	100.0%

Staff respondents were presented a subsequent question asking them to identify the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who belong to minority groups.

One of the three top barriers that staff selected for DBVI consumers who are minorities was also listed in the top three barriers staff selected for the general population. “Not having job skills” ranked as the third barrier on the staff result list for minority groups and ranked in the first position on the general consumer list. The partner selection of top three barriers towards employment goals for minorities also contains “not having job skills.” Table 113 summarizes the staff survey results to the question addressing the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for minority groups.

Table 113

*Staff Survey: Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals – Minorities*

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - Minorities</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
Not having education or training	9	45.0%
Language barriers	9	45.0%
Not having job skills	7	35.0%
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	4	20.0%
Disability-related transportation issues	4	20.0%
Convictions for criminal offenses	4	20.0%
Not having job search skills	2	10.0%
Not having disability-related accommodations	2	10.0%
Other transportation issues	2	10.0%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	2	10.0%
Other (please describe)	2	10.0%
Poor social skills	2	10.0%
Lack of help with disability-related personal care	1	5.0%
Mental health issues	1	5.0%
Substance abuse issues	1	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	52	

**Difficulties Accessing DBVI Services**

Staff were asked two questions related to difficulties accessing DBVI services for the population of DBVI consumers that belong to ethnic minority groups.

### Staff Survey: Accessing DBVI Services - Minorities

Staff respondents were presented a “yes-no” question asking them to identify whether or not the difficulties to accessing DBVI services is different for minorities compared to the general population of DBVI consumers. Similar to partner results, the majority of staff indicated that the difficulties accessing DBVI services is not different for minorities. Table 114 details the staff responses.

Table 114

*Staff Survey: Difficulty To Access DBVI Services Different for Minorities*

<b>Difficulty To Access DBVI Different for Minorities</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	29	67.4%
Yes	14	32.6%
<b>Total</b>	43	100.0%

Although the majority of staff believe that minorities and the general population of DBVI consumers have similar difficulties when accessing DBVI services, staff identified “difficulties in accessing training or education programs” as one of the top three difficulties for minorities and as the top difficulty for the general population. Table 115 details the staff results to the question regarding identifying the top three difficulties to accessing DBVI services for minorities.

Table 115

*Staff Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – Minorities*

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Language barriers	9	56.3%
Difficulties accessing training or education programs	7	43.8%
Inadequate assessment services	5	31.3%
Slow service delivery	4	25.0%
Inadequate disability-related accommodations	3	18.8%
Difficulties completing the application	3	18.8%



<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment	3	18.8%
Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation	2	12.5%
Other (please describe)	2	12.3%
DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live	2	12.3%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office	1	6.3%
<b>Total</b>	41	

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*INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS*

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**The following themes emerged on a recurring basis from the individual interviews and focus groups conducted for this assessment in the area of the needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments from different ethnic groups, including needs of individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program:**

1. As was the case in the last CSNA, the interview participants did not generally feel that any specific groups of individuals were underserved or unserved by the agency. They indicated that DBVI works with whomever is interested in services without regard to race. There were however, several groups that were identified as not accessing services as frequently or regularly as others due to a variety of factors and these are discussed below.
2. Hispanic and Asian individuals were cited most commonly as the two ethnic groups that do not access DBVI services as frequently as others. Lack of knowledge about the program and available services, fear or mistrust of government agencies, lack of representative staff, language barriers and cultural factors were commonly cited as possible reasons for this lack of access.
3. Individuals with intellectual disabilities in addition to vision loss were cited as possibly being underserved.
4. The rural areas of Virginia were commonly mentioned as an underserved geographic area primarily due to the lack of transportation and Internet access. The lack of Internet access was especially noted as problematic for rural areas during the pandemic when services were delivered virtually.

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*RECOMMENDATIONS*

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**The following recommendations are offered to DBVI based on the results of the research in the Needs of Individuals with Blindness and Vision Impairments from Different Ethnic Groups, including needs of Individuals who have been Unserved or Underserved by the VR Program area:**

1. DBVI is encouraged to recruit bilingual Hispanic counselors when they have vacant positions. In addition to being able to speak to consumers in their native language, these counselors can help build trust and relationships with the Hispanic community and increase DBVI's ability to reach this population;
2. DBVI is encouraged to establish liaison and referral relationships with community programs serving minority populations in the State. Targeted outreach to these community service organizations can help increase the awareness of DBVI and build trust among traditionally underserved populations. The agency is encouraged to collaborate with Virginia Department of Health's Division of Multicultural Health and Community Engagement. Information is available at <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/health-equity/division-of-multicultural-health-and-community-engagement/>;
3. DBVI is encouraged to provide training for staff and partners on diversity, equity and inclusion. These efforts can impact the perspectives and beliefs of agency staff and partners and improve outreach efforts;
4. DBVI is encouraged to continue to partner with the General program (DARS) and the Virginia Department of Behavioral Health and Developmental Service to increase awareness of their services to individuals with intellectual and other developmental disabilities that have vision impairments. This partnership may have the secondary effect of increasing the number of individuals who can benefit from the supported employment model; and
5. DBVI needs to increase its ability to gather and analyze its own data related to case movement and outcomes for individuals from minority populations so that it can make evidence-based decisions on how to improve services.

## SECTION 4

### NEEDS OF YOUTH WITH BLINDNESS OR VISION IMPAIRMENTS IN TRANSITION

The comprehensive statewide needs assessment must include an assessment of the needs of youth and students with disabilities in the State, including their need for Pre-ETS. This section contains information about the needs of transition-age youth with blindness or vision impairments (14-24) and the needs of students with blindness or vision impairments (14-21) for pre-employment transition services.

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#### *Recurring Themes Across all Data Collection Methods*

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1. Transportation to and from school and work was the most common rehabilitation and employment need mentioned for students and youth with blindness and vision impairments. The lack of reliable or available transportation, especially in the rural areas, affects every area of the lives of youth and can significantly limit their work options.
2. Low vision technology and other assistive technology is needed for youth and students with blindness and vision impairments to prepare for their career and perform the essential functions of their jobs.
3. All of the five required pre-employment transition services required activities were consistently cited as needed by students with disabilities. Work--based learning experiences were the most frequently cited need, but self-advocacy and soft-skills training were also noted frequently.
4. Although the pandemic adversely affected enrollment at VRCBVI and in-person attendance at school, the agency found that the shift to virtual training and programming opened the doors for more students and youth to participate, which was a positive outcome.
5. DBVI's counselors work closely with the Teachers for the Visually Impaired (TVIs) in most of the school districts. When the relationship between the TVIs and DBVI are close, services for students with blindness and vision impairments are coordinated and comprehensive. In many rural areas where schools have limited resources and there may not be a TVI, services to youth are adversely impacted.
6. The agency added resiliency and financial literacy training to their pre-employment transition services programs. These new offerings were considered as positive, needed and helpful for students.
7. The transition from secondary school to college can be a major challenge for youth with blindness or vision impairments as they have had someone in secondary school actively work to meet their accommodation needs, but when they get to college, this must be a

self-directed process. It generally takes at least one, and often two semesters before consumers get their technology and reasonable accommodation needs met in college. This creates a slow start to their higher education pursuits which can be frustrating and result in a delay in achieving their goals.

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***NATIONAL AND AGENCY SPECIFIC DATA RELATED TO THE  
NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS IN TRANSITION***

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### **Educational Attainment: Ages 18 to 24 Years**

The data indicates that the rate of individuals whose highest level of educational attainment is a high school graduate or the equivalent in Virginia's rural areas is 5.5 percentage points higher than the National average. RO2 has the lowest rate of high school graduation attainment (28.3%) which is lower than the National and State averages by 4.4 to 5.7 percent. Conversely, the rate of youth who have attained a bachelor's degree or higher in RO2 is significantly higher than the U.S. average and the State average by 7.1 to 8.3 percentage points. Note that RO2 is a DBVI region serving roughly one-third of Virginia's population.

Table 116 contains educational attainment rates for ages 18 to 24 years, which includes high school graduation rates and bachelor's degree achievement.

Table 116

*Educational Attainment for all Individuals Ages 18 to 24 Years*

<b>Region</b>	<b>Less than high school graduate</b>	<b>High school graduate (includes equivalency)</b>	<b>Some college or associate's degree</b>	<b>Bachelor's degree or higher</b>
<b>US</b>	12.1%	32.7%	43.4%	11.9%
<b>US -- Urban</b>	11.3%	31.5%	44.5%	12.6%
<b>US -- Rural</b>	16.1%	39.0%	36.9%	8.0%
<b>VA</b>	9.7%	34.0%	43.1%	13.1%
<b>VA -- Urban</b>	9.4%	31.8%	44.7%	14.2%
<b>VA -- Rural</b>	11.1%	44.5%	36.0%	8.4%
<b>RO1</b>	11.5%	39.5%	43.3%	5.6%
<b>RO2</b>	12.4%	28.3%	39.1%	20.2%
<b>RO3</b>	8.3%	34.2%	49.0%	8.5%

Region	Less than high school graduate	High school graduate (includes equivalency)	Some college or associate's degree	Bachelor's degree or higher
RO4	11.5%	32.7%	44.5%	11.3%
RO5	7.8%	29.2%	51.7%	11.3%
RO6	7.6%	32.3%	49.2%	10.9%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 1-Year Estimates and 2014-2019 5-Year Estimates

### School Enrollment, Educational Attainment and Employment Status: Ages 16 to 19 Years

Data found in Tables 115 and 116 represents school enrollment and educational attainment by employment status for individuals ages 16 to 19 years. Over 43 percent of youth ages 16 to 19 in Virginia participate in the labor force. Rates for youth that participate in the labor force in Virginia exceed the US averages by roughly between 1 and 5 percent as noted in each geographic designation.

Table 117 contains data for the United States and Virginia, including urban and rural statistics.

Table 117

#### *Education and Employment for Ages 16 to 19 Years: United States and Virginia*

	United States		Virginia	
	Total Population	Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled	Total Population	Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled
<i>Total:</i>	17,166,913	-----	448,646	-----
<i>Enrolled in school:</i>	14,586,802	85.0%	380,726	84.9%
<i>Employed</i>	4,376,969	30.0%	123,872	32.5%
<i>Unemployed</i>	716,681	4.9%	20,787	5.5%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	9,493,152	65.1%	236,067	62.0%
<i>Not enrolled in school:</i>	2,580,111	15.0%	67,920	15.1%
<i>High school graduate (includes equivalency):</i>	1,942,619	75.3%	57,938	85.3%

	<i>United States</i>		<i>Virginia</i>	
	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled</i>
<i>Employed</i>	1,218,482	62.7%	40,931	70.6%
<i>Unemployed</i>	218,035	11.2%	6,602	11.4%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	506,102	26.1%	10,405	18.0%
<i>Not high school graduate:</i>	637,492	24.7%	9,982	14.7%
<i>Employed</i>	246,172	38.6%	3,947	39.5%
<i>Unemployed</i>	69,663	10.9%	1,314	13.2%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	321,657	50.5%	4,721	47.3%
<i>Total Labor Force Participation</i>	6,846,002	39.9%	197,453	44.0%
<i>Total Not in labor force</i>	10,320,911	60.1%	251,193	56.0%
	<i>United States - Urban</i>		<i>Virginia - Urban</i>	
	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled</i>
<i>Total:</i>	14,088,731	-----	359,654	-----
<i>Enrolled in school:</i>	12,079,858	85.7%	308,173	85.7%
<i>Employed</i>	3,579,733	29.6%	101,348	32.9%
<i>Unemployed</i>	610,653	5.1%	17,240	5.6%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	7,889,472	65.3%	189,585	61.5%

	<i>United States</i>		<i>Virginia</i>	
	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled</i>
<i>Not enrolled in school:</i>	2,008,873	14.3%	51,481	14.3%
<i>High school graduate (includes equivalency):</i>	1,531,536	76.2%	43,613	84.7%
<i>Employed</i>	958,683	62.6%	30,622	70.2%
<i>Unemployed</i>	173,068	11.3%	5,145	11.8%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	399,785	26.1%	7,846	18.0%
<i>Not high school graduate:</i>	477,337	23.8%	7,868	15.3%
<i>Employed</i>	177,203	37.1%	3,140	39.9%
<i>Unemployed</i>	54,911	11.5%	1,224	15.6%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	245,223	51.4%	3,504	44.5%
<i>Total Labor Force Participation</i>	5,554,251	39.4%	158,719	44.1%
<i>Total Not in labor force</i>	8,534,480	60.6%	200,935	55.9%
	<i>United States - Rural</i>		<i>Virginia - Rural</i>	
	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled</i>
<i>Total:</i>	3,078,182	-----	88,992	-----
<i>Enrolled in school:</i>	2,506,944	81.4%	72,553	81.5%
<i>Employed</i>	797,236	31.8%	22,524	31.0%



	<i>United States</i>		<i>Virginia</i>	
	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/ Not Enrolled</i>
<i>Unemployed</i>	106,028	4.2%	3,547	4.9%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	1,603,680	64.0%	46,482	64.1%
<i>Not enrolled in school:</i>	571,238	18.6%	16,439	18.5%
<i>High school graduate (includes equivalency):</i>	411,083	72.0%	14,325	87.1%
<i>Employed</i>	259,799	63.2%	10,309	72.0%
<i>Unemployed</i>	44,967	10.9%	1,457	10.2%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	106,317	25.9%	2,559	17.9%
<i>Not high school graduate:</i>	160,155	28.0%	2,114	12.9%
<i>Employed</i>	68,969	43.1%	807	38.2%
<i>Unemployed</i>	14,752	9.2%	90	4.3%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	76,434	47.7%	1,217	57.6%
<i>Total Labor Force Participation</i>	3,078,182	42.0%	38,734	43.5%
<i>Total Not in labor force</i>	1,786,431	58.0%	50,258	56.5%

Source: ACS 1-Year Estimates Detailed Tables

RO5 has the lowest percentage of youth that are not enrolled in school, yet have attained high school graduation, and are employed and participating in the labor force (57%). Rates for youth ages 16 to 19 that are not enrolled in school, have not attained high school graduation, and are not in the labor force exceed 49 percent in all ROs with the exception of RO4 where the rate is slightly less than 40 percentage points

Table 118 represents school enrollment and educational attainment by employment status for individuals ages 16 to 19 years in Virginia's regional office service areas.

Table 118  
*Education and Employment for Ages 16 to 19 Years: Workforce Development Areas*

	<i>RO1</i>		<i>RO2</i>	
	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/</i>
		<i>Not Enrolled</i>		<i>Not Enrolled</i>
<i>Total:</i>	16,588	-----	149,270	-----
<i>Enrolled in school:</i>	13,645	82.3%	132,537	88.8%
<i>Employed</i>	3,706	27.2%	39,343	29.7%
<i>Unemployed</i>	905	6.6%	6,668	5.0%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	9,034	66.2%	86,526	65.3%
<i>Not enrolled in school:</i>	2,943	17.7%	16,733	11.2%
<i>High school graduate (includes equivalency):</i>	2,397	81.4%	13,050	78.0%
<i>Employed</i>	1,561	65.1%	8,534	65.4%
<i>Unemployed</i>	250	10.4%	1,420	10.9%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	586	24.4%	3,096	23.7%
<i>Not high school graduate:</i>	546	18.6%	3,683	22.0%
<i>Employed</i>	167	30.6%	1,330	36.1%
<i>Unemployed</i>	81	14.8%	393	10.7%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	298	54.6%	1,960	53.2%
<i>Total Labor Force Participation</i>	6,670	40.2%	57,688	38.6%
<i>Total Not in labor force</i>	9,918	59.8%	91,582	61.4%
	<i>RO3</i>		<i>RO4</i>	

	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/</i>
		<i>Not Enrolled</i>		<i>Not Enrolled</i>
<i>Total:</i>	96,208	-----	74,748	-----
<i>Enrolled in school:</i>	78,697	81.8%	64,755	86.6%
<i>Employed</i>	22,454	28.5%	19,532	30.2%
<i>Unemployed</i>	5,188	6.6%	4,236	6.5%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	51,055	64.9%	40,987	63.3%
<i>Not enrolled in school:</i>	17,511	18.2%	9,993	13.4%
<i>High school graduate (includes equivalency):</i>	15,721	89.8%	7,871	78.8%
<i>Employed</i>	11,709	74.5%	4,719	60.0%
<i>Unemployed</i>	1,452	9.2%	1,413	18.0%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	2,560	16.3%	1,739	22.1%
<i>Not high school graduate:</i>	1,790	10.2%	2,122	21.2%
<i>Employed</i>	616	34.4%	959	45.2%
<i>Unemployed</i>	290	16.2%	316	14.9%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	884	49.4%	847	39.9%
<i>Total Labor Force Participation</i>	41,709	43.4%	31,175	41.7%
<i>Total Not in labor force</i>	54,499	56.6%	43,573	58.3%
	<i>RO5</i>		<i>RO6</i>	
	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/</i>	<i>Total Population</i>	<i>Percent of Enrolled/</i>

		<i>Not Enrolled</i>		<i>Not Enrolled</i>
<i>Total:</i>	61,328	-----	47,705	-----
<i>Enrolled in school:</i>	54,467	88.8%	41,910	87.9%
<i>Employed</i>	15,869	29.1%	11,108	26.5%
<i>Unemployed</i>	2,148	3.9%	1,986	4.7%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	36,450	66.9%	28,816	68.8%
<i>Not enrolled in school:</i>	6,861	11.2%	5,795	12.1%
<i>High school graduate (includes equivalency):</i>	5,525	80.5%	4,884	84.3%
<i>Employed</i>	3,152	57.0%	3,490	71.5%
<i>Unemployed</i>	731	13.2%	454	9.3%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	1,642	29.7%	940	19.2%
<i>Not high school graduate:</i>	1,336	19.5%	911	15.7%
<i>Employed</i>	337	25.2%	254	27.9%
<i>Unemployed</i>	179	13.4%	92	10.1%
<i>Not in labor force</i>	820	61.4%	565	62.0%
<i>Total Labor Force Participation</i>	22,416	36.6%	17,384	36.4%
<i>Total Not in labor force</i>	38,912	63.4%	30,321	63.6%

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2019 American Community Survey 2014-2019 5-Year Estimates

### **Bureau of Labor Statistics Youth Labor Force Participation and Unemployment Rates Including Youth with Disabilities**

The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics collects information on the Nation's youth labor force participation and unemployment by age. The data indicates that the labor force participation rates for youth with disabilities are lower by 7% or more compared to individuals without disabilities when youth are ages 16-19. However, once the group ages to 20 to 24 years, the disparity grows dramatically to more than 20 percentage points.

The Annual 2021 unemployment rate for ages 20 to 24 with disabilities is 7.8 percentage points higher than those without disabilities. In November of 2021, the unemployment rate difference between those with disabilities and those without disabilities ages 20 to 24 rises to over 10 percent.

Table 119 details National data for youth ages 16 to 19 and 20 to 24 with and without disabilities.

Table 119

*Youth LFP and Unemployment Rates: Oct.-Dec. 2021 and Annual 2121*

Group	Youth Labor Force Participation Rate							
	Oct-21		Nov-21		Dec-21		Annual 2021	
	Disability	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability	No Disability
Age 16 to 19	24.8%	35.7%	25.2%	35.2%	27.4%	34.4%	24.3%	36.8%
Age 20 to 24	52.1%	72.2%	51.9%	72.4%	49.2%	72.2%	46.7%	72.0%
	Youth Unemployment Rate							
	Disability	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability	No Disability	Disability	No Disability
Age 16 to 19	23.2%	10.7%	25.5%	10.0%	15.7%	9.3%	21.1%	11.4%
Age 20 to 24	11.3%	6.7%	16.7%	6.3%	15.1%	6.1%	16.5%	8.7%

Source: Borbely, James @bls.gov

### Cornell University Youth Employment by Disability Type

Cornell University provides online disability statistics for National and State youth employment. The employment data for youth with disabilities ages 16 to 20 differs slightly from the same data for individuals ages 18 to 64 who are employed and report disabilities. Youth ages 16 to 20 reporting visual disabilities have the second highest employment rate in the Nation compared to other disabilities that are reported. Virginia's rate for employed youth ages 16 to 20 reporting a visual disability is 30.8 percent, exceeding the National average by 1.3 percentage points.

The following data in Table 120 contains 2018 youth employment rates for the Nation and the State by disability type. The designated category is comprised of non-institutionalized youth ages 16 to 20, male and female, from all ethnic backgrounds and includes all education levels.

Table 120  
 2018 Employment by Disability Type for Non-institutionalized Youth Ages 16 -20

Disability Type	Percent Employed in US	Percent Employed in VA
Any Disability	25.5%	28.7%
Visual Disability	29.5%	30.8%
Hearing Disability	32.7%	37.6%
Ambulatory Disability	16.6%	14.6%
Cognitive Disability	22.6%	24.4%
Self-Care Disability	8.6%	8.6%
Independent Living Disability	13.6%	21.5%

Source: <http://www.disabilitystatistics.org/>

Table 121 identifies the case movement and outcomes for youth coded as transition students, and those aged 14-24, who may or may not be transition students.

Table 121  
 General Case Information – Transition and Youth

Item	Transition 14-24			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Applications	82	73	88	61
% of apps found eligible	97.5%	100.0%	97.7%	96.7%
Avg. time for eligibility determination	54	54	47	38
Significance of Disability				
Disabled	0	0	0	0
% of total	0%	0%	0%	0%
Significant	4	1	0	2
% of total	5%	1%	0%	3%
Most significant	76	72	86	57
% of total	95.0%	98.6%	100.0%	96.6%
% closed prior to IPE development	25.0%	23.3%	20.9%	18.6%
Plans developed	60	56	68	48
Avg. time from eligibility to plan (days) INCLUDING DELAYED STATUS IN OOS	281	329	289	112
Number of consumers in training by type				

Item	Transition 14-24			
	2017	2018	2019	2020
Vocational	59	26	73	50
Undergraduate	20	8	15	9
Graduate	2	0	0	0
Credential attainment rate	n/a	40	16.7	65.4
Measurable skill gain rate	19.4	56	82.6	86.4
Ave. length of open case (days) for cases closed other than rehabilitated	666	325	275	806
Ave. length of open case (days) for cases closed rehabilitated	510.57	439	279	N/A
Number of cases closed rehabilitated	9	23	19	11
Employment rate at exit	19.6	33.8	44.2	21.6
Employment rate in 2nd quarter after exit	n/a	39.1	42.1	49.2
Employment rate in 4th quarter after exit	n/a	38.9	33.3	39.1
Median earnings of those closed as successfully rehabilitated	\$12.00	\$18.00	\$20.00	\$20.00
Total number of cases served	463	439	402	422
Rate of all served	40.7%	43.2%	42.4%	42.8%

The number of transition-age youth applying for services ranged from 73-88 in PYs 2017-2019 before dropping to 61 in PY 2020. This decrease was a result of the pandemic and the impact of school closures and the shift to remote service delivery. The average time frame for eligibility determinations for transition-age youth decreased during the four-year period, ending at 38 days. This is well below the established time frame of 60 days maximum in the Rehabilitation Act. All of the youth found eligible were determined to have at least a significant disability, with more than 96% having a most significant disability in PY 2020.

The credential attainment rate and MSG rate for youth was consistent with all other DBVI consumers. The employment rate at exit in PY 2020 was significantly lower than the general population of DBVI consumers, though the employment rate in the second and fourth quarters after exit were consistent with all other participants. The median earnings for youth were also equal to all consumers.

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### ***PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES***

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The Rehabilitation Act as amended in WIOA requires VR programs to expend at least 15% of their Federal allotment annually on pre-employment transition services. These services must be made available to all eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities in the State that have need of such services. These services include:

1. Job exploration counseling;
2. Work-based learning experiences;
3. Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
4. Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living (often referred to as soft skills); and
5. Instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring

Although the pandemic significantly impacted the school system in Virginia and the country, DBVI was able to shift to remote service delivery of pre-employment transition services and create a number of exceptional programs for students with blindness and vision impairments. The agency received unanimous praise from all of the individuals interviewed for this study related to their ability to respond to the needs of students during the pandemic. A list of pre-employment transition services programs developed by the agency includes the following:

STEM programs:

- June 2017-18-19 Robotics and Cyber Academy for hands-on Career Exploration- in person
- December 2019 In Person IT Credential Fair- separate session for students- 98 registered
- December 2020 Virtual IT Credential Fair- separate session for students- 116 registered
- 2020 Fall and 2021- Spring and Fall cohort- virtual Tiered IT Training beginning with fundamental Comp TIA, followed by foundational training in ITIL or other
- July 2020, Raspberry Pi and the Security Camera Academy-virtual
- June 2021, Raspberry Pi and the Security Camera Academy-virtual
- June 2021, Leap into Linux Academy-virtual
- July 2021, Ethical Hacker Academy-virtual
- August 2021, HTML Hero Academy-virtual

Other programs not specifically STEM:

- ACE Academy for College Success- in person- January 2020
- ACE Advocacy for College- Jan -February 2021
- ACE Promoting Student Success (PASS) Jan-February 2021
- Ace Academy Resiliency- April 2021
- Ace Academy Career Exploration- May and June 2021
- Ace leadership for College success- May and June 2021
- Financial Literacy- June and July 2021
- Advocating for Science- September and October, 2021

The project team examined the delivery of pre-employment transition services to students with blindness and vision impairments using the RSA 911 data and the pre-employment transition services tool published by RSA. Table 122 contains this information.



Table 122  
*Pre-Employment Transition Services Provided PY 2017-2020*

<b>Item</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Total Number of SWD Participants in VR Program	212	187	230	237
Total number of potentially eligible SWD in DBVI	17	93	98	38
Number of potentially eligible SWD who received a pre-ETS service	10	69	27	10
Percent of potentially eligible SWD that received a pre-ETS service	58.8%	74.2%	27.6%	26.3%

Despite the pandemic, the number of students with disabilities increased from 2018-2020. In addition, the number of potentially eligible students decreased significantly during that time. This indicates that DBVI is maximizing the number of potentially eligible students that apply to the VR program and become participants. Consequently, the agency is able to charge a number of supportive services that help students participate in the five required services to the 15% pre-employment transition services reserve.

All of the five required services were cited by staff, partners and parents of consumers as needed and beneficial. Consistent with the last CSNA in 2018/19, work experience was identified as the most beneficial activity in terms of preparing students for future work. An analysis of the RSA data dashboards for DBVI indicates that the agency is providing the five required services evenly in terms of percentage of all services offered. Work-based learning experiences have become the most frequently provided pre-employment transition service by DBVI, indicating that the agency responded quickly and efficiently to the input from the previous CSNA.

The Rehabilitation Act as reauthorized in WIOA also indicates that the following authorized services can be provided if funds remain after the provision of the five required services noted above:

1. Implementing effective strategies to increase the likelihood of independent living and inclusion in communities and competitive integrated workplaces;
2. Developing and improving strategies for individuals with intellectual disabilities and individuals with significant disabilities to live independently, participate in postsecondary education experiences, and obtain and retain competitive integrated employment;
3. Providing instruction to vocational rehabilitation counselors, school transition personnel, and other persons supporting students with disabilities;
4. Disseminating information about innovative, effective, and efficient approaches to achieve the goals of this section;
5. Coordinating activities with transition services provided by local educational agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.);
6. Applying evidence-based findings to improve policy, procedure, practice, and the preparation of personnel, in order to better achieve the goals of this section;

7. Developing model transition demonstration projects;
8. Establishing or supporting multistate or regional partnerships involving States, local educational agencies, designated State units, developmental disability agencies, private businesses, or other participants to achieve the goals of this section; and
9. Disseminating information and strategies to improve the transition to postsecondary activities of individuals who are members of traditionally unserved populations.

To determine if a VR agency can move from the five required services to the nine authorized services, a fiscal forecasting model must be utilized which identifies the expenditures on the required services and on coordination services and then forecasts how much of the remaining funds, if any, can be utilized to pay for authorized services. DBVI conducts this forecast annually and the results of the most recent forecast are included below.

### **Movement from Required to Authorized Activities**

#### **DBVI Fiscal Forecasting 2021**

##### **Describe the agency's methods for identifying students and youth with disabilities in the State**

DBVI utilized the Virginia Department of Education data as of December, 2020 for students identified as having a Visual Impairment (VI) or were identified as Deaf-Blind (DB) and who would potentially be in the age group to receive Pre-ETS (14 to 21). The data provided included a range of students who would have graduated from 12<sup>th</sup> grade in 2018 (but have remained in school until age 22) to students who would not reach graduation until 2022 and therefore would typically be 14 years old. From this data, it was determined that there are a total of 259 Visually Impaired students and 20 Deaf-Blind students, for a total of 279 students that are potentially eligible for pre-employment transition services.

DBVI also collected data on those individuals who are currently receiving Educational Services through DBVI for the age range of 14 through 21. The number of individuals being served through Educational Services with DBVI was determined to be 897 open cases, with 327 of those also open with Vocational Rehabilitation. Therefore, there are a total of 570 open Educational Services cases that have not been referred for Vocational Rehabilitation services that could potentially be provided pre-employment transition services.

Given that the number of individuals currently being served by DBVI through Educational Services (including those who are already open with Vocational Rehabilitation) is much larger than the Department of Education number of Visually Impaired and Deafblind students, DBVI has established the larger Educational Services number as individuals who could potentially be provided pre-employment transition services and thus elected to use that number for purposes of determining the amount of the required reserved funds.

DBVI established the need for pre-employment transition services based on the previous CSNA, feedback from Education partners, collaboration with IL instructors, and first-hand exposure through the education and rehabilitation system.

**The agency should have sufficient documentation to demonstrate:**

**1. The number of students with disabilities in the state and potentially eligible to receive pre-employment transition services (pre-ETS):**

Department of Education (DOE) data from June, 2020 regarding the number of Visually Impaired and Deafblind students in the age group of 14 to 21 was collected as well as data regarding those individuals who are currently receiving Educational Services through DBVI in order to establish the number of students with disabilities in Virginia who are potentially eligible to receive pre-ETS.

**2. Develop a target amount of reserve funds that will be necessary to provide the required pre-ETS to students with disabilities**

For Fiscal Year 2021, DBVI had a total Vocational Rehabilitation Allotment of \$8,830,760. DBVI will establish a reserve fund for pre-employment transition services of \$1,558,369.

DBVI has vendor agreements with eight vendors to provide statewide Pre-ETS services to students with disabilities. The average cost per student for these services over the course of one year is \$1200. Accordingly, DBVI will ensure a total of \$1,076,400 be reserved for those required pre-ETS services.

**3. Have made the required services available to these students with disabilities**

All students who are currently being served through DBVI's Educational Services who are within the age range of 14 to 22 are being contacted to inform them of the availability of Pre-ETS services, whether or not they are currently open with VR. If there is interest, the contact information for that student and family will be provided to the appropriate VR counselor who will contact the individual to discuss their specific needs and interests regarding pre-ETS services.

**4. Have done the fiscal forecasting to determine the amount of reserve funds remaining**

There is a total of \$481,969 remaining to expend on authorized activities.

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***SURVEY RESULTS BY TYPE***

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**PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS**

**Partner Survey: Barriers to Employment Goals for Youth in Transition**

Partners were asked two questions related to barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are youth with blindness and vision impairments and in transition.

Partners were asked whether or not the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are youth with blindness and vision impairments and in transition were different from the general population of DBVI consumers. The sample size was 13 respondents. The majority of the respondents indicated that the barriers to achieving employment goals were different for youth in transition. Table 123 details the results to the question.

Table 123

*Partner Survey: Different Barriers – Youth in Transition*

<b>Barriers To Goals Different for Youth in Transition</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	8	61.5%
No	5	38.5%
<b>Total</b>	13	100.0%

Partner respondents were asked to identify the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are youth with vision impairments and in transition. Nine respondents ranked the barriers.

The results indicate that the barriers to achieving employment goals are not different for the general population of DBVI consumers and for DBVI consumers who are youth in transition. Caution is used to analyze the results and making the inference that the barriers are not different because the sample size is small. Two of three top barriers that partners selected for DBVI consumers who are youth with vision impairments and in transition were also listed in the top three barriers selected for the general population. “Not having education or training” ranked in a tie for the second position on the youth list and ranked in a tie for the fourth position on the general consumer list. Table 124 details the results.

Table 124

*Partner Survey: Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals – Youth in Transition*

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - Youth in Transition</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Not having job skills	5	55.6%
Not having education or training	4	44.4%
Disability-related transportation issues	4	44.4%
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	3	33.3%
Poor social skills	3	33.3%
Not having job search skills	2	22.2%
Not enough jobs available	2	22.2%

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - Youth in Transition</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	1	11.1%

**Partner Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – Youth in Transition**

Partner respondents were presented a “yes-no” question asking them to identify whether or not the difficulties to accessing DBVI services is different for DBVI consumers who are youth in transition compared to the general population of DBVI consumers. Partner respondents indicated that the difficulties accessing DBVI services is not different for DBVI consumers who are youth in transition by roughly 69 percent. Table 125 summarizes the results.

Table 125

*Partner Survey: Difficulty To Access DBVI Services Different for Youth in Transition*

<b>Difficulty To Access DBVI Different for Youth in Transition</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	9	69.2%
Yes	4	30.8%
<b>Total</b>	13	100.0%

Partners were presented with a subsequent question asking them to identify the top three reasons DBVI consumers who are youth in transition have difficulty accessing services. Four respondents answered the question, making the sample size too small for making inferences. Important to note that the top-ranking reason partners selected for why youth in transition have difficulty accessing DBVI services is the same item partners selected for the general population of consumers (slow service delivery).

Table 126

*Partner Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – Youth in Transition*

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services - Youth in Transition</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Slow service delivery	3	75.0%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office	2	50.0%
Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation	1	25.0%
Difficulties completing the application	1	25.0%
Inadequate assessment services	1	0.0%

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services - Youth in Transition</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Difficulties accessing training or education programs	1	25.0%
Other (please describe)	1	25.0%
DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live	1	25.0%
DBVI staff are not responsive to communication from clients or potential clients	1	25.0%
<b>Total</b>	12	

### STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

#### Staff Survey: Barriers to Employment Goals for Youth in Transition

Staff were asked two questions related to barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are youth with blindness and vision impairments in transition to college, career, and adulthood.

When asked about the differences in barriers to achieving employment goals, the majority of staff believe the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are youth with blindness and vision impairments were different from the general population of DBVI consumers. Table 127 details the results to the question.

Table 127

*Staff Survey: Different Barriers – Youth in Transition*

<b>Barriers To Goals Different for Youth in Transition</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	35	79.6%
No	9	20.5%
<b>Total</b>	44	100.0%

Staff respondents were presented with a subsequent question and asked to identify the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are youth in transition. Staff result lists for both the youth and the general population of DBVI consumers cited “not having job skills” as the top barrier and the remaining barriers were in a different ranking order. When comparing staff result list to the partner result list for the same question, the top two barriers match. Table 128 details the results.

Table 128

*Staff Survey: Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals – Youth in Transition*

<b>Top Three Barriers to Employment Goals - Youth in Transition</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Not having job skills	28	70.0%
Not having education or training	13	32.5%
Not having job search skills	13	32.5%
Poor social skills	13	32.5%
Disability-related transportation issues	11	27.5%
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	7	17.5%
Other (please describe)	6	15.0%
Not enough jobs available	4	10.0%
Other transportation issues	4	10.0%
Mental health issues	4	10.0%
Not having disability-related accommodations	1	2.5%
Substance abuse issues	1	2.5%
Other health issues	1	2.5%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	1	2.5%
Convictions for criminal offenses	1	2.5%
<b>Total</b>	108	

**Staff Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – Youth in Transition**

Staff respondents were presented a “yes-no” question asking them to identify whether or not the difficulties to accessing DBVI services is different for DBVI consumers who are youth in transition compared to the general population of DBVI consumers. Staff indicated that the difficulties accessing DBVI services is not different for DBVI consumers who are youth in transition by roughly 56 percent. Table 129 summarizes the results.

Table 129

*Staff Survey: Difficulty To Access DBVI Services Different for Youth in Transition*

<b>Difficulty To Access DBVI Different for Youth in Transition</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	24	55.8%
Yes	19	44.2%
<b>Total</b>	43	100.0%

When asked a subsequent question that required staff to identify the top three reasons DBVI consumers who are youth in transition have difficulty accessing services, staff selected the same top three reasons that they selected for consumers who require supported employment and two of the same reasons that they selected for the general population of consumers. Table 130 details the staff responses to the question.

Table 130

*Staff Survey: Accessing DBVI Services – Youth in Transition*

<b>Top Three Reasons Difficult to Access DBVI Services - Youth in Transition</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Difficulties accessing training or education programs	10	50.0%
Slow service delivery	8	40.0%
Inadequate assessment services	7	35.0%
Inadequate disability-related accommodations	5	25.0%
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment	5	25.0%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office	4	20.0%
Language barriers	4	20.0%
Other (please describe)	4	20.0%
DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live	3	15.0%
Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation	2	10.0%
Difficulties completing the application	1	5.0%
<b>Total</b>	53	



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*INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS*

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**The following recurring themes emerged related to the needs of youth with blindness and vision impairments in transition:**

1. Transportation to and from school and work was the most common rehabilitation and employment need mentioned for students and youth with blindness and vision impairments. The lack of reliable or available transportation, especially in the rural areas, affects every area of the lives of youth and can significantly limit their work options.
2. Low vision technology and other assistive technology is needed for youth and students with blindness and vision impairments to prepare for their career and perform the essential functions of their jobs.
3. All of the five required pre-employment transition services required activities were consistently cited as needed by students with disabilities. As indicated earlier, work-based learning experiences were the most frequently cited need, but self-advocacy and soft-skills training were also mentioned frequently. DBVI staff do most of the counseling on postsecondary training opportunities in-house, and most of the youth and students they serve have educational goals beyond secondary school.
4. The LIFE summer program at VRCBVI and the STEPS to Success program received high praise from many interview participants, as did much of the virtual and in-person training programs offered at VRCBVI by DBVI.
5. Although the pandemic adversely affected enrollment at VRCBVI and in-person attendance at school, the agency found that the shift to virtual training and programming opened the doors for more students and youth to participate, which was a positive outcome.
6. DBVI's counselors work closely with the Teachers for the Visually Impaired (TVIs) in most of the school districts. When the relationship between the TVIs and DBVI are close, services for students with blindness and vision impairments are coordinated and comprehensive. In many rural areas where schools have limited resources and there may not be a TVI, services to youth are adversely impacted.
7. The agency added resiliency and financial literacy training to their pre-employment transition services programs. These new offerings were considered as positive, needed and helpful for students.
8. The transition from secondary school to college can be a major challenge for youth with blindness or vision impairments as they have had someone in secondary school actively work to meet their accommodation needs, but when they get to college, this must be a self-directed process. Interview participants indicated it generally takes at least one, and often two semesters before they get their technology and reasonable accommodation needs met in college. This creates a slow start to their higher education pursuits which can be frustrating and result in a delay in achieving their goals.

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*RECOMMENDATIONS*

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**The following recommendations are provided to DBVI related to the needs of youth with blindness and vision impairments in transition:**

1. DBVI should continue to develop virtual and in-person options for training and pre-employment transition services. The agency has received national recognition for the training for students and youth with blindness and vision impairments, especially the training that is offered in Science, Technology, Engineering and Math (STEM) occupations. DBVI should continue to develop these options that contribute to training students and youth to work in high-demand, high-paying career-level occupations;
2. The use of advanced technology such as AI programs to interact with students with blindness and vision impairments can contribute the ability of DBVI to recruit students and youth and help keep them engaged in the VR process. DBVI is encouraged to explore these possibilities as resources allow and to expand their use of social media platforms to attract and engage youth;
3. DBVI is encouraged to connect youth that are transitioning to college from secondary education with the college student ability centers prior to beginning their first semester of college work to ensure that all of their reasonable accommodation needs are met. This will help ensure these individuals get a good start to their education pursuits; and
4. DBVI is encouraged to consider developing a peer mentoring program for youth with disabilities in Virginia. One possibility is an online peer mentoring program available through PolicyWorks at <https://disabilitypolicyworks.org/peer-mentoringworks-2/>. A key component of this mentoring program is the development of self-advocacy skills in youth and students with disabilities.

## **SECTION 5**

### **NEEDS OF INDIVIDUALS WITH BLINDNESS AND VISION IMPAIRMENTS SERVED THROUGH OTHER COMPONENTS OF THE STATEWIDE WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT SYSTEM**

The following information was gathered during this assessment in the area of the needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments served through other components of the statewide workforce development system. The core partners in the Workforce Development System include the following:

Title I: The Adult, Dislocated Worker and Youth programs

Title II: The Adult Education and Family Literacy program

Title III: The Wagner-Peyser program (Employment Services)

Title IV: The Vocational Rehabilitation Program (General and Blind in Virginia)

The pandemic was especially impactful on the American Job Center (AJCs) system in Virginia and the nation. All of the AJCs closed for many months and were only available for remote services. This significantly impacted the partnerships at the local level between DBVI and the AJCs. Much of the ground that was gained in their partnership prior to COVID-19 was lost during the pandemic according to the staff and partners. The State-level partnership between the core partners is very strong and there is every expectation that the progress that was stalled during the pandemic will begin again. However, during this study, it had been several months since most of the DBVI staff had even spoken to their AJC partners due to the pandemic. The reader is cautioned to interpret these findings in this context.

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#### ***Recurring Themes Across all Data Collection Methods***

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The following themes emerged in the area of the needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments served through other components of the statewide workforce development system:

1. There has been considerable progress in the relationship between DBVI and the core partners at the State level since the previous CSNA. Joint planning and frequent communication are common among partners.
2. Virginia DARS (the General agency) is an important Workforce partner for DBVI. The relationship between DARS and DBVI was characterized as helpful and beneficial. DBVI staff and partners indicated that the relationship with DARS is especially helpful when a DBVI consumer has a mental health impairment, and they can take advantage of the expertise and resources of the General agency.

3. Although the State-level relationship between DBVI and the core partners was described as good and improved, relationships at the local levels were primarily based on referral alone. AJC staff were generally described as struggling to work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments, uncertain what to do, and untrained on how to use the AT in the AJCs when it is functioning. AJC staff need frequent and regular training in order to effectively work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments.

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***SURVEY RESULT BY TYPE:***

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**INDIVIDUAL SURVEY:**

**Virginia Workforce Centers**

Individuals with blindness and vision impairments in Virginia were asked a series of questions about their use and opinion of the Virginia Workforce Centers.

Seventy respondents answered the survey question regarding utilizing the Virginia workforce centers beyond an online account and twenty percent (n=14) indicated “yes” they used services. Of the respondents that utilized Virginia Workforce Centers beyond creating an online account, physical accessibility of the building was difficult for seven percent of the respondents (n=1) and access to programs was challenging for 21.4 percent (n=3). Table 131 summarizes the responses to questions of use and accessibility.

Table 131

*Virginia Workforce Centers’ Use and Accessibility*

Accessibility Questions	Yes	Percent of Total	No	Percent of Total	Total Number of Responses
Have you ever tried to use the services of the Virginia Workforce Centers beyond creating an online account? (this may include testing, preparing for or finding employment, job coaching, training assistive technology or other services)	14	20.0%	56	80.0%	70
Did you experience any difficulties with the physical accessibility of the building?	1	7.1%	13	92.9%	14
Did you have any difficulty accessing the programs at the Virginia Workforce Centers (i.e.	3	21.4%	11	78.6%	14

<b>Accessibility Questions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Total Number of Responses</b>
no available assistive technology, no interpreters, etc.)?)					

A low sample of respondents used the Virginia Workforce Centers to obtain training or a job. Of those who used the Centers' services for finding a job, 20 percent (n=2) found employment.

Table 132 details the results to the questions regarding training and employment.

Table 132

*Virginia Workforce Centers' Training and Employment*

<b>Training and Employment Questions</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>No</b>	<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>Total Number of Responses</b>
Did you go to the Virginia Workforce Centers to get training?	3	21.4%	11	78.6%	14
Did you get the training that you were seeking?	1	33.3%	2	66.7%	3
Did the Virginia Workforce Centers training result in employment?	0	0.0%	4	100.0%	4
Did you go to the Virginia Workforce Centers to find a job?	10	71.4%	4	28.6%	14
Did the Virginia Workforce Centers staff help you find employment?	2	20.0%	8	80.0%	10

The concept of helpfulness and effectiveness is evaluated in this study with respect to Virginia Workforce Center services. Fourteen respondents answered the question regarding helpfulness and 13 respondents answered the questions regarding the effectiveness of the Workforce Centers. An equal percentage of respondents found the Workforce Center staff to be "somewhat helpful" or "not helpful." Similarly, in regard to the effectiveness of the Virginia Workforce Centers, an equal percentage of respondents found the Workforce Center services to be "somewhat effective" or "not effective" in serving individuals with disabilities. In terms of overall effectiveness rating, roughly 31 percent of the respondents did not have an opinion while 46.2 percent selected either "very ineffective" or "somewhat ineffective." Table 133 identifies the rating for helpfulness of the Workforce Centers' staff by the individuals that responded to the survey. Table 134 details the effectiveness of the Centers.

Table 133  
*Helpfulness of the Virginia Workforce Centers' Staff*

Virginia Workforce Center Staff	Number	Percent
They were somewhat helpful	6	42.9%
No, they were not helpful	6	42.9%
Yes, they were very helpful	2	14.3%
<b>Total</b>	14	100.0%

Table 134  
*Effectiveness of the Virginia Workforce Center Services*

Effectiveness of Center Services	Number	Percent
The services were somewhat effective	6	46.2%
No, the services were not effective	6	46.2%
Yes, the services were very effective	1	7.7%
<b>Total</b>	13	100.0%
Effectiveness Rating	Number	Percent
No opinion	4	30.8%
Somewhat ineffective	3	23.1%
Very ineffective	3	23.1%
Somewhat effective	2	15.4%
Very effective	1	7.7%
<b>Total</b>	13	100.0%

When asked, “What recommendations do you have for the Virginia Workforce Centers to improve service to individuals with disabilities in Virginia?,” individual survey respondents were given an opportunity to provide a narrative response. Five comments were received and three provided specific feedback. Two narrative responses cited was “no idea/too long ago.” The three narrative responses are quoted:

- *“Help people instead of pushing people to do things they don't want to get into”*

- *“Not to rely on their personal knowledge of a person’s ability and knowledge. Respect privacy. Cannot see does not equal cannot read. Keyboards on computer should have a visually adapted unit.”*
- *“They have to know what kind job is needed for a disabled person”*

## STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

### Virginia Workforce Centers

Staff survey respondents in Virginia were asked a series of questions about their use and opinion of the Virginia Workforce Centers (American Job Centers).

Roughly 41 percent of staff respondents (n=18) indicated that they have referred DBVI consumers to the Virginia Workforce Centers. Although a minority of staff indicated that the Virginia Workforce Center assisted their consumers with training and finding employment, the majority of staff (n=12) indicated that the Job Center services are not effective. Staff were united in recommending that the Centers train their staff on how to work with people with blindness or other vision impairments.

Tables 135-138 details the survey responses from DBVI staff.

Table 135  
*Staff Referral to Virginia Workforce Job Centers*

Referral Question	Number	Percent
No	26	59.1%
Yes	18	40.9%
<b>Total</b>	44	100.0%

Table 136

*Staff Interaction with Virginia Workforce Job Centers' Training and Employment Services*

Training and Employment Questions	Yes		No		Never Referred		Total Number of Responses
	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	Number	% of Total	
Have the Virginia Workforce Centers helped any of your consumers to get training for a job?	5	29.4%	10	58.8%	2	11.8%	17
Have the Virginia Workforce Centers helped any of your consumers to get a job?	5	27.8%	10	55.6%	3	16.7%	18

Table 137

*Staff Opinion on Effectiveness of American Job Centers' Service to DBVI Consumers*

Effectiveness of American Job Centers to Serve Individuals with VI	Number	Percent
Not effectively	12	70.6%
Somewhat effectively	4	23.5%
They do not serve individuals with blindness or other vision impairments	1	5.9%
Very effectively	0	0.0%
Unsure	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	17	100.0%



Table 138

*Staff Opinion for Improving Service of American Job Centers for DBVI Consumers*

<b>Improving Service of the American Job Centers to Effectively Serve Individuals with Blindness and Vision Impairments</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Train their staff on how to work with people with blindness or other vision impairments	17	100.0%
Partner more effectively with DBVI	13	76.5%
Improve programmatic accessibility	11	64.7%
Include individuals with blindness or other vision impairments when they fund for training for consumers	10	58.8%
Other (please specify)	3	17.6%
Improve physical accessibility	1	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	55	

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*INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS*

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**The following information was gathered from the individuals interviewed for this assessment in the area of the needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments served through other components of the Statewide Workforce Development System:**

1. There has been considerable progress in the relationship between DBVI and the core partners at the State level since the previous CSNA. The Commissioner sits on the Statewide Workforce Development Board (SWDB) and The Director for VR and Workforce Services at DBVI has a primary role in bringing the core partners together and acts as staff to the SWDB. The result has been the development of stronger partnerships between DBVI and the other core partners. Joint planning and frequent communication are common among partners. DBVI plays a critical role on the SWDB in that they advocate for the accessibility of the AJCs and all partner programs and facilities.
2. Virginia DARS (the General agency) is an important Workforce partner for DBVI. The relationship between DARS and DBVI was generally characterized as helpful and beneficial. The agencies do share cases, but the level of service and the productivity of the relationship varies greatly from person to person. DBVI staff and partners indicated that the relationship with DARS is especially helpful when a DBVI consumer has a mental health impairment, and they can take advantage of the expertise and resources of the General agency. The Career Pathways grant was noted as a powerful linkage between the agencies and demonstrated how effective the relationship could be when working towards a common goal.
3. Although the State-level relationship between DBVI and the core partners was described as good and improved, relationships at the local levels were primarily based on referral alone. DBVI staff and partners indicate that if an individual with blindness or a vision impairment goes into an AJC, they are immediately referred to DBVI. AJC staff were generally described as unable to work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments, uncertain what to do, and untrained on how to use the AT in the AJCs when it is functioning. Although the data indicates that 11% of DBVI consumers were co-enrolled with at least one core partner in PY 2020, data was not available on which partners and what services were received, if any, beyond an online registration in the AJC system.
4. AJC staff need frequent and regular training in order to effectively work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments.
5. The core partners have developed a common referral portal which should aide in tracking co-enrollment, but the system is not full accessible and was being modified as of this assessment.

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*RECOMMENDATIONS*

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**The following recommendations are offered to DBVI based on the results of the research in the needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments served through other components of the Statewide Workforce Development System area:**

1. DBVI is encouraged to continue to work with the core partners to ensure that the common intake form is accessible. This will help develop the ability to track and analyze data on co-enrollment with core partners;
2. DBVI should identify successful partnerships with the AJCs and other core partners and tell the story of these successes to the field throughout the State so that they can try and be replicated. This may help the partnership to go beyond one of referral in many areas of the State;
3. DBVI is encouraged to continue to collaborate with the core partners to ensure physical and programmatic accessibility of their programs for individuals with blindness and vision impairments;
4. DBVI is encouraged to create customized training programs with their core partners in order to increase opportunities for braided funding and productive outcomes; and
5. DBVI should consider allowing a representative from the other core partners to come to VRCBVI and make presentations to participants on core program services and how they can be of assistance when the participants complete their adjustment to blindness training and return to their communities to look for work. DBVI should consider allowing core partners to outstation staff at VRCBVI on a regular basis to facilitate the exchange of information and an increase in co-enrollment.

## **SECTION 6**

### **NEED TO ESTABLISH, DEVELOP OR IMPROVE COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAMS IN VIRGINIA**

Section 6 identifies the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs in Virginia that serve individuals with blindness and vision impairments. DBVI provides the vast majority of services to their consumers with in-house staff, but they do purchase some services from community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) such as supported employment. The results of the surveys and interviews should be interpreted with the knowledge that DBVI is the primary service provider for their consumers.

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#### ***Recurring Themes Across all Data Collection Methods***

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The following themes emerged from all of the research methods in the area of the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs serving individuals with disabilities in Virginia:

1. DBVI continues to provide most of their consumer services through their own staff. They do use CRPs and other individual service providers for some services, but in-house service provision is the most common method of service delivery.
2. The focus on in-house service provision was beneficial for the agency during the pandemic as they were not as adversely affected by the loss of external service providers due to layoffs or high turnover as some other VR programs nationally.
3. There is a need to develop the ability of Employment Services Organizations (ESOs) to work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments.
4. There is a need to develop either internal or external vocational evaluation services for DBVI consumers. There is a lack of professional vocational evaluation services that are tailored to the needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments in Virginia.
5. There is a need to develop peer mentors for individuals with blindness and vision impairments, especially youth.

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***SURVEY RESULTS BY TYPE***

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**INDIVIDUAL SURVEY RESULTS**

**Service Providers**

Individual survey respondents were asked a series of questions identifying the quality, effectiveness, and responsiveness of their service provider and whether or not they would recommend their service provider to others.

Respondents were asked to rate the quality of the service from the service provider. A low number (n=22) of responses were received and over 77 percent (n=17) indicated that the quality of service from the service provider was either “excellent” or “good”. Table 139 details the results.

Table 139

*Quality of Service: Service Provider*

<b>Quality of Service: Service Provider</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Excellent	10	45.5%
Good	7	31.8%
Poor	3	13.6%
Fair	2	9.1%
<b>Total</b>	22	100.0%

Individuals were asked to rate the effectiveness of the service from the service provider. The majority rated the services from the service provider as “very effective.” The results are detailed in Table 140.

Table 140  
*Effectiveness of Service: Service Provider*

Effectiveness of Services: Service Provider	Number	Percent
Very effective	12	54.6%
Effective	4	18.2%
Somewhat ineffective	4	18.2%
Ineffective	2	9.1%
<b>Total</b>	22	100.0%

Respondents were also asked to rate the responsiveness of the service provider. Roughly 82 percent of the respondents rated the responsiveness of the service provider as either “excellent” or “good.” Table 141 summarizes the results.

Table 141  
*Responsiveness of Service: Service Provider*

Responsiveness of Service Provider	Number	Percent
Excellent	10	45.5%
Good	8	36.4%
Fair	3	13.6%
Poor	1	4.6%
<b>Total</b>	22	100.0%

The final question asked of individuals regarding service providers was “Would you recommend your service provider to others served by DBVI?” Almost 82 percent of the respondents indicated that they would recommend their service provider to others. The response ratings are contained in table 142.

Table 142  
*Recommend Service Provider*

Recommend Service Provider	Number	Percent
Yes	18	81.8%

<b>Recommend Service Provider</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
No	3	13.6%
Not sure	1	4.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

## PARTNER SURVEY RESULTS

### Partner Survey: Services Readily Available to DBVI Consumers

Partners were provided with a list of 18 items and asked to select the services that are readily available to DBVI consumers.

“Transition services” and “Pre-employment transition services” were identified by 70.6 percent of the 17 partner survey respondents who answered the question regarding the services most readily available. “Job development and placement services” and “assistive technology” were cited by an equal percentage of partners (58.8%) as the third most readily available service to consumers. Personal care attendants, affordable housing services, and financial literacy training were cited the least number of times as services readily available. One narrative response was received in the category of “other” and the comment did not cite another service as an option for consumers. Table 143 summarizes the services readily available as reported by partner survey respondents.

Table 143

*Partner Survey: Services Readily Available*

<b>Services Readily Available</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Transition services	12	70.6%
Pre-employment transition services	12	70.6%
Job development and placement services	10	58.8%
Assistive technology	10	58.8%
Vocational evaluation	8	47.1%
Independent living skills training	8	47.1%
Vocational training	8	47.1%

<b>Services Readily Available</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Job training services	7	41.2%
Mental health treatment	7	41.2%
Substance abuse treatment	6	35.3%
Public transportation	5	29.4%
Other transportation assistance	4	23.5%
Adjustment to blindness training	4	23.5%
Benefits planning assistance	4	23.5%
Personal care attendants	3	17.6%
Affordable housing services	3	17.6%
Financial literacy training	2	11.8%
Other (please describe)	1	5.9%
<b>Total</b>	<b>114</b>	

### **Partner Survey: Service Providers Meeting Consumer Needs**

Partner respondents were asked to identify whether or not rehabilitation service providers in the State of Virginia were able to meet DBVI consumers' vocational rehabilitation service needs.

Roughly 62.5 percent of the partner respondents indicated that service providers are able to meet the needs of DBVI consumers. Table 144 details the results to this question.



Table 144

*Ability of Rehabilitation Service Providers to Meet DBVI Consumer Vocational Needs*

<b>Rehab Service Providers Meet DBVI Consumer Vocational Needs</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	10	62.5%
No	6	37.5%
<b>Total</b>	16	100.0%

**Partner Survey: Service Needs that Rehabilitation Service Providers Are Unable to Meet**

Partners were provided a list of 18 items and asked to identify the service needs that rehabilitation service providers were unable to meet in the state of Virginia. There was no limit to the number of services that could be chosen.

Six partner respondents participated in answering this survey question. Table 145 contains the partners' choices of service needs that rehabilitation service providers are unable to meet. Assistive technology ranked in a tie for the third position as a service that is readily available in Table 143 yet tied with "job training services" and "other transportation assistance" for the first position in the results list of service needs that rehabilitation providers are unable to meet.

Table 145  
*Service Needs that Rehab Providers Are Unable to Meet*

<b>Service Needs Rehab Providers Unable to Meet</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of total number of respondents</b>
Job training services	4	66.7%
Assistive technology	4	66.7%
Other transportation assistance	4	66.7%
Independent living skills training	3	50.0%
Adjustment to blindness training	3	50.0%
Affordable housing services	3	50.0%
Benefits planning assistance	3	50.0%
Vocational training	3	50.0%
Job development and placement services	2	33.3%
Vocational evaluation	2	33.3%
Mental health treatment	2	33.3%
Public transportation	2	33.3%
Substance abuse treatment	1	16.7%
Personal care attendants	1	16.7%
Financial literacy training	1	16.7%
Other (please describe)	1	16.7%
Transition services	1	16.7%
Pre-employment transition services	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>40</b>	

### Partner Survey: Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Consumer Needs

Partners were provided with a list of five reasons and asked to identify the primary reasons why vocational rehabilitation service providers were unable to meet consumers' service needs.

Respondents were able to select more than one item if desired. Six respondents answered the question. Partners do not believe the payment rates for services is too low. The majority of partners agreed that there are "not enough services providers available in areas" which infers that the item is the primary reason service needs are not met. The phrase "do not get referrals" was cited in the narrative comments for the item choice "other, please describe." Table 146 contains the number of times the reason was chosen and the percentage of the number of respondents who answered the question.

Table 146

#### *Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Consumer Needs*

<b>Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Consumer Needs</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Not enough providers available in area	5	83.3%
Low quality of provider services	2	33.3%
Client barriers prevent successful interactions with providers	2	33.3%
Other (please describe)	1	16.7%
The rates of payment for services are too low	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	10	

### Partner Survey: Most Important Change Service Providers Could Make to Support Consumer Efforts to Achieve Employment Goals

Partner respondents were asked to identify the most important change that network or rehabilitation service providers in the state of Virginia could make to support consumers' efforts to achieve their employment goals. Two responses were similar to the responses cited regarding the changes DBVI could make to support consumers to achieve their employment goals. The quotes are:

- *"Communication with the consumer and lists of options"*
- *"More staff, more training for staff, more in-person participation in meetings and training"*
- *"More training on AT and accommodations"*
- *"Provide training closer to southwest Virginia"*

## STAFF SURVEY RESULTS

### Staff Survey: Services Readily Available to DBVI Consumers

Staff were provided with a list of 18 items and asked to select the services that are readily available to DBVI consumers.

Staff and partners have slightly different views on the types of services that are readily available to consumers. Staff identified “independent living skills training,” “assistive technology,” and “adjustment to blindness training” as services that are readily available to consumers more frequently than partners did. The narrative comment received in the category of “other” contained the phrase “orientation and mobility training.” Table 147 details the services readily available as reported by staff.

Table 147

*Staff Survey: Services Readily Available*

Services Readily Available	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Independent living skills training	51	96.2%
Assistive technology	49	92.5%
Adjustment to blindness training	44	83.0%
Job development and placement services	42	79.2%
Transition services	42	79.2%
Pre-employment transition services	42	79.2%
Vocational training	40	75.5%
Job training services	39	73.6%
Vocational evaluation	37	69.8%
Public transportation	26	49.1%
Other transportation services	25	47.2%
Benefit planning assistance	17	32.1%
Mental health treatment	16	30.2%

Services Readily Available	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Financial literacy training	12	22.6%
Substance abuse treatment	10	18.9%
Personal care attendants	7	13.2%
Affordable housing services	6	11.3%
Other (please describe)	1	1.9%
<b>Total</b>	506	

### Staff Survey: Service Providers Meeting Consumer Needs

Staff respondents were asked to identify whether or not vendors in the State of Virginia were able to meet DBVI consumers' vocational rehabilitation service needs.

The majority of staff respondents agreed with the majority of partner respondents that service providers are able to meet the needs of DBVI consumers. Table 148 details the results to this question.

Table 148

*Staff Survey: Ability of Vendors to Meet DBVI Consumer Vocational Needs*

Vendors Meet DBVI Consumer Vocational Needs	Number	Percent
Yes	42	82.4%
No	9	17.7%
<b>Total</b>	51	100.0%

### Staff Survey: Service Needs that Vendors are Unable to Meet

Staff were presented with an open-ended question asking them to identify service needs the vendors are unable to meet. Seven narrative responses were received and six of the responses identified specific service needs. The quotes are:

- *"Quality employment ... Neuropsychology evals"*
- *"Some vendors do a better job than others. We have a variety of vendors that we may work with from time to time. Accessibility is often an issue for our consumers. Some of the ESO's have minimal experience working with the vision impaired."*
- *"Transportation issues, housing issues, financial planning"*

- *“Voc. evals., working with deafblind individuals, mental health counseling”*
- *“We need more job development and placement for totally blind individuals. We also need more access to MH/SA services for clients. We need more advocacy in the school system so that blind kids do not graduate from high school without being able to touch type, use computers, and other technology. In the field, counselors need staff who can assist them with paperwork they are doing so they can spend more time providing guidance and counseling to individuals instead of spending a lot of time completing paperwork and other administrative duties. We need more AT instructors at VRCBVI.”*

### **Staff Survey: Primary Reasons Vendors are Unable to Meet Consumer Needs**

Staff respondents were provided with a list of six reasons and asked to identify the primary reasons why vendors were unable to meet consumers’ service needs. There was no limit to the number of options a respondent could choose.

Seven staff respondents answered the question and unanimously agreed that there are not enough vendors available in the area. The table containing staff results reflects the partner respondent choices to a similar question. The phrase “lack of training with specific populations like mentally ill and deafblind” was cited in the narrative comments for the item choice “other, please describe.” Table 149 contains the number of times the reason was chosen by staff respondents and the percentage of the number of respondents who answered the question.

Table 149

*Staff Survey: Primary Reasons Vendors are Unable to Meet Consumer Needs*

<b>Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Consumer Needs</b>	<b>Number of times chosen</b>	<b>Percent of number of respondents</b>
Not enough vendors available in area	7	100.0%
Client barriers prevent successful interactions with vendors	3	42.9%
Low quality of vendor services	2	28.6%
Low rates paid for services	1	14.3%
Other (please describe)	1	14.3%
Low levels of accountability for poor performance by vendors	1	14.3%
<b>Total</b>	15	

**Staff Survey: Most Important Change Vendors Could Make to Support Consumer Efforts to Achieve Employment Goals**

Staff survey respondents were asked to identify the most important change that vendors could make to support consumers' efforts to achieve their employment goals. One response cited, "Most vendors are very good at what they do and typically follow counselor's requests and suggestions for situational assessments and job development." Content analysis revealed four themes. The suggestions for change are provided in table 150 and categorized by theme.

Table 150

*Staff Survey: Most Important Change Vendors Could Make to Support Consumers*

<b>Most Important Change Vendors Can Make to Support Consumers to Achieve Employment Goals</b>
<b>Mission and Outreach</b>
<i>"Expand quality services to ALL of the Southwest region....Not just the big cities"</i>
<i>"Make training accessible"</i>
<i>"Have additional workshops across the state for folks to better understand what is out there and what could be used to better achieve the job they are hired to do"</i>
<i>"Have additional workshops across the state to make consumers aware of the equipment available for them to use in their jobs and daily life"</i>
<b>Increasing Staff</b>
<i>"Right now they do not have enough staff to work with our clients, so clients are having to wait. This is a national issue though and is pandemic related."</i>
<i>"Reduce staff turnover"</i>
<i>"There need to be more vendors for services. We have limited vendors who provide job development and job coaching."</i>
<b>Communication</b>
<i>"Communicate better with DBVI staff (O&amp;M)"</i>
<i>"Provide the equipment or services more efficiently"</i>
<b>Vendor Education</b>
<i>"Better understanding of vision specific needs"</i>

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Most Important Change Vendors Can Make to Support Consumers to Achieve Employment Goals</b></p>
<p><i>“Gain more experience working with the blind and low vision population”</i></p>
<p><i>“More public understanding of vision impairments”</i></p>
<p><i>“Increase their understanding of blindness”</i></p>
<p><i>“Provide more training to staff in the area of vision impairments and mental health”</i></p>
<p><i>“Know how to work with blind people and have belief in and know how to promote their abilities to potential employers”</i></p>
<p><i>“Sometimes the vendors have little to no knowledge of blindness”</i></p>
<p><i>“Vendors also should have someone trained in ASL as we have virtually no one to work with our Deaf Blind individuals.”</i></p>
<p><i>“Increase staff training on sensory disabilities”</i></p>
<p><i>“Increase knowledge of assistive technology and low vision aids”</i></p>
<p><i>“Job development/coaching vendors could have a better understanding of assistive technology”</i></p>



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### *INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS*

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**The following themes were recurring from the individuals interviewed for this assessment in the area of the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs serving individuals with blindness and vision impairments in Virginia:**

1. DBVI continues to provide most of their consumer services through their own staff. They do use CRPs and other individual service providers for some services, but in-house service provision is the most common method of service delivery. They use external service providers (ESOs) for some employment services including supported employment, though this is infrequent.
2. The focus on in-house service provision was beneficial for the agency during the pandemic as they were not as adversely affected by the loss of external service providers due to layoffs or high turnover as some other VR programs nationally.
3. There was a need expressed to develop the ability of ESOs to work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments. Staff indicated they would be more likely to use ESOs for employment services if they had more knowledge and experience working with their consumers.
4. A need was expressed by several participants to develop either internal or external vocational evaluation services for DBVI consumers. There is a lack of professional vocational evaluation services that are tailored to the needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments.
5. The need for peer mentors, especially for youth with blindness or vision impairments was cited earlier in this report. Although mentors are not typically considered a purchased service, peer mentor training programs and networks can be contractually provided or arranged for on a fee-for-service basis.

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### *RECOMMENDATIONS*

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**The following recommendations are offered to DBVI based on the results of the research in the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs in Virginia:**

1. DBVI is encouraged to provide training for CRP staff that work primarily with the general agency on how to effectively work with individuals with blindness and vision impairments. This training may help with ensuring that DBVI consumers have qualified CRP staff to work with them when receiving employment services;
2. DBVI should consider recruiting for vocational evaluation services from a certified vocational evaluator. One possibility would be to identify experts in Virginia through the American Board of Vocational Experts at <https://abve.net/search/>;

3. DBVI is encouraged to establish a peer mentoring network for their consumers. One possibility would be to identify their successful consumers to act as mentors.

## **SECTION 7**

### **NEEDS OF BUSINESS AND EFFECTIVENESS IN SERVING EMPLOYERS**

Businesses are a customer of the VR program. The effectiveness in serving employers is one of the WIOA performance measures and as such is included in this CSNA. If a VR program effectively meets this recruiting, hiring, accommodating and retention needs of business in the State, this contributes to the ability of the VR program to meet the employment needs of the individuals they serve.

There was a total of 10 businesses that participated in some way in the CSNA, with six completing a survey and four participating in an interview. The reader is cautioned to interpret any findings with the low participation rates in mind. DBVI should consider strategies for encouraging a more active role for businesses in future CSNAs.

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#### ***Recurring Themes Across all Data Collection Methods***

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The following themes emerged in the area of the needs of business and effectiveness in serving employers:

1. The Business Relations Team at DBVI was given high marks by multiple individuals interviewed during this assessment for their ability to shift to virtual services and meet the needs of employers during the pandemic.
2. Although there has been significant progress in serving the needs of business and in educating them through the efforts of DBVI since the last CSNA, there are still many employers that are fearful of the ability of individuals with blindness and vision impairments to perform the essential functions of jobs. Businesses continue to need to be educated about the ability of individuals with blindness and vision impairments.

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#### ***AGENCY-SPECIFIC DATA RELATED TO EFFECTIVELY SERVING THE NEEDS OF EMPLOYERS***

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The project team examined data from DBVI related to the effectiveness in serving employers measure as part of the WIOA common performance measures. This data is included in Table 151.

Table 151  
Effectiveness in Serving Employers Measures for PYs 2017-2020

<b>Measure</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>2020</b>
Effectiveness in Serving Employers - Employer Penetration, number of business services provided	187	256	266	190
Effectiveness in Serving Employers - Employer Penetration, number of businesses served	109	129	132	84
Effectiveness in Serving Employers - Employer Retention	n/a	n/a	55.0%	70.0%

The data indicates that DBVI increased the number of business services and number of businesses served from 2017-2019, before being impacted by the pandemic in PY 2020. It is notable that the employer retention percentage increased by 15% from PY 2019-2020. Although there was an impact to services to business as a result of the pandemic, the impact does not appear to be as significant as one would expect, and the services that were provided were of such value to employers that they remain engaged with the agency.

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### ***SURVEY RESULTS***

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## **BUSINESS SURVEY RESPONSES**

### **Disability in the Workplace**

With respect to the “Disability in the Workplace” section of the survey, business survey respondents were presented with eight questions regarding whether or not their business needed help with a variety of concerns related to disability and employment. The questions were specifically written to address the needs of employees with blindness and vision impairments and structured in a yes-no response format. Table 152 summarizes the results to the eight questions according to the percentage of respondents who indicated a need for help as cited in the question.

Table 152  
*Disability in the Workplace: Employer Needs*

Does your business need help...	Number of Times Yes was Chosen	Percent of Time Yes was Chosen	Number of Times No was Chosen	Percent of Time No was Chosen	Total
Recruiting job applicants with blindness and vision impairments?	4	80.0%	1	20.0%	5
Identifying job accommodations for workers with blindness and vision impairments?	3	60.0%	2	40.0%	5
Obtaining information on training programs available for workers with blindness and vision impairments?	3	75.0%	1	25.0%	4
Understanding disability-related legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Rehabilitation Act as amended?	2	50.0%	2	50.0%	4
Helping workers with blindness and vision impairments to retain employment?	2	40.0%	3	60.0%	5
Obtaining training on the different types of blindness and vision impairments?	2	50.0%	2	50.0%	4
Obtaining training on sensitivity to workers with blindness and vision impairments?	2	50.0%	2	50.0%	4
Obtaining incentives for employing workers with blindness and vision impairments?	1	25.0%	3	75.0%	4

The majority of business respondents indicated that they need some assistance in regard to addressing blindness and vision impairments in the workplace. Six survey items received a 50

percent or higher “Yes” response rate. This is similar to the results from the 2018 CSNA Business Survey. Eighty percent of business respondents (n=4) would like assistance on how to recruit job applicants with blindness and vision impairments.

Business respondents were asked, in a supplemental open-ended question, if they would like to further comment on needs regarding disability in the workplace. One respondent wrote a narrative comment in response to the supplemental question:

- *“Additional info on benefits of employing workers with vision impairment”*

### **Business Survey: Applicants with Visual Disabilities**

Business respondents were asked six questions regarding the need for recruitment assistance for applicants with blindness and vision impairments. Respondents were asked to provide their answers to the questions in a yes-no response format.

Respondents indicated a need for assistance with recruiting applicants with blindness and vision impairments. Each of the items were selected with a 50 percent rate or higher.

Four out of five business respondents (80%) cited needing assistance in recruiting applicants with visual disabilities that meet job qualifications, have good work habits, and have good social and interpersonal skills. This is a change from the 2018 Business Survey in which the items “meet job qualifications,” “have good work habits,” and “have good social and interpersonal skills” were cited by 55.6 percent of nine business respondents who participated in the 2018 survey.

Three businesses would like assistance with accessing applicant skills and addressing needs related to identifying reasonable accommodations. Table 153 summarizes the results of the responses to the six questions according to the percentage of respondents who indicated a need for help as cited in the question.

Table 153

*Recruitment: Applicants with Blindness and Vision Impairments: Does Your Business Need Help with...*

<b>Does your business need help...</b>	<b>Number of Times Yes was Chosen</b>	<b>Percent of Time Yes was Chosen</b>	<b>Number of Times No was Chosen</b>	<b>Percent of Time No was Chosen</b>	<b>Total</b>
Recruiting applicants who meet the job qualifications?	4	80.0%	1	20.0%	5
Recruiting applicants with good work habits?	4	80.0%	1	20.0%	5
Recruiting applicants with good social/interpersonal skills?	4	80.0%	1	20.0%	5

Does your business need help...	Number of Times Yes was Chosen	Percent of Time Yes was Chosen	Number of Times No was Chosen	Percent of Time No was Chosen	Total
Assessing applicants' skills?	3	75.0%	1	25.0%	4
Identifying reasonable job accommodations for applicants?	3	60.0%	2	40.0%	5
Discussing reasonable job accommodations with applicants?	2	50.0%	2	50.0%	4

Business respondents were given the opportunity to further comment on their answers in the previous question or if they had additional comments or needs regarding applicants with blindness and vision impairments. No individualized responses were received in regard to this subsequent question.

#### **Business Survey: Employees with Visual Disabilities: Positive Employee Traits Related to Job Retention**

Business survey respondents were presented with a list of 12 positive employee traits and asked the question, “With respect to employees with blindness and visual impairments that you have now or have had in the past, what are the positive employee traits you have experienced with them regarding job retention?”

Four respondents participated in answering this question. “Reliability,” “initiative/ambition” and “positive attitude” were each cited twice. The narrative comments in response to selecting the item “other, please describe” did not contain a trait. Table 154 summarizes the percentage of business survey respondents who identified each trait as a part of job retention.

Table 154

*Positive Employee Traits Related to Job Retention: Employees with Visual Disabilities*

<b>Employees with Visual Disabilities: Positive Employee Traits Related to Job Retention</b>	<b>Number of Times Chosen</b>	<b>Percent of Number of Respondents</b>
Reliability	2	50.0%
Initiative/Ambition	2	50.0%
Positive attitude	2	50.0%
Other (please describe)	2	50.0%
Flexibility	1	25.0%
Honesty/Integrity	1	25.0%
Works well with their team	1	25.0%
Determined/dedicated	1	25.0%
Independent	1	25.0%
Punctual	1	25.0%
Organized	1	25.0%
Attention to detail	1	25.0%
<b>Total</b>	16	

**Business Survey: Employees with Visual Disabilities – Challenges to Job Retention**

Business survey respondents were presented with a list of 13 job-related challenges and asked to identify the challenges they have now or have experienced in the past with respect to employees with blindness and vision impairments and job retention.

Two of the business survey respondents indicated that they had no knowledge of any challenges their business has incurred retaining employees with blindness and vision impairments. The narrative comments received in the category “other, please describe” cited the phrases “cannot comment” and “have not employed any.”

Table 155 contains the list of challenges to job retention and the number of times chosen by business survey respondents.



Table 155  
Challenges Related to Job Retention: Employees with Visual Disabilities

Challenges to Job Retention	Number of Times Chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Other (please describe)	2	50.0%
I have no knowledge of any challenges we have had retaining employees with blindness and vision impairments	2	50.0%
<b>Total</b>	4	

Business respondents were provided the option to comment further on any of their answers in the previous question above, or if they had additional comments or needs regarding employees with blindness and vision impairments. No responses were received.

#### **Business Survey: Services Provided by DBVI**

Business survey respondents were asked three questions regarding their knowledge of DBVI, and their utilization of services provided by the agency. The sample size is small for this section of the survey.

Business survey respondents were first asked to rate their knowledge of DBVI and the services they provide to businesses. Half of business survey respondents (50 percent) indicated that they were somewhat knowledgeable regarding DBVI and the services that they provide.

The second question asked respondents to cite whether or not their business had utilized DBVI services to assist with their employment needs. Fifty percent of business respondents (n=2) cited that they have not used DBVI services. This is a change from the 2018 CSNA where five of the eight respondents (62.5%) had utilized DBVI services.

Two business respondents answered the question identifying what services DBVI provided to their business. The most frequently cited item was “helping workers with disabilities to retain employment.”

Tables 156-158 include the results to the above series of questions.

Table 156  
*Businesses' Knowledge of DBVI and Services*

<b>Businesses' Knowledge of DBVI and Services</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Somewhat knowledgeable	2	50.0%
Little or no knowledge	2	50.0%
Very knowledgeable	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 157  
*Utilization of DBVI Services by Employers (Businesses)*

<b>Employer Usage of DBVI Services</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
Yes	2	50.0%
I don't know	2	50.0%
No	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

Table 158  
*Services Provided to Employers (Businesses) by DBVI*

<b>Services Provided to Employers by DBVI</b>	<b>Number of Times Chosen</b>	<b>Percent of respondents</b>
Helping workers with blindness and vision impairments to retain employment?	2	100.0%
Training in understanding disability-related legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Rehabilitation Act as amended?	1	50.0%
Assistance identifying job accommodations for workers with blindness and vision impairments?	1	50.0%

Services Provided to Employers by DBVI	Number of Times Chosen	Percent of respondents
Obtaining training on the different types of blindness and vision impairments?	1	50.0%
Obtaining training on sensitivity to workers with blindness and vision impairments?	1	50.0%
<b>Total</b>	6	

### Business Survey: Satisfaction Rating and Recommending DBVI Services

Business survey respondents who utilized DBVI services were asked a series of questions regarding their satisfaction with the DBVI services their business utilized and whether or not they would recommend DBVI services to other businesses. Two survey respondents participated in this section of the survey.

### Business Survey: Satisfaction with Services Provided by DBVI

Business survey respondents who utilized DBVI services were presented with a five-point response scale (with responses ranging from “very satisfied” to “very dissatisfied”) and asked to indicate how satisfied they were with the services they received from DBVI. Two respondents provided an answer to the question. Both respondents indicated they were very satisfied with DBVI services. Table 159 contains the results.

Table 159

#### *Employer (Business) Satisfaction with DBVI Services*

Satisfaction Rating	Number	Percent
Very satisfied	2	100.0%
Satisfied	0	0.0%
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	0	0.0%
Dissatisfied	0	0.0%
Very dissatisfied	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	2	100.0%

### Business Survey: Seek Again or Recommend DBVI

Business survey respondents who utilized DBVI services were presented with a five-point response scale (with responses ranging from “very likely” to “very unlikely”) and asked to indicate whether or not they would seek to use DBVI services in the future or recommend DBVI services to other businesses. The two respondents cited “very likely” they would seek DBVI again or recommend DBVI to others. Table 160 summarizes the results.

Table 160  
*Seek Again or Recommend DBVI*

Seek Again or Recommend DBVI	Number	Percent
Very likely	2	100.0%
Likely	0	0.0%
Neither likely nor unlikely	0	0.0%
Unlikely	0	0.0%
Very unlikely	0	0.0%
<b>Total</b>	2	100.0%

### Business Survey: Business Demographics

Business survey respondents described their respective business types and the number of employees the business currently employs. Tables 160-161 indicate the various business types and size of the organization based on the number of employees.

Table 160  
*Type of Business*

Organization Type	Number	Percent
Government	3	60.0%
Service	2	40.0%
<b>Total</b>	5	100.0%

Table 161  
*Size of Organization by Employee*

<b>Number of Employees</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>Percent</b>
1 to 15	1	20.0%
16 - 50	1	20.0%
51 - 250	1	20.0%
251 - 999	1	20.0%
1,000 or more	1	20.0%
<b>Total</b>	5	100.0%

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### *INDIVIDUAL AND FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS*

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**The following information was gathered from the individuals interviewed for this assessment in the area of needs of business and effectiveness in serving employers:**

1. The Business Relations Team at DBVI was given high marks by multiple individuals interviewed during this assessment for their ability to shift to virtual services and meet the needs of employers during the pandemic. The team provides a number of services that include, but are not limited to:
  - a. A “Federal” job club that focuses on assisting consumers to obtain Federal jobs;
  - b. A leader in Virginia Ability, a business-to-business association focused on building inclusive communities and cultures through disability diversity in the workplace;
  - c. Disability awareness and inclusivity workshops for businesses;
  - d. A focus on developing work-based learning experiences for youth, which includes partnering with a third party staffing agency to ensure WBLEs can be paid. This is a very positive response to the recommendations in the previous CSNA;
  - e. “Steer your career” curriculum that provides career exploration and preparation services; and
  - f. A variety of support services to employers that educate them about the abilities of individuals with blindness and vision impairments, including retention services to help keep consumers on the job.
2. The business relations team is represented on the statewide business solutions team that includes multiple workforce partners.
3. Although there has been significant progress in serving the needs of business and in educating them through the efforts of DBVI since the last CSNA, there are still many employers that are fearful of the ability of individuals with blindness and vision impairments to perform the essential functions of jobs. Businesses continue to need to be educated about the ability of individuals with blindness and vision impairments.

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### *RECOMMENDATIONS*

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The following recommendations are offered based on the information gathered in the needs of business and effectiveness in serving employers section:

1. At the time of this CSNA, there were two vacancies in the Business Relations Team. DBVI is encouraged to fill these positions in order to sustain the momentum that the team has made since the previous assessment.
2. DBVI is encouraged to continue to offer disability awareness training and other educational opportunities that promote awareness of the ability of individuals with blindness and vision impairments in Virginia.

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*CONCLUSION*

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The comprehensive statewide needs assessment for Virginia’s Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired utilized qualitative and quantitative methods to investigate the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments in Virginia. The combination of surveys and interviews resulted in 247 people participating in the assessment in some form. The project team at San Diego State University’s Interwork Institute is confident that the data gathered accurately reflects the employment needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments and is hopeful that the findings and recommendations will be utilized by DBVI to inform the VR portion of the Unified State Plan and the development of goals and objectives for the future.

The project team wants to commend the staff of DBVI and their community partners for responding so effectively to the pandemic and ensuring that vocational rehabilitation services continued to be provided. The agency’s response is evidence of commitment to, and passion for, serving individuals with blindness and vision impairments in Virginia.

# Appendices



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*Appendix A: Individual and Focus Group Protocols*

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**Key Informant Individual Interview Protocol**

1. Please identify your name, title, time with DBVI or time in your current role.
2. Briefly describe your duties and service areas?

**Overall DBVI Performance**

3. Regarding DBVI's overall performance as an agency, how effectively is the organization fulfilling its mission of helping people with blindness or other vision impairments obtain employment?
  - A. How would you describe the changes, if any, that have occurred in DBVI in the last three years?
  - B. What are the major challenges that DBVI consumer's face in obtaining and retaining employment?
  - C. What are the major challenges that you face that impact your ability to help consumers obtain and retain employment?

**MSD and SE**

4. What are the needs of people with people with the most significant disabilities in Virginia and how effectively is DBVI meeting those needs?
5. Do you provide SE services? If so, please describe the model of SE services you use.
  - A. How long does job coaching typically last?
  - B. Who provides extended services
  - C. How many providers do you have and how effective are they?
  - D. What populations generally receive SE services?
6. Do you provide customized employment services to individuals with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia? Please describe this service.
7. What would you recommend to improve your SE or CE program?

**Unserved/Underserved Populations**

8. What geographic areas are underserved and why?
9. What racial/ethnic minority groups are underserved and why?
10. What are the rehabilitation needs of the minority populations that you serve?
11. What disability types are underserved and why?
12. How effective is DBVI's outreach to these groups/areas and what can be done to improve outreach to them?
13. What do you recommend to improve service to these areas or populations?
14. Are there any other groups that are underserved, and if so, why do you think that is and what can be done to improve services to this group?

### **Transition**

15. Please describe how transition services works for people with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia. Comment on:
  - A. Partnerships with schools
  - B. Outreach and intake/referral/plan processes
  - C. Services provided
16. What are the greatest needs of transition-aged youth and how well are DBVI and the schools meeting these needs?
17. Are you involved in pre-employment transition services? If yes, please describe how this works in Virginia.
18. Do you serve foster care youth or youth involved with the juvenile justice system?
19. What can be done to improve youth and/or transition services in Virginia?

### **CRPs**

20. How effective are the CRPs in Virginia in serving people with blindness or other vision impairments?
21. What are the greatest challenges you face as a CRP, or in working with CRPs?
22. What needs to happen to improve or increase CRPs in Virginia?
23. Is there a need to develop CRPs to serve any specific population or geographic areas?
24. What services do CRPs in the Virginia need to provide? Where are the current gaps in service?

### **Workforce Development System**

25. How well is the Workforce Development System in Virginia meeting the needs of people with blindness or other vision impairments? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the system?
26. What is the relationship like between DBVI and American Job Centers?
27. Are there shared-funding of cases between DBVI and the AJCs?
28. What has to happen to improve the relationship between the two organizations? Has there been a noticeable improvement in the relationship over the last three years?
29. Do you work closely with Adult Education and Family Literacy? Please describe.
30. Are there other workforce agencies that serve people with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia? If so, please identify them and the service they provide to your consumers as well as DBVI's relationship with them.

### **VRCBVI**

31. Have your clients received services from VRCBVI?
32. How would you rate the effectiveness of the IL and vocational services provided by VRCBVI?
33. What would you recommend VRCBVI do to improve services?

### **Business Partnerships**

34. Please describe the ways that DBVI partners with businesses in Virginia to promote the employment of people with blindness or other vision impairments.
35. What can DBVI do to improve business partnerships and to engage employers in recruiting and hiring people with blindness or other vision impairments?

36. What would you recommend that DBVI do as an organization to maximize its effectiveness in fulfilling its mission and providing excellent customer service during the next three years?

### **Virginia DBVI, CSNA 2022 Focus Group Protocols**

[Introductions/confidentiality/purpose statements]

#### **Focus Group Protocol - Individuals with Blindness or other vision impairments:**

##### **Employment goals**

- What barriers do people with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia face in getting or keeping a job?  
Follow up: Transportation, education, not enough jobs, discrimination, attitudes, lack of communications, fear of loss of benefits, lack of knowledge of options, etc.

##### **DBVI Overall Performance**

- What has your experience with DBVI been like? What have been the positives and negatives?
- What services were helpful to you in preparing for, obtaining and retaining employment?
- What services did you need that were not available or provided and why weren't you able to get these services?
- What can DBVI do differently to help consumers get and keep good jobs?

##### **Barriers to accessing services**

- What barriers do people with blindness or other vision impairments encounter when trying to access rehabilitation services from DBVI? (prompts if necessary -- mobility, communication, structural)

##### **American Job Centers Partners**

- Has anyone had used or tried to use the services of The American Job Centers? Follow-up: What was that experience like for you? What can they do differently to better serve individuals with blindness or other vision impairments?

##### **Transition**

- What needs do young people with blindness or other vision impairments in transition from high school have as far as preparing for, obtaining or retaining employment?
- How well are the high schools in Virginia preparing young people for the world of postsecondary education or employment? What can the schools do differently to prepare young people to be successful in postsecondary education or employment?
- What can DBVI do to improve services to youth in transition?

**Needs of underserved groups with blindness or other vision impairments**

- What groups of individuals would you consider un-served or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation system?  
(Prompt if needed for different disability groups, minority status, geographic area and any other characteristics)  
(For each identified group): What unmet needs do they have?

**Need for establishment of CRPs**

- Have you received services from a CRP? If so, how was your service? How effective was it? What can be done to improve the future service delivery by CRPs?
- What programs or services should be created that focus on enhancing the quality of life for people with blindness or other vision impairments and their families, meeting basic needs and ensuring inclusion and participation? Of these services now in existence, which need to be improved?
- What services need to be offered in new locations in order to meet people's needs?

**VRCBVI**

- Did you attend VRCBVI?
- What is your assessment of the value of the program?
- How prepared were you to live independently and to work as a result of your participation in the Center?
- What recommendations do you have to improve the Center?

**Need for improvement of services or outcomes**

- What needs to be done to improve the vocational rehabilitation services that people receive in Virginia?

## Focus Group Protocol - Partner Agencies:

### **Employment Goals**

- What barriers do people with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia face in getting or keeping a job?  
Follow up: Education, not enough jobs, discrimination, attitudes, lack of communications, fear of loss of benefits, lack of knowledge of options, etc.

### **Barriers to accessing services**

- What barriers do people with blindness or other vision impairments encounter when trying to access rehabilitation services from DBVI?

### **Impressions of needs of individuals with significant and most significant blindness or other vision impairments**

- What are the unmet rehabilitation needs of individuals with significant or most significant blindness or other vision impairments?
- What needs of individuals with significant and most significant blindness or other vision impairments are being met the best/most extensively?

### **Needs of underserved groups with blindness or other vision impairments**

- What groups of individuals would you consider un-served or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation system?  
(Prompt for different disability groups, minority status, geographic area or other characteristics)  
(For each identified group): What unmet needs do they have?

### **Need for supported employment**

- Please describe how effective the SE program is in Virginia. What populations are receiving SE services?
- What SE needs are not being met?
- What do you recommend to meet the needs for SE?

### **Transition**

- What needs do young people with blindness or other vision impairments in transition from high school have as far as preparing for, obtaining or retaining employment?
- How well are the high schools in Virginia preparing young people for the world of postsecondary education or employment? What can the schools do differently to prepare young people to be successful in postsecondary education or employment?
- How would you characterize DBVI's relationship/partnership with the secondary school system in Virginia?
- How well is DBVI serving youth in transition in terms of preparing them for postsecondary education or employment?
- What can DBVI do to improve services to youth in transition?

### **Needs of individuals served through the American Job Centers**

- How effectively does the American Job Center system serve individuals with blindness or other vision impairments?
- Are there any barriers to individuals with blindness or other vision impairments accessing services through the American Job Centers? If so, what are they and what can be done to change this?
- How effectively is DBVI working in partnership with the Workforce Centers? Do you have any recommendations about how to improve this partnership if needed?
- What would you recommend to improve the American Job Centers' ability to serve individuals with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia?

**Need for establishment, development or improvement of CRPs**

- What community-based rehabilitation programs or services need to be created, expanded or improved?
- What services need to be offered in new locations in order to meet people's needs?
- What community-based rehabilitation services are most successful? How are they most successful or what makes them so?

**Need for improvement of services or outcomes**

- What needs to be done to improve the vocational rehabilitation services that people receive?

Focus Group Protocol – Virginia DBVI staff:

### **Employment Goals**

- What barriers do people with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia face in getting or keeping a job?  
Follow up: Education, not enough jobs, discrimination, attitudes, lack of communications, fear of loss of benefits, lack of knowledge of options, etc.

### **Barriers to accessing services**

- What barriers do people with blindness or other vision impairments encounter when trying to access rehabilitation services from DBVI?

### **Impressions of needs of individuals with significant and most significant blindness or other vision impairments**

- What are the unmet rehabilitation needs of individuals with significant or most significant blindness or other vision impairments?
- What needs of individuals with significant and most significant blindness or other vision impairments are being met the best/most extensively?

### **Needs of underserved groups with blindness or other vision impairments**

- What groups of individuals would you consider un-served or underserved by the vocational rehabilitation system?  
(Prompt for different disability groups, minority status, geographic area or any other characteristics).  
(For each identified group): What unmet needs do they have?

### **Need for supported employment**

- Please describe how effective the SE program is in Virginia. What populations are receiving SE services?
- What SE needs are not being met?
- What do you recommend to meet the needs for SE?

### **Transition**

- What needs do young people with blindness or other vision impairments in transition from high school have as far as preparing for, obtaining or retaining employment?
- How well are the high schools in Virginia preparing young people for the world of postsecondary education or employment? What can the schools do differently to prepare young people to be successful in postsecondary education or employment?
- How would you characterize DBVI's relationship/partnership with the secondary school system in Virginia?
- How well is DBVI serving youth in transition in terms of preparing them for postsecondary education or employment?
- What can DBVI do to improve services to youth in transition?

### **Needs of individuals served through the American Job Centers or WIOA system**

- 
- How effectively does the American Job Center system serve individuals with blindness or other vision impairments?
- Are there any barriers to individuals with blindness or other vision impairments accessing services through the American Job Centers? If so, what are they and what can be done to change this?
- How effectively is DBVI working in partnership with the American Job Centers? Do you have any recommendations about how to improve this partnership if needed?
- What would you recommend to improve the American Job Centers' ability to serve individuals with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia?

**Need for establishment, development or improvement of CRPs**

- What community-based rehabilitation programs or services need to be created, expanded or improved?
- What services need to be offered in new locations in order to meet people's needs?
- What community-based rehabilitation services are most successful? How are they most successful or what makes them so?

**VRCBVI**

- Have you referred clients to attend VRCBVI?
- What is your assessment of the value of the program?
- How prepared were your clients to live independently and to work as a result of their participation in the Center?
- What recommendations do you have to improve the Center?

**Need for improvement of services or outcomes**

- What needs to be done to improve the vocational rehabilitation services that people receive?



**Focus Group Protocol – Businesses**

**Please discuss your familiarity with DBVI and the services they provide to people with blindness or other vision impairments and to businesses**

**What needs do you have regarding recruiting people with blindness or other vision impairments for employment?**

- Do you do anything specific to attract candidates with blindness or other vision impairments? Please describe

**Please discuss how qualified and prepared individuals with blindness or other vision impairments are when they apply for employment with your business**

**What needs do you have regarding applicants with blindness or other vision impairments?**

- Are you aware of the incentives for hiring people with blindness or other vision impairments? Would these incentives influence your decision to hire?

**What are the qualities you are looking for in an applicant for a given job and an employee?**

**What needs do you have regarding employees with blindness or other vision impairments?**

- Sensitivity training?
- Understanding and compliance with applicable laws?
- Reasonable accommodations?

**What challenges do employees with blindness or other vision impairments face with job retention?**

**What services can DBVI provide to you and to other businesses to increase employment opportunities for people with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia?**

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*Appendix B: Individual Survey*

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## Virginia DBVI 2021-22 CSNA - Individual Survey

Q1

### **Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired Individual Survey**

The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) is contracting with the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University to conduct an assessment of the vocational rehabilitation needs of Virginia residents with blindness and vision impairments. The results of this survey will be used to help improve programs and services for individuals with blindness and vision impairments in Virginia.

The following survey includes questions that ask you about the unmet, employment-related needs of persons with blindness and vision impairments. We anticipate that it will take about 20 minutes of your time to complete the survey. If you prefer, you may ask a family member, a personal attendant, or a caregiver to help complete the survey for you. If you are a family member, personal attendant or caregiver for a person with blindness or a vision impairment and are responding on their behalf, please answer the survey questions based upon your knowledge of the needs of the individual.

This survey is completely anonymous and your participation in this needs assessment is voluntary. If you decide to participate, your responses will be anonymous, that is, recorded without any identifying information that is linked to you. You will not be asked for your name anywhere in this survey.

If you have any questions regarding this survey or if you would prefer to complete this survey in an alternate format, please contact Dr. Chaz Compton at San Diego State University at the following e-mail address:

ccompton@interwork.sdsu.edu

Thank you very much for your time and input!

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Page Break

Q2 Which statement best describes your association with the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)? (select one response)

- I have never used the services of DBVI
- I am a current client of DBVI
- I am a previous client of DBVI, my case has been closed
- I am not familiar with DBVI
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

*Skip To: Q4 If Which statement best describes your association with the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vi... = I have never used the services of DBVI*

*Skip To: Q4 If Which statement best describes your association with the Virginia Department for the Blind and Vi... = I am not familiar with DBVI*

Q3 How long have you been working with DBVI?

- Less than 1 year
- 1 year
- 2-5 years
- 6-9 years
- 10 years or greater

Q4

#### **Demographic Information**

Q5 What is your age?

- under 25
- 25-64
- 65 and over
- 

Q6 What is your primary race or ethnic group (check all that apply)?

- African American/Black
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Caucasian/White
- Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Hispanic/Latino
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- I prefer not to say
-

Q7 What is your language of preference for communication?

- English
  - Spanish
  - Hmong
  - Chinese
  - Japanese
  - American Sign Language
  - Other (Please identify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q8 Do you feel that DBVI honors and respects your cultural identity?

- Yes
  - No
  - I don't know
- 

Q9

Have you ever been in a situation when you felt that DBVI did not honor your cultural identity?

- Yes (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- No

*Skip To: Q11 If Have you ever been in a situation when you felt that DBVI did not honor your cultural identity? = No*

---

Q10 What can DBVI do to help its staff understand your culture?

\_\_\_\_\_

Q11

Please identify which DBVI Region serves you.

- Bristol Region
- Fairfax Region
- Norfolk Region
- Richmond Region
- Roanoke Region
- Staunton Region
- I am not sure

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Q12 If you have one or more disabilities in addition to blindness or a vision impairment, please identify them below (select as many that apply):

- Intellectual Disability (ID)
  - Developmental Disability (DD)
  - Autism Spectrum Disorder
  - Traumatic Brain Injury
  - Communication
  - Deaf or Hard of Hearing
  - Deaf-Blind
  - Mental Health
  - Mobility
  - Physical
  - Alcoholism or substance abuse
  - Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
  - No impairment
-

Q13 Please indicate whether you receive the following Social Security disability benefits (please check all that apply).

- I receive SSI (Supplemental Security Income. SSI is a means-tested benefit generally provided to individuals with little or no work history)
- I receive SSDI (Social Security Disability Insurance. SSDI is provided to individuals that have worked in the past and is based on the amount of money the individual paid into the system through payroll deductions)
- I receive a check from the Social Security Administration every month, but I do not know which benefit I get
- I don't know if I receive Social Security disability benefits
- I do not receive Social Security disability benefits
- I have received benefits in the past, but no longer receive them

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Q14

**Employment-Related Needs**

The next several questions ask you about employment-related needs that you may have.

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Q15 Please identify which of the following have been barriers to you getting a job

	Yes, it has been a barrier	No, it has not been a barrier
Lack of education	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of job skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of job search skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of reliable Internet access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Criminal Record	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Limited English skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of available jobs	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employer concerns about my ability to do the job due to my disability	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Age	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of assistive technology	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of attendant care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of reliable transportation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental health concerns	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Substance abuse	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of child care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Lack of housing	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employers hesitant to hire people with disabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Concern over loss of Social Security benefits due to working	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

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Page Break

Q16 Please identify what the top three barriers have been to you getting a job. Please choose only three.

- Lack of education
- Lack of training
- Lack of job skills
- Lack of job search skills
- Lack of reliable Internet access
- Criminal Record
- Limited English skills
- Lack of available jobs
- Employer concerns about my ability to do the job due to my disability
- Lack of assistive technology
- Lack of attendant care
- Lack of reliable transportation
- Mental health concerns
- Substance abuse
- Lack of child care
- Lack of housing
- Employers hesitant to hire people with disabilities
- Concern over loss of Social Security benefits due to working

---

Q17 If you have experienced other barriers to getting a job not mentioned above, please list them here.

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Page Break

Q18

**Barriers to Accessing DBVI Services**

The next several questions ask you about barriers to accessing DBVI services.

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Q19 Please indicate which of the following have been a barrier to you accessing DBVI services.

	Yes, it has been a barrier	No, it has not been a barrier
The DBVI office is not on a public bus route	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
DBVI's hours of operation	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of information about available services	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of disability-related accommodations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language barriers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulties scheduling meetings with my counselor	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulty reaching DBVI staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other difficulties with DBVI staff	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulties completing the DBVI application	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Reliable Internet access	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q20 What have been the top three barriers to you accessing DBVI services? Please choose no more than three.

- The DBVI office is not on a public bus route
- DBVI's hours of operation
- Lack of information about available services
- Lack of disability-related accommodations
- Language barriers
- Difficulties scheduling meetings with my counselor
- Difficulty reaching DBVI staff
- Other difficulties with DBVI staff
- Difficulties completing the DBVI application
- Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)
- Reliable Internet access
- I have not had any barriers to accessing DBVI services

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Q21 Have you had any other challenges or barriers not already mentioned that have made it difficult for you to access DBVI services?

- Yes (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- No

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Page Break



Q22 Where do you usually meet with your DBVI counselor?

- In my community/school
  - I go to a DBVI office
  - We meet remotely by phone
  - We meet remotely by video conference
  - I don't have a DBVI counselor
- 

Q23 How many DBVI counselors have you had?

- 1
  - 2
  - 3
  - 4
  - More than 4
  - I have never had a DBVI counselor
- 

Q24 How often are you able to reach your counselor when you need to?

- Always
  - Usually
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
-

Q25 How do you get along with your DBVI counselor?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - So-so
  - Poor
  - Terrible
- 

Q26 Has DBVI helped you to make progress towards your employment goal?

- Yes
  - No
  - I have not worked with DBVI
- 

Page Break

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Q27 Which of the following DBVI services have you received remotely (by phone, email or video conference) since the beginning of the COVID 19 pandemic? (select all that apply)

- Career Counseling
- Job development and/or job placement
- Job support to keep a job
- Benefits counseling
- Assistive technology
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- I have not received any services from DBVI remotely during the pandemic

*Skip To: Q29 If Which of the following DBVI services have you received remotely (by phone, email or video confere... = I have not received any services from DBVI remotely during the pandemic*

Q28 How would you rate the effectiveness of the services delivered remotely during the pandemic?

- Extremely effective
- Effective
- Somewhat effective
- Less effective
- Not effective at all

Q29 How can DBVI change their services to help you get a job, keep your job, or get a better job?

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Q30 Please tell us about how you manage money

	Yes	No
I have a monthly budget	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a savings account	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I have a checking account	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I invest my money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I would like to learn more about managing my money	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

Q31 Please identify how well the following statements describe your financial situation.

	Completely	Very well	Somewhat	Very little	Not at all
Because of my money situation, I feel like I will never have the things I want in life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am just getting by financially	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am concerned the money I have, or will have, won't last	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q32 How often do you have money left over at the end of each month?

- Always
- Often
- Sometimes
- Rarely
- Never

33 How often do you feel your finances control your life?

- Always
  - Often
  - Sometimes
  - Rarely
  - Never
- 

Q34 What is your current employment goal?

---

Q35 Have you thought about what your next job might be after reaching your current employment goal?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

*Skip To: Q37 If Have you thought about what your next job might be after reaching your current employment goal? = No*

*Skip To: Q37 If Have you thought about what your next job might be after reaching your current employment goal? = I don't know*

---

Q36 Will you need more training or help to get your next job?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

Q37 Have you received services from an organization or an individual that DBVI referred you to? (This may include an assessment, preparing for or finding employment, job coaching, training, assistive technology, or other services)

- Yes
- No
- I am not sure

*Skip To: Q42 If Have you received services from an organization or an individual that DBVI referred you to? (This... = No*  
*Skip To: Q42 If Have you received services from an organization or an individual that DBVI referred you to? (This... = I am not sure*

---

Q38 How effective were the services you received from the service provider?

- Very effective
  - Effective
  - Somewhat ineffective
  - Ineffective
- 

Q39

How would you rate the quality of services you received from your service provider?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - Fair
  - Poor
-

Q40 How would you rate the responsiveness of your service provider?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - Fair
  - Poor
- 

Q41 Would you recommend your service provider to others served by DBVI?

- Yes
  - No
  - Not sure
- 

Q42

The next set of questions asks you about the

**Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired**

---

Q43 Did you attend the Virginia Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)?

- Yes, and I completed the program
- Yes, but I did not complete the program
- No, I did not attend VRCBVI

*Skip To: Q56 If Did you attend the Virginia Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)? = No, I did not attend VRCBVI*

---



Q44 Why did you not complete VRCBVI?

- The program was too long
  - Health issues
  - I was dismissed from the program
  - Family issues
  - I was not pleased with the instruction
  - I had difficulty getting along with others
  - Mental health concerns prevented me from completing
  - Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q45 How would you rate the quality of the Orientation and Mobility training provided at VRCBVI?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor
  - I did not receive Orientation and Mobility training
-

Q46 How would you rate the quality of the Braille training provided at VRCBVI?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor
  - I did not receive Braille training
- 

Q47 How would you rate the quality of the keyboarding, computers and access technology training provided at VRCBVI?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor
  - I did not receive keyboarding, computers and access technology training
- 

Q48 How would you rate the quality of the personal home management/cooking training provided at VRCBVI?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor
  - I did not receive personal home management/cooking training
-

Q49 How would you rate the quality of the adult basic education training provided at VRCBVI?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor
  - I did not receive adult basic education training
- 

Q50 How would you rate the quality of the wellness instruction and recreation training provided at VRCBVI?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor
  - I did not receive wellness instruction and recreation training
- 

Q51 How would you rate the quality of the health services training provided at VRCBVI?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor
  - I did not receive health services training
-

Q52 How would you rate the quality of the vocational services training provided at VRCBVI?

- Excellent
  - Good
  - Average
  - Poor
  - I did not receive vocational services training
- 

Q53 How prepared are you to live independently as a result of the training that you received at VRCBVI?

- Very prepared
  - Moderately prepared
  - Minimally prepared
  - Not at all prepared
- 

Q54 How prepared are you to go to work as a result of the training that you received at VRCBVI?

- Very prepared
  - Moderately prepared
  - Minimally prepared
  - Not at all prepared
-

Q55 How can VRCBVI improve their services?

---

Q56

**Virginia Workforce Centers**

The next several questions ask you about experiences you may have had with the Virginia Workforce Centers previously referred to as One-Stops or Career Centers. These questions refer only to your experience with the staff or services at the Virginia Workforce Centers and not with DBVI staff who may be working at the Centers.

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Q57 Have you ever tried to use the services of the Virginia Workforce Centers beyond creating an online account? (this may include testing, preparing for or finding employment, job coaching, training assistive technology or other services)

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q69 If Have you ever tried to use the services of the Virginia Workforce Centers beyond creating an onli... = No*

---

Q58 Did you experience any difficulties with the physical accessibility of the building?

Yes (If yes, please describe the difficulties you experienced)

---

No

---

Q59 Did you have any difficulty accessing the programs at the Virginia Workforce Centers (i.e. no available assistive technology, no interpreters, etc.)?

Yes

No

---

Q60 Did you go to the Virginia Workforce Centers to get training?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q63 If Did you go to the Virginia Workforce Centers to get training? = No*

---

Q61 Did you get the training that you were seeking?

Yes

No

---

Q62 Did the Virginia Workforce Centers training result in employment?

Yes

No

---

Q63 Did you go to the Virginia Workforce Centers to find a job?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q65 If Did you go to the Virginia Workforce Centers to find a job? = No*

---

Q64 Did the Virginia Workforce Centers staff help you find employment?

- Yes
  - No
- 

Q65 Was the Virginia Workforce Centers staff helpful?

- Yes, they were very helpful
  - They were somewhat helpful
  - No, they were not helpful
- 

Q66 Were the services at the Virginia Workforce Centers effective?

- Yes, the services were very effective
  - The services were somewhat effective
  - No, the services were not effective
- 

Q67 Overall, how would you rate the effectiveness of the Virginia Workforce Centers in serving individuals with disabilities?

- Very effective
  - Somewhat effective
  - No opinion
  - Somewhat ineffective
  - Very ineffective
-

Q68 What recommendations do you have for the Virginia Workforce Centers to improve their services to individuals with disabilities in Wisconsin?

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Q69 Is there anything else you would like to add about DBVI or its services?

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Q70 This is the end of the survey! Your information and feedback is valuable to DBVI, thank you for completing the survey.

Please select the "NEXT" button below to submit your responses.

End of Block: Default Question Block

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*Appendix C: Partner Survey*

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## Virginia DBVI 2021-22 CSNA - Partner Survey

**Q1 Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired Community Partner Survey** The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) is working collaboratively with the State Rehabilitation Council and the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University in order to conduct an assessment of the needs of individuals with blindness or other vision impairments who live in Virginia. The results of this needs assessment will inform the development of the Virginia Combined State Plan and will help planners make decisions about programs and services for persons with blindness and vision impairments. The following survey includes questions that ask you about the unmet, employment-related needs of persons with blindness or other vision impairments. We anticipate that it will take about 10-15 minutes of your time to complete the survey. Your participation in this needs assessment is voluntary. If you decide to participate, your responses will be anonymous; that is, recorded without any identifying information that is linked to you. You will not be asked for your name anywhere in this survey. If you have any questions regarding this survey or would like to request the survey in an alternate format, please contact Dr. Chaz Compton at San Diego State University at the following e-mail address: [ccompton@interwork.sdsu.edu](mailto:ccompton@interwork.sdsu.edu)

Q2 Please identify the type of organization you work for.

- A Community Rehabilitation Program
- An educational agency
- A health care provider
- A Workforce Development System partner
- Another State, Federal or local agency that serves individuals with disabilities
- I am an individual service provider
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Q3 Please indicate which of the following services are readily available to individuals with blindness or other vision impairments who are served by DBVI. By "readily available" we mean that services are available in the area to individuals with a range of vision impairments (check all that apply).

- Job development and placement services
- Job training services
- Assistive technology
- Vocational evaluation
- Vocational training
- Transition services
- Pre-employment transition services
- Public transportation
- Other transportation assistance
- Independent living skills training
- Adjustment to blindness training
- Mental health treatment
- Substance abuse treatment
- Personal care attendants
- Financial literacy training
- Affordable housing services
- Benefits planning assistance

Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q4 In your experience, is the network of rehabilitation service providers in Virginia able to meet DBVI consumers' vocational rehabilitation service needs?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q7 If In your experience, is the network of rehabilitation service providers in Virginia able to meet D... = Yes*

---

Q5 What service needs is the network of rehabilitation service providers in Virginia unable to meet?

- Job development and placement services
- Job training services
- Assistive technology
- Vocational evaluation
- Vocational training
- Transition services
- Pre-employment transition services
- Public transportation
- Other transportation assistance
- Independent living skills training
- Adjustment to blindness training
- Mental health treatment
- Substance abuse treatment
- Personal care attendants
- Financial literacy training
- Affordable housing services
- Benefits planning assistance
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q6 What are the primary reasons that vocational rehabilitation service providers are generally unable to meet consumers' service needs?

- Not enough providers available in area
- Low quality of provider services
- The rates of payment for services are too low
- Client barriers prevent successful interactions with providers
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q7 Below is a list of potential reasons that DBVI consumers might find it difficult to achieve their employment goals. For each potential barrier, please indicate whether you believe that:

It is a barrier, and DBVI services adequately address the barrier

It is a barrier, and DBVI services do not adequately address the barrier

It is not a barrier  
You do not know if it is a barrier

	Barrier, adequately addressed by DBVI services	Barrier, NOT adequately addressed by DBVI services	Not a barrier	Don't know
Not having education or training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not having job skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not having job search skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convictions for criminal offenses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language barriers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor social skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not enough jobs available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not having disability-related accommodations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of help with disability-related personal care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>



Disability-related transportation issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other transportation issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental health issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Substance abuse issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other health issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Childcare issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please describe)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

Q8 What would you say are the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers (please select a maximum of three barriers to achieving employment goals)?

- Not having education or training
- Not having job skills
- Not having job search skills
- Convictions for criminal offenses
- Language barriers
- Poor social skills
- Not enough jobs available
- Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities
- Not having disability-related accommodations
- Lack of help with disability-related personal care
- Disability-related transportation issues
- Other transportation issues
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse issues
- Other health issues
- Childcare issues
- Housing issues
- Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits

Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q9 Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers that require supported employment services different from the overall population of consumers served by DBVI?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q11 If Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers that require supported employe... = No*

---

Q10 What would you say are the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers that require supported employment services (please select a maximum of three barriers to achieving employment goals)?

- Not having education or training
- Not having job skills
- Not having job search skills
- Convictions for criminal offenses
- Language barriers
- Poor social skills
- Not enough jobs available
- Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities
- Not having disability-related accommodations
- Lack of help with disability-related personal care
- Disability-related transportation issues
- Other transportation issues
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse issues
- Other health issues
- Childcare issues
- Housing issues

Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits

Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q11 Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for youth in transition different from the overall population of individuals served by DBVI?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q13 If Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for youth in transition different from the overall... = No*

---

Q12 What would you say are the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for youth in transition (please select a maximum of three barriers to achieving employment goals)?

- Not having education or training
- Not having job skills
- Not having job search skills
- Convictions for criminal offenses
- Language barriers
- Poor social skills
- Not enough jobs available
- Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities
- Not having disability-related accommodations
- Lack of help with disability-related personal care
- Disability-related transportation issues
- Other transportation issues
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse issues
- Other health issues
- Childcare issues
- Housing issues
- Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits

Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q13 Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are racial or ethnic minorities different from the overall population of consumers served by DBVI?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q15 If Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are racial or ethnic minori... = No*

---

Q14 What would you say are the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are racial or ethnic minorities (please select a maximum of three barriers to achieving employment goals)?

- Not having education or training
- Not having job skills
- Not having job search skills
- Convictions for criminal offenses
- Language barriers
- Poor social skills
- Not enough jobs available
- Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities
- Not having disability-related accommodations
- Lack of help with disability-related personal care
- Disability-related transportation issues
- Other transportation issues
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse issues
- Other health issues
- Childcare issues
- Housing issues



Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits

Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q15 Is there anything else we should know about the primary barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers?

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Q16 What would you say are the top three reasons that individuals with blindness or other vision impairments find it difficult to access DBVI services (please select a maximum of three reasons)?

- Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation
- Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office
- Inadequate disability-related accommodations
- Language barriers
- Difficulties completing the application
- Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment
- Inadequate assessment services
- Slow service delivery
- Difficulties accessing training or education programs
- DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live
- DBVI staff are not responsive to communication from clients or potential clients
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Q17 Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by individuals that require supported employment services disabilities different from the general population of individuals with blindness or other vision impairments?

- Yes
- No

*Skip To: Q19 If Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by individuals that require supp... = No*

Q18 What would you say are the top three reasons that individuals that require supported employment services find it difficult to access DBVI services (please select a maximum of three reasons)?

- Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation
- Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office
- Inadequate disability-related accommodations
- Language barriers
- Difficulties completing the application
- Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment
- Inadequate assessment services
- Slow service delivery
- Difficulties accessing training or education programs
- DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live
- DBVI staff are not responsive to communication from clients or potential clients
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Q19 Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by youth in transition different from the general population of individuals with blindness or other vision impairments?

- Yes
- No

*Skip To: Q21 If Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by youth in transition different... = No*

---

Q20 What would you say are the top three reasons that youth in transition find it difficult to access DBVI services (please select a maximum of three reasons)?

- Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation
  - Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office
  - Inadequate disability-related accommodations
  - Language barriers
  - Difficulties completing the application
  - Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment
  - Inadequate assessment services
  - Slow service delivery
  - Difficulties accessing training or education programs
  - DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live
  - DBVI staff are not responsive to communication from clients or potential clients
  - Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q21 Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by consumers who are racial or ethnic minorities different from the general population of individuals with blindness or other vision impairments?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q23 If Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by consumers who are racial or e... = No*

---

Q22 What would you say are the top three reasons that consumers who are racial or ethnic minorities find it difficult to access DBVI services (please select a maximum of three reasons)?

- Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation
- Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office
- Inadequate disability-related accommodations
- Language barriers
- Difficulties completing the application
- Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment
- Inadequate accessing assessment services
- Slow service delivery
- Difficulties accessing training or education programs
- DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live
- DBVI staff are not responsive to communication from clients or potential clients
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q23 Is there anything else we should know about why individuals with blindness or other vision impairments find it difficult to access DBVI services?

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Q24 What is the most important change that DBVI could make to support consumers' efforts to achieve their employment goals?

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Q25 What is the most important change that the network or rehabilitation service providers in the state of Virginia could make to support consumers' efforts to achieve their employment goals?

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Q26 Your feedback is valuable to us, and we would like to thank you for taking the time to complete the survey! Please select the "NEXT" button below to submit your responses.

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*Appendix D: Staff Survey*

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## Virginia DBVI 2021-22 CSNA - Staff Survey

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### Start of Block: Default Question Block

**Q1 Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired Staff Survey** The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) is working collaboratively with the State Rehabilitation Council and the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University in order to conduct an assessment of the needs of individuals with blindness and vision impairments in Virginia. The results of this needs assessment will inform the development of Virginia's Combined State Plan and will help planners make decisions about programs and services for persons with blindness and vision impairments. The following survey includes questions that ask you about the unmet, employment-related needs of persons with blindness and vision impairments. We anticipate that it will take about 10-15 minutes of your time to complete the survey. Your participation in this needs assessment is voluntary. If you decide to participate, your responses will be anonymous; that is, recorded without any identifying information that is linked to you. You will not be asked for your name anywhere in this survey. If you have any questions regarding this survey or would like to request the survey in an alternate format, please contact Dr. Chaz Compton at San Diego State University at the following e-mail address: [ccompton@interwork.sdsu.edu](mailto:ccompton@interwork.sdsu.edu) Thank you for taking the time to complete this survey!

---

**Q2 Which job classification best fits your current position at DBVI?**

- Rehabilitation Counselor
  - Instructor
  - Supervisor, Manager or Administrator
  - Support Staff
  - Administration or Operations
  - Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
-



Q3

In what Region do you primarily work?

- Headquarters
- Bristol Region
- Fairfax Region
- Norfolk Region
- Richmond Region
- Roanoke Region
- Staunton Region

Q4

The next set of questions asks you about the service providers used by DBVI to deliver services to consumers

---

Q5 Please indicate which of the following services are readily available to DBVI consumers. By "readily available" we mean that services are available in the area to individuals with a range of vision impairments (check all that apply).

- Job development and placement services
- Job training services
- Assistive technology
- Vocational evaluation
- Vocational training
- Transition services
- Pre-employment transition services
- Public transportation
- Other transportation services
- Independent living skills training
- Adjustment to blindness training
- Mental health treatment
- Substance abuse treatment
- Personal care attendants
- Financial literacy training
- Affordable housing services
- Benefit planning assistance

Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q6 In your experience, are vendors able to meet DBVI consumers' vocational rehabilitation service needs?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q9 If In your experience, are vendors able to meet DBVI consumers' vocational rehabilitation service ne... = Yes*

---

Q7 What service needs are vendors unable to meet?

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---

---

---

Q8 What are the primary reasons that vendors are generally unable to meet consumers' service needs?

- Not enough vendors available in area
- Low quality of vendor services
- Low rates paid for services
- Low levels of accountability for poor performance by vendors
- Client barriers prevent successful interactions with vendors
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q9 Below is a list of potential reasons that DBVI consumers might find it difficult to achieve their employment goals. For each potential barrier, please indicate whether you believe that:

It is a barrier, and DBVI services adequately address the barrier

It is a barrier, and DBVI services do not adequately address the barrier  
It is not a barrier  
You do not know if it is a barrier

	Barrier, adequately addressed by DBVI services	Barrier, NOT adequately addressed by DBVI services	Not a barrier	Don't know
Not having education or training	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not having job skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not having job search skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Convictions for criminal offenses	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Language barriers	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Poor social skills	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not enough jobs available	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Not having disability-related accommodations	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Lack of help with disability-related personal care	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Disability-related transportation issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other transportation issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Mental health issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Substance abuse issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other health issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Childcare issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Housing issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please describe)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

---

Q10 What would you say are the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers (please select a maximum of three barriers to achieving employment goals)?

- Not having education or training
- Not having job skills
- Not having job search skills
- Convictions for criminal offenses
- Language barriers
- Poor social skills
- Not enough jobs available
- Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities
- Not having disability-related accommodations
- Lack of help with disability-related personal care
- Disability-related transportation issues
- Other transportation issues
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse issues
- Other health issues
- Childcare issues
- Housing issues
- Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits



Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q11 Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers that require supported employment services different from the overall population?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q13 If Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers that require supported employe... = No*

---

Q12 What would you say are the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers that require supported employment services (please select a maximum of three barriers to achieving employment goals)?

- Not having education or training
- Not having job skills
- Not having job search skills
- Convictions for criminal offenses
- Language barriers
- Poor social skills
- Not enough jobs available
- Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities
- Not having disability-related accommodations
- Lack of help with disability-related personal care
- Disability-related transportation issues
- Other transportation issues
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse issues
- Other health issues
- Childcare issues
- Housing issues

Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits

Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q13 Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for youth in transition different from the overall population of consumers served by DBVI?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q15 If Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for youth in transition different from the overall... = No*

---

Q14 What would you say are the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for youth in transition (please select a maximum of three barriers to achieving employment goals)?

- Not having education or training
- Not having job skills
- Not having job search skills
- Convictions for criminal offenses
- Language barriers
- Poor social skills
- Not enough jobs available
- Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities
- Not having disability-related accommodations
- Lack of help with disability-related personal care
- Disability-related transportation issues
- Other transportation issues
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse issues
- Other health issues
- Childcare issues
- Housing issues
- Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits

Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

---

Q15 Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are racial or ethnic minorities different from the overall population consumers served by DBVI?

Yes

No

*Skip To: Q17 If Are the barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are racial or ethnic minori... = No*

---

Q16 What would you say are the top three barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers who are racial or ethnic minorities (please select a maximum of three barriers to achieving employment goals)?

- Not having education or training
- Not having job skills
- Not having job search skills
- Convictions for criminal offenses
- Language barriers
- Poor social skills
- Not enough jobs available
- Employers' perceptions about employing persons with disabilities
- Not having disability-related accommodations
- Lack of help with disability-related personal care
- Disability-related transportation issues
- Other transportation issues
- Mental health issues
- Substance abuse issues
- Other health issues
- Childcare issues
- Housing issues

Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits

Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

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Q17 Is there anything else we should know about the primary barriers to achieving employment goals for DBVI consumers?

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Q18 What would you say are the top three reasons that people with blindness or other vision impairments find it difficult to access DBVI services (please select a maximum of three reasons)?

- Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation
- Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office
- Inadequate disability-related accommodations
- Language barriers
- Difficulties completing the application
- Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment
- Inadequate assessment services
- Slow service delivery
- Difficulties accessing training or education programs
- DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Q19 Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by individuals that require supported employment services different from the general population of people with blindness or other vision impairments?

- Yes
- No

*Skip To: Q21 If Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by individuals that require supp... = No*



Q20 What would you say are the top three reasons that individuals that require supported employment services find it difficult to access DBVI services (please select a maximum of three reasons)?

- Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation
- Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office
- Inadequate disability-related accommodations
- Language barriers
- Difficulties completing the application
- Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment
- Inadequate assessment services
- Slow service delivery
- Difficulties accessing training or education programs
- DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Q21 Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by youth in transition different from the general population of individuals with blindness or other vision impairments?

- Yes
- No

*Skip To: Q23 If Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by youth in transition different... = No*

Q22 What would you say are the top three reasons that youth in transition find it difficult to access DBVI services (please select a maximum of three reasons)?

- Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation
- Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office
- Inadequate disability-related accommodations
- Language barriers
- Difficulties completing the application
- Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment
- Inadequate assessment services
- Slow service delivery
- Difficulties accessing training or education programs
- DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Q23 Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by consumers who are racial or ethnic minorities different from the general population of individuals with blindness or other vision impairments?

- Yes
- No

*Skip To: Q25 If Are the reasons for finding it difficult to access DBVI services by consumers who are racial or e... = No*

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Q24 What would you say are the top three reasons that consumers who are racial or ethnic minorities find it difficult to access DBVI services (please select a maximum of three reasons)?

- Limited accessibility of DBVI via public transportation
- Other challenges related to the physical location of the DBVI office
- Inadequate disability-related accommodations
- Language barriers
- Difficulties completing the application
- Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment
- Inadequate assessment services
- Slow service delivery
- Difficulties accessing training or education programs
- DBVI staff do not meet clients in the communities where the clients live
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

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Q25 Is there anything else we should know about why individuals with blindness or other vision impairments find it difficult to access DBVI services?

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Q26

**Virginia Workforce Centers**

The next set of questions ask you about the effectiveness of the Virginia Workforce Centers (previously referred to as One-Stops or Career Centers) in serving individuals with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia.

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Q27 Have you ever referred one of your clients to a Virginia Workforce Center?

- Yes
- No

*Skip To: Q37 If Have you ever referred one of your clients to a Virginia Workforce Center? = No*

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Q28 Have the Virginia Workforce Centers helped any of your clients to get training for a job?

- Yes
- No
- I have never referred anyone for training
- 

Q29 Have the Virginia Workforce Centers helped any of your clients to get a job?

- Yes
- No
- I have never referred a client for employment
-

Q30 In your opinion, how effectively do the Virginia Workforce Centers serve individuals with blindness or other vision impairments?

- Very effectively
  - Somewhat effectively
  - Not effectively
  - They do not serve individuals with blindness or other vision impairments
  - Unsure
- 

Q31 What can the Virginia Workforce Centers do to more effectively serve individuals with blindness or other vision impairments in Virginia (select all that apply)?

- Improve physical accessibility
  - Improve programmatic accessibility
  - Train their staff on how to work with people with blindness or other vision impairments
  - Include individuals with blindness or other vision impairments when they fund for training for clients
  - Partner more effectively with DBVI
  - Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q32

The next set of questions asks you about the

**Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired**

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Q33 Have you ever referred a consumer to the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)?

- Yes
- No

*Skip To: Q37 If Have you ever referred a consumer to the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision... = No*

---

Q34 How effectively does VRCBVI prepare your consumer to live independently?

- Very effectively
- Somewhat effectively
- Not effectively

Q35 Upon completion of the VRCBVI program, how prepared are your consumers to go to work?

- Very prepared
- Somewhat prepared
- Not at all prepared
- I do not send my consumers to VRCBVI to prepare for employment

Q36 Please identify at least two ways that VRCBVI can improve services to your consumers. You may include as many suggestions as possible, but please include at least two.

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Q37 What is the most important change that DBVI could make to support consumers' efforts to achieve their employment goals?

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Q38 What is the most important change that vendors could make to support consumers' efforts to achieve their employment goals?

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Q39 What are the top three changes that would enable you to better assist your DBVI consumers (please select a maximum of three changes)?

- Smaller caseload
  - More streamlined processes
  - Better data management tools
  - Better assessment tools
  - Additional training
  - More administrative support
  - More supervisor support
  - Improved business partnerships
  - Decreased procurement time
  - More effective community-based service providers
  - Increased outreach to clients in their communities
  - Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q40 Your feedback is valuable to us, and we would like to thank you for taking the time to complete the survey! Please select the "NEXT" button below to submit your responses.



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*Appendix E: Business Survey*

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## Virginia DBVI 2021-22 CSNA - Business Survey

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Q1

### **Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired Vocational Rehabilitation Program Business Survey**

The Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) is a State agency that helps Virginia residents with blindness and vision impairments to prepare for, obtain and retain employment. DBVI is contracting with San Diego State University to conduct an assessment to learn more about the needs of businesses and employers with respect to partnering with DBVI and employing and accommodating workers with blindness and vision impairments. The information that you provide will help DBVI to more effectively respond to the needs of businesses and will influence the planning and delivery of vocational services to persons with blindness and vision impairments.

This survey will take approximately five minutes to complete. Your responses will be kept confidential and you will not be asked for your name or the name of your organization anywhere in the survey.

If you have any questions regarding this survey or if you would prefer to complete this survey in an alternate format, please contact Dr. Chaz Compton at San Diego State University at the following e-mail address: [ccompton@interwork.sdsu.edu](mailto:ccompton@interwork.sdsu.edu)

Thank you very much for your time and input!

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Page Break

Q2 Which of the following best describes your type of business? (select one response)

- Service
  - Retail
  - Manufacturing
  - Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing
  - Construction
  - Government
  - Education
  - Health care
  - Banking/Finance
  - Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
- 

Q3 How many people are employed at your business? (select one response)

- 1 - 15
  - 16 - 50
  - 51 - 250
  - 251 - 999
  - 1,000 or more
-

**Q4 Disability in the Workplace:**

Does your business need help... (select one response for each)

	Yes	No
Understanding disability-related legislation such as the Americans with blindness and vision impairments Act as amended, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Rehabilitation Act as amended?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying job accommodations for workers with blindness and vision impairments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recruiting job applicants who are people with blindness and vision impairments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Helping workers with blindness and vision impairments to retain employment?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtaining training on the different types of blindness and vision impairments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtaining training on sensitivity to workers with blindness and vision impairments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtaining incentives for employing workers with blindness and vision impairments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Obtaining information on training programs available for workers with blindness and vision impairments?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q5 If you would like to comment further on any of your answers above, or if you have additional comments or needs regarding disability in the workplace, please describe them in the space below.

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Page Break

**Q6 Applicants with blindness and vision impairments:**

With respect to applicants with blindness and vision impairments, does your business need help...  
(select one response for each)

	Yes	No
Recruiting applicants who meet the job qualifications?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recruiting applicants with good work habits?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Recruiting applicants with good social/interpersonal skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Assessing applicants' skills?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Discussing reasonable job accommodations with applicants?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Identifying reasonable job accommodations for applicants?	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Q7 If you would like to comment further on any of your answers above, or if you have additional comments or needs regarding applicants with blindness and vision impairments, please describe them in the space below.

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Q8 With respect to employees with blindness and vision impairments you have now or have had in the past, what are the positive employee traits you have experienced with them regarding job retention? (check all that apply)

- Flexibility
  - Reliability
  - Initiative/Ambition
  - Honesty/Integrity
  - Works well with their team
  - Positive attitude
  - Determined/dedicated
  - Independent
  - Punctual
  - Organized
  - Attention to detail
  - Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
-

**Q9 Employees with blindness and vision impairments:**

With respect to employees with blindness and vision impairments you have now or have had in the past, what are the challenges you have experienced with them regarding job retention?

- I have no knowledge of any challenges we have had retaining employees with blindness and vision impairments
- Poor attendance
- Difficulty learning job skills
- Slow work speed
- Poor work stamina
- Poor social skills
- Physical health problems
- Mental health concerns
- Language barriers
- Identifying effective accommodations
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of ongoing support due to case closure
- Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_

Q10 If you would like to comment further on any of your answers above, or if you have additional comments or needs regarding employees with blindness and vision impairments, please describe them in the space below.

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Q11 How would you rate your knowledge of DBVI and the services they can provide to businesses?

- Very knowledgeable
- Somewhat knowledgeable
- Little or no knowledge

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Q12 Has your business utilized any of the services that DBVI provides?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

*Skip To: Q16 If Has your business utilized any of the services that DBVI provides? = No*

*Skip To: Q16 If Has your business utilized any of the services that DBVI provides? = I don't know*

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Q13 Which of the following services did DBVI provide to your business (please select all that apply)?

- Training in understanding disability-related legislation such as the Americans with Disabilities Act as amended, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and the Rehabilitation Act as amended?
  - Assistance identifying job accommodations for workers with blindness and vision impairments?
  - Recruiting job applicants who are people with blindness and vision impairments?
  - Helping workers with blindness and vision impairments to retain employment?
  - Obtaining training on the different types of blindness and vision impairments?
  - Obtaining training on sensitivity to workers with blindness and vision impairments?
  - Obtaining incentives for employing workers with blindness and vision impairments?
  - Obtaining information on training programs available for workers with blindness and vision impairments?
  - Recruiting applicants who meet the job qualifications?
  - Recruiting applicants with good work habits?
  - Recruiting applicants with good social/interpersonal skills?
  - Assessing applicants' skills?
  - Discussing reasonable job accommodations with applicants?
  - Identifying reasonable job accommodations for applicants?
  - Other (please describe) \_\_\_\_\_
-

Q14 How satisfied were you with the services you received from DBVI?

- Very satisfied
  - Satisfied
  - Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied
  - Dissatisfied
  - Very dissatisfied
- 

Q15 How likely would you be to seek out services from DBVI again, or recommend DBVI to another employer?

- Very likely
  - Likely
  - Neither likely nor unlikely
  - Unlikely
  - Very unlikely
- 

Q16 If your business has any needs related to applicants or workers with blindness and vision impairments that are not currently being met please describe them here:

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Q17 Your feedback is valuable to us, and we would like to thank you for taking the time to complete the survey!

DBVI is also conducting focus groups and individual interviews as part of this assessment. If you are interested in participating in a focus group or individual interview, please contact Dr. Chaz Compton by email at [ccompton@interwork.sdsu.edu](mailto:ccompton@interwork.sdsu.edu). Thank you!

Please select the "NEXT" button below to submit your responses.

End of Block: Default Question Block

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*Appendix F: BPD's Technology Assessment Checklist*

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**BPD Technology Committee's  
Technology Assessment Checklist for Social Work Practice (Version 2)  
September 2018**

**History:** The BPD Technology Committee created the first version of the Technology Assessment Checklist for Social Work Practice in 2016, using the web-based mapping tool, *MindMeister* (<https://www.mindmeister.com>), with ten social workers contributing their suggestions this first version. After compiling all the ideas from the mapping tool, the list was reviewed by members of the committee, and was presented at BPD's 2017 Annual Conference during the Technology Committee's Board Sponsored Session in New Orleans. Feedback was provided and the next step was to revise the checklist. Here is a link that original document: <https://tinyurl.com/BPDTechChecklist3-2017>.

In 2018, we used an online collaborative process using *Google Docs* to crowd source the next round of revisions to the Technology Assessment List. Below is a list of the individuals who contributed to that process. A sample of the second version was shared at BPD's 2018 Annual Conference during the Technology Committee's Board-Sponsored Session in Atlanta, GA. Attendees reviewed the document for feedback, and the final version is included in this document.

Contributors:

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- Laurel Iverson Hitchcock, University of Alabama at Birmingham & Co-Chair of the BPD Technology Committee (2017-2019)
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**BPD Technology Committee's  
Technology Assessment Checklist for Social Work Practice**

**Interpretation:** Historically, social workers have been taught to assess the psychosocial well-being of clients in the context of their environment, including relationships with family members, peers, neighbors, and coworkers. With the increasing use of technology in society, it is important for social workers to also consider clients' relationships and comfort with technology. Such assessments could include client strengths, such as access to particular forms of technology and the ability to use technology for family, work, school, social, recreational, and other purposes. In addition, social workers should consider relevant needs, risks, and challenges, such as clients' reluctance to use technology; difficulty affording technology; limited computer knowledge or fluency with technology; and the risk of cyberbullying, electronic identity theft, and other behaviors regarding the use of technology.

This assessment checklist also addresses Standard 2.05 of the NASW Technology Standards for Social Work Practice: Assessing Clients' Relationships with Technology, which reads "When conducting psychosocial assessments with clients, social workers shall consider clients' views about technology and the ways in which they use technology, including strengths, needs, risks, and challenges." The goal of this assessment is to help social workers and other practitioners focus on practical issues of technology use across client systems and life span issues. There are seven sections of this assessment checklist:

- Section I: Access to Social & Digital Technology
- Section II: Digital literacy and Comfort of client to use technology
- Section III: Developmentally-based Considerations for Individuals
- Section IV: Intergenerational/Cultural issues
- Section V: Special Populations
- Section VI: Families
- Section VII: Social Worker Technology Self-Assessment

This checklist is not meant to be comprehensive, and a social worker can use any or all of these questions, in whatever order works best, when conducting an assessment on the use of technology. When using the questions on this checklist, please consider the following:

- Assess for strengths and needs as well as risks and challenges.
- Not every client will have or be aware of the available technology so you may want ask if they use a type of technology before asking about details (i.e. ask if they use email before asking for an email address).
- Although much research about technology use points to associations between mental distress and technology use, (a) the studies are typically correlational; (b) the effect of the correlation is often weak; and (c) the correlation typically occurs with very high rates of screen time, 5 or more non-work/school related hours.

## Section I: Access to Social & Digital Technology

### General questions

**Note:** Please adapt these questions for different types hardware and software.

- What hardware/devices do you own?
- What hardware/devices do you have access to? Where? When? How frequently?
- What devices do you wish you had access to (i.e. hearing aids, smartphone, laptop)?
- What are the barriers to owning or accessing hardware/devices (i.e. cost, knowledge of howto use, awareness of what is available/possible)?

### Basic Information to obtain about technology ownership and access:

- Hardware Devices available to client (i.e. smartphone, e-readers, computers, etc.):
- Wearable devices
- Assistive technology (i.e. have you ever been prescribed to use/do you use?)
- Software/apps/frequently visited sites used by client
- Internet connection or access available to clients - DSL, Wi-Fi, in-home, and/or library?
- Email Accounts - how many and how used? Email addresses are often required to set-up an account for Electronic Health Records (EHR).
- Social Media Accounts - how many, which ones and how used?
- Apps - how many, which ones and how used?

### General Use of Technology

- Number of hours spent engaged with technology each day; How much screen time per day; per week?
- What reasons do you use technology (i.e. social, financial, entertainment, educational, etc.)?
- For social reasons, what types of relationships (i.e. online dating or relationships, online friendships, online community or group memberships)?
- How would you describe your screen time and/or use of technology (i.e. productive vs. non-productive; problematic vs. non-problematic; passive such web surfing, watching ads, or watching videos vs. active use such as reading, communicating with others; or creating content)? How do others perceive your use?
- How does tech affect mood? What prompts tech use; how do you feel after?
- Is any online activity monitored? By who? How?
- Is any online activity private? Secret?

### Financial Costs of Technology

- Is computer used for financial purposes (online banking, shopping, medication)?
- What is the monthly expenditure for technology?
- How much awareness do members of your family have regarding the financial impact their technology has on the family budget?
- What is your accessibility and ability to access innovative technology?
- What is your financial burden regarding technology?
- Do you understand their monthly phone/internet plan/bill?
- Are you using online payments for any bills, transactions, or online shopping? If so, what sites and how?
- Do you track your subscriptions? Micro-transactions?

- Are other people in or out of your household connected to these accounts?
- Do you share any subscriptions with anyone (i.e. *Netflix*, *Amazon*, etc.)?
- What percent of their spending is on *Amazon*, online shopping, etc. do you know ways to intervene in problematic tech use? Strategies for cutting back or taking breaks?

#### Resources:

- Pew Research Center. (n.d.). Internet & Technology Home Page. Retrieved from <http://www.pewinternet.org/>
- Techopedia. (n.d.). *Techopedia Home Page*. Retrieved from <https://www.techopedia.com/>

## Section II: Digital Literacy and Comfort of Client

*Note:* For this section, you are trying to assess a client's level of knowledge and skills about technology as well as their comfort with technology.

- Overall, how competent or comfortable do you feel using technology?
- Have you ever been uncomfortable with something you posted on someone else's social media site? Have you ever been uncomfortable (angry, sad, afraid) of a post someone send you on a social media site or by private message?
- Has technology created any benefits for you?
- Has technology created any problems for you?
- What do you want to learn or areas of where you need direct technical assistance?
- What is your comfort-level with use of technology with practitioner?
- News and other information - Where do you go for info? So you use trusted sites? How do you assess?
- Online help-seeking behaviors (i.e. medical, behavioral, etc) - Where do you go for info? So you use trusted sites? How do you assess? How do you protect identity when you do?
- Identity Theft/Phishing – what do you do to protect your online identity? Do you use specific hardware or software?
- Netiquette - Is the client familiar with netiquette guidelines? How do the practice civility and etiquette in online environments?
- Tech-Mediated Communications/Interventions - Do you want to use tech-mediated communication/interventions? How do you think you would benefit from tech mediated interventions?

#### Resources:

- Belshaw, D. (2014). The Essential Elements of Digital Literacies. Retrieved from <http://digitalliteraci.es/>
- Jenkins, H., Clinton, K., Purushotma, R., Robison, A. J., & Weigel, M. (2009). *Confronting the Challenges of Participatory Culture: Media Education for the 21st Century*. Chicago, IL: MacArthur Foundation. Retrieved from [https://www.macfound.org/media/article\\_pdfs/JENKINS\\_WHITE\\_PAPER.PDF](https://www.macfound.org/media/article_pdfs/JENKINS_WHITE_PAPER.PDF)

### Section III: Developmentally-based Considerations for Individuals

#### Infants, toddlers, and young children:

- How much screen time does the child per day?
- What technology is shared with the child (i.e. caregiver's phone or tablet?)
- What are parents teaching their kids about the internet?
- Do parents actively participate with their children while they are using technology?
- What content, sites, or apps are parents using with their younger children?

#### Elementary school, Tweens, and Teens:

- Texting: With whom, do you have regular group texts? Who do you text one-on-one with themost?
- Social Media: What types of accounts do you have, use and how frequently used (*Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook Messenger, Kik, YouTube, Vine*)? What types of posts, comments or stories on your accounts? What do you post, like, re-post or share? Who do you follow on these social media accounts? If using anonymous posting sites (i.e. *Yik-yak, Whisper, etc.*) assess for potential bullying, mean-girl/boy behavior or older adult posing as a younger person. What are some of the current social expectations about social media use (leaving friends unread, *Snapchat* replies, response time, etc)?
- Music: How do you listen to music? (i.e. *Pandora, Spotify* or *YouTube*, etc)
- Video: Do you watch *Netflix* or other video platforms such as *YouTube* or *Vine*? If so, when and what do you watch? Do you binge watch? What YouTube personalities do you follow? What movie or TV genres are most viewed? Be aware if child is viewing of high-risk content, including sexually-explicit, self-harm, and other that mismatches family values/practices.
- Create Content: Where do you generate content, and what is it about? (i.e. *YouTube* videos).
- Gaming: Which games? Length of gaming time? Online group video gaming? Any impact of daily functioning? What game streams are you watching? Do they participate in a role play game? Are they using micro-transactions or loot crates?
- Safety & Privacy: Have you discussed inappropriate conversations vs. appropriate conversations with online 'friends'? Have they developed safety provisions if they want to meet online friends or potential dating prospects? Are you currently experiencing any stressor discomfort related to social media use (inability to meet social expectations due to lack of access, not understanding social expectations)?
- Parental Involvement: Do parents speak with you about online issues or controversies, especially if you follow the online personality? Where does the phone/tablet/ computer reside during bedtime? Family time?
- School: What are the school's policy on phone use, access to computers, Wi-Fi, social media, etc? How does this promote or hinder technology use by kids? Does the teen have access to phone or other devices that would allow for chat during school and free Wi-Fi? How is technology used for school work?
- Online Dating: Do you use in online dating apps? How many? Which ones? What is your profile like? Assess online dating practices and app use. Some teenagers also use *Snapchat* and within chat communication of gaming apps to date, they also date within role playing games online using the computer and games on *Xbox* etc.



### Adults (19 -64 years of age):

- Work: How is technology used for work activities? What devices are work only devices? Does your profession require technological adaptation over the years? If so, in what era of informational and communication technology did you leave off?
- Family & Friends: What types of technology do their families or friends use? Are they connected to their families or friends on social media? What types? How often do they use it? If they do not connect with them, why? Lack of tech literacy? How aware are you of internet scams and other risk factors? Assess possible isolation and technological disconnectedness.
- Leisure time: How is technology used for leisure activities or socializing?
- Texting: With whom, do you have regular group texts? Who do you text one-on-one with the most?
- Social Media: What types of accounts do you have, use and how frequently used (*Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook Messenger, Kik, YouTube, Vine*)? What types of posts, comments or stories on your accounts? What do you post, like, re-post or share? Who do you follow on these social media accounts? If using anonymous posting sites (i.e. *Yik-yak, Whisper*, etc.) assess for potential bullying, mean-girl/boy behavior or older adult posing as a younger person. What are some of the current social expectations about social media use (leaving friends unread, *Snapchat* replies, response time, etc)?
- Music: How do you listen to music? (i.e. *Pandora, Spotify* or *YouTube*, etc)
- Video: Do you watch *Netflix* or other video platforms such as *YouTube* or *Vine*? If so, when and what do you watch? Do you binge watch? What YouTube personalities do you follow? What movie or TV genres are most viewed? Be aware if child is viewing of high-risk content, including sexually-explicit, self-harm, and other that mismatches family values/practices.
- Create Content: Where do you generate content, and what is it about? (i.e. *YouTube* videos).
- Gaming: Which games? Length of gaming time? Online group video gaming? Any impact of daily functioning? What game streams are you watching? Do they participate in a role play game? Are they using micro-transactions or loot crates?
- Online Dating: Do you use in online dating apps? How many? Which ones? What is your profile like? Assess online dating practices and app use. (i.e. *Tinder* and other dating apps). About a third of romantic relationships now begin online. It is good to know the strengths and risks of various dating websites, whether your clients are using them, and how to assess their knowledge about strengths and risks.
- Safety & Privacy: Have you discussed inappropriate conversations vs. appropriate conversations with online 'friends'? Have they developed safety provisions if they want to meet online friends or potential dating prospects? Are you currently experiencing any stressor discomfort related to social media use (inability to meet social expectations due to lack of access, not understanding social expectations)?

### Elderly (65 years of age and older):

- Leisure time: How is technology used for leisure activities or socializing? How often do you go online? What type of activities do you engage in online?
- Family & Friends: What types of technology do their families or friends use? Are they connected to their families or friends on social media? What types? How often do they use it? If they do not connect with them, why? Lack of tech literacy? How aware are you of internet scams and other risk factors? Assess possible isolation and technological disconnectedness.

- **Texting:** With whom, do you have regular group texts? Who do you text one-on-one with the most?
- **Social Media:** What types of accounts do you have, use and how frequently used (*Instagram, Snapchat, Facebook Messenger, Kik, YouTube, Vine*)? What types of posts, comments or stories on your accounts? What do you post, like, re-post or share? Who do you follow on these social media accounts? If using anonymous posting sites (i.e. *Yik-yak, Whisper*, etc.) assess for potential bullying, mean-girl/boy behavior or older adult posing as a younger person. What are some of the current social expectations about social media use (leaving friends unread, *Snapchat* replies, response time, etc)?
- **Music:** How do you listen to music? (i.e. *Pandora, Spotify* or *YouTube*, etc)
- **Video:** Do you watch *Netflix* or other video platforms such as *YouTube* or *Vine*? If so, when and what do you watch? Do you binge watch? What YouTube personalities do you follow? What movie or TV genres are most viewed? Be aware if child is viewing of high-risk content, including sexually-explicit, self-harm, and other that mismatches family values/practices.
- **Create Content:** Where do you generate content, and what is it about? (i.e. *YouTube* videos).
- **Gaming:** Which games? Length of gaming time? Online group video gaming? Any impact of daily functioning? What game streams are you watching? Do they participate in a role play game? Are they using micro-transactions or loot crates?
- **Online Dating:** Do you use in online dating apps? How many? Which ones? What is your profile like? Assess online dating practices and app use. (i.e. *Tinder* and other dating apps).
- **Safety & Privacy:** Have you discussed inappropriate conversations vs. appropriate conversations with online friends? Have they developed safety provisions if they want to meet online friends or potential dating prospects? Are you currently experiencing any stressor/discomfort related to social media use (inability to meet social expectations due to lack of access, not understanding social expectations)?

#### Resources:

- Albion. (n.d.). *Netiquette Home Page -- A Service of Albion.com*. Retrieved from <http://www.albion.com/netiquette/>
- American Academy of Pediatrics. (n.d.). *Media and Children Communication Toolkit*. Retrieved from <https://www.aap.org/en-us/advocacy-and-policy/aap-health-initiatives/pages/media-and-children.aspx>
- Common Sense Media. (n.d.). *Common Sense Media's Home Page*. Retrieved from <https://www.commonsensemedia.org/>
- University of Southern California School of Gerontology. (n.d.). *Designing Technology for the Aging Population [Infographic]*. Retrieved from: <https://gerontology.usc.edu/resources/infographics/designing-technology-for-the-aging-population/>

#### Section IV: Intergenerational/Cultural issues

- **Communication Preferences:** For this can we say something like, what is your preferred communication style? What about for your family members? Are there any differences? How do you navigate these? How do you and/or your family communicate regarding sensitive issues in your families (i.e. teens texting parents about topics that they can't discuss face-to-face)? What is the communication style/preference for communicating with technology across generations (i.e. texting conversations at the dinner table instead of face-to-face or

- older adults (maybe) prefer face-to-face while (maybe) teens prefer to text)?
- Grief, death & loss Does the client or family have a plan for social media and other digital accounts at the end-of-life? Who has access to account log-on information to access in case of an emergency? How familiar is the client with archiving or legacy account settings with different types of social media? How comfortable is the client or family with sharing private information via social media?
- Social Media: What cultural or personal beliefs encourage or discourage your interaction with social media?
- General Cultural Issues: Are there any cultural factor that affect how you use technology? How that may impact family dynamics? Has technology increased your access to your culture and heritage? If so, how?

### Resources:

- Singer, J. B. (Producer). (2017, February 19). #109 - Death and Grief in the Digital Age: Interview with Carla Sofka, Ph.D. [Audio Podcast]. *Social Work Podcast*. Retrieved from <http://www.socialworkpodcast.com/2017/02/digital-death.html>

## Section V: Special Populations

- Homeless: What are the options for battery life, Wi-Fi access? How willing are you to use device to communicate with service provider? What web-based programs do you use? Libraries available as resource? Welcoming or hostile? Social worker available? Some social workers program phone numbers and addresses of resources directly into the phones/direct technical assistance and/or set-up connections to a *Google* account to store phone numbers and addresses in case of phone loss or they lose the paper copy.
- Mental Health: What apps do you use to track your mental health? There are many apps that can be used to supplement mental health care (i.e. self-awareness, mindfulness, self-regulation, etc).
- Foster Youth: Who are you allowed to contact, and how? What are the special safety issues? Do foster parents know how to monitor use?
- Clients with limited capacity/developmental disabilities: These clients may require extra support around psychoeducational, protection of personal information, online shopping, dating/sex-related sites, and gambling/addiction.
- Rural Communities: Many rural areas may have many dead spots for making phone calls but can still send and receive text messages for help.
- Online Education: Does the student have access to hardware, software and devices needed to access learning management systems? Is student aware of school's institutional policies, requirements and resources for online education? Does student have access to Wi-Fi?

### Resources:

- Johnson, E. (2016). *Tech/SW Assessment*. Retrieved from <https://plus.google.com/100511899319175723425/posts/9nwu8RgkAiD>
- Hitchcock, L. I., Sage, M., & Smyth, N. J. (Eds.). (2018). *Technology in social work education: Educators' perspectives on the NASW Technology Standards for Social Work Education and Supervision*. Buffalo, NY: University of Buffalo School of Social Work, State University of New York.

## Section VI: Families

- General perception of technology on family: Where does tech support, where does it create tension/harm/family conflict? A tech infused ecomap? Need direct technical assistance?
- Equal Access to Tech: Do the parents have the same kind of technology that their children have (e.g. Does dad have a flip phone while the teenager has an iPhone 6?)
- Norms: What are the family rules/norms about technology use? How are rules made?
- Who has passwords to media accounts? Do parents know each media account youth use? Is the computer in public/private place? Do parents/caregivers teach netiquette to children?
- Privacy & Monitoring: What privacy settings are used in media accounts, and who supports the understanding of privacy use? What circumstances lead to restriction of use or monitoring? Do children know how to screen for lock specific apps and secret phone/video apps?
- Online Friendships: Does internet friendship ever move to “in real life” sphere (phone number exchange, in person meeting)? How and who is involved?
- Technology used by other resources that influence the family: School, Work, Health Care Providers, Non-Profit agencies, etc.
- Divorce: What is the family plan for communicating? There are communication sites for mediation and high conflict or abuse situational divorces where parents need to communicate such as *Our Family Wizard* (<https://www.ourfamilywizard.com/pro/courts>).

### Resources:

- Belluomini, E. (2013). *Technology Assessments for Families*. Retrieved from <http://www.socialworker.com/api/content/ce3e1470-3b8c-11e3-ade5-1231394043be/>

## Section VII: Social Worker Technology Self-Assessment

- Knowledge & Skills: How knowledgeable are you about the technology that you use in your professional practice (i.e. could you explain privacy settings in *Facebook* to a client)? How familiar are you with online behaviors such as bullying, trolling, binge watching videos, etc? How would you rate your digital literacy skills (i.e. spotting fake news; awareness of and ability to use software, apps, and devices; netiquette; social networking, etc)?
- Technology Use: What technology do you use and how in your social work practice?
- Privacy & Confidentiality: How you protect client confidentiality related to the use of technology (i.e. use of encryption software, HIPAA compliant electronic records, etc)? How do you protect client privacy related to the use of technology? If you have a website, *Facebook* page/group, blog, how do you inform clients about posting, self-identification, and confidentiality/privacy risk?
- Informed Consent: Do you use informed consent with clients about using technology to communicate, interact, etc? If so, how?
- Social Media Policy: What are your social media professional practices? Do you have a social media policy?
- Professional Learning Network: Do you have a professional learning network? How do you stay current about tech trends (i.e. crisis texting services, telehealth, etc)?
- Organizational Context: How does your agency support technology use (i.e. training, provides adequate tech, etc)? Do you have a risk management plan for your technology in place of employment?
- Financial: What type of financial transactions do you use your phone/computer for? How do you track passwords? Do you use a fingerprint for financial transactions?

### Resources:

- National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2017a). *Code of ethics of the National Association of Social Workers*. Washington, DC: NASW Press. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/About/Ethics/Code-of-Ethics/Code-of-Ethics-English>
- National Association of Social Workers (NASW). (2017b). *NASW, ASWB, CSWE, & CSWA standards for technology in social work practice*. Washington, DC: NASW Press. Retrieved from [https://www.socialworkers.org/includes/newIncludes/homepage/PRA-BRO-33617.TechStandards\\_FINAL\\_POSTING.pdf](https://www.socialworkers.org/includes/newIncludes/homepage/PRA-BRO-33617.TechStandards_FINAL_POSTING.pdf)
- National Association of Social Workers & Association of Social Work Boards. (2005). *Technology for social work practice*. Retrieved from <https://www.socialworkers.org/practice/standards/NASWTechnologyStandards.pdf>
- University at Buffalo School of Social Work. (n.d.). *Social worker's guide to social media*. Retrieved from <http://socialwork.buffalo.edu/resources/social-media-guide.html> (Includes an infographic and embedded videos).

### How to cite:

Hitchcock, L.I. & Jones, N.P (Eds.) (2018). *Technology Assessment Checklist for Social Work Practice (Version 2)*. Washington, DC: BPD Technology Committee, The Association of Baccalaureate Social Work Program Directors.

## **Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired**

### **Public Comment and Agency Responses 2023**

During the summer and fall of 2023, the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) received public comment in three formal settings including the June State Rehabilitation Council Meeting, in conjunction with the L.I.V.E program held at the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired, and in collaboration with the National Federation of the Blind State Convention. In addition to these formally announced comment opportunities, DBVI invites input from the public at any time during the year including quarterly State Rehabilitation Council meetings.

The purpose of these meetings was to provide agency stakeholders with the opportunity to comment on DBVI programs and services, to assist with strategic planning, development of agency policies and procedures, and implementation of services and supports to potentially eligible and eligible individuals who are blind, vision impaired, and deafblind. DBVI was interested in receiving comment regarding its three divisions: Services, Enterprises, and Administration.

“DBVI”, “agency”, and “department” means the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

“RT/IL” means the Rehabilitation Teaching/Independent Living program.

“SRC” refers to the DBVI State Rehabilitation Council.

“VIB” means the Virginia Industries for the Blind.

“VR” means the Vocational Rehabilitation Program.  
“VRCBVI” and “Center” means the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired.

Information regarding DBVI programs and services can be found at <https://vdbvi.org/> or by calling 804-371-3140, toll free at 800-662-2155.

**Comment 1:** I am receiving services and am concerned as a potential customer and trainer for technology. I am concerned that people are being trained on Narrator when their employment actually requires JAWS in order for them to maintain their job. I find this most concerning because if I had to use Narrator, it would be ineffective for my employment. It would make work non-accessible.

**Agency Response 1:** Thank you for your comment. DBVI provides training to individuals to use JAWS and/or Narrator based on the individual’s needs. The agency does train both Narrator and JAWS.

**Comment 2:** I am an advocate for an individual currently receiving DBVI services. There is significant lack of communication with DBVI staff in the Norfolk Office. In March 2020, the individual completed a referral and due to changes in Norfolk Office counselors, the individual did not get a counselor until March 2023. The counselor went to the individual’s home to develop a plan which would have been initiated in April

2023. By the end of March 2023, the counselor had left the agency and on April 1<sup>st</sup>, the DBVI denied that the plan had been recorded. The individual contacted the VR Director who confirmed that the plan had not been entered into the individual's record. On April 12, the VR Director called the individual having located the written plan. The individual requested a Victor Reader Stream and DBVI provided a Sony Dictation device which is not acceptable to the individual. On April 16, the individual needed to register for a class and paid for it themselves. By June 8, the individual still had not been reimbursed for the class. DBVI has not tried to help her and the DBVI local office in Norfolk does not receive as much funding as the offices in Richmond, Northern Virginia, or Western Virginia. The individual reported a lack of communication that resulted in a rush to get a plan developed. The Norfolk office is not capable of managing blind people or people with low vision. Everyone in the Norfolk office is sighted and maybe they don't understand people with visual disabilities.

**Agency Response 2:** The Norfolk DBVI Field Office has experienced turnover in VR Counselors over the last three years and though the agency has tried to ensure that individuals receive services in a timely manner, in some instances, that was not the case. The agency took steps to remedy the situation by having Vocational Rehabilitation Program administrators carry caseloads until VR Counselor Positions could be filled. It should be noted DBVI is not required to purchase an exact piece of assistive technology (service) that an individual may request.



The agency is required to provide assistive technology that will meet the individual's needs in the most cost-effective manner if the service is on the person's Individualized Plan for Employment. Services have been provided to this individual.

**Comment 3:** I am commenting on the termination of my wife which was unjust because there were multiple mistakes made by the Norfolk manager and the Senior Manager, but the buck really stops with agency Commissioner. My wife has documentation to support that the action by the agency was discriminatory and the agency is going to be held accountable. I have concern about the Commissioner and his recruitment of or interest in hiring blind employees. Many years ago, the agency was a welcome place for blind employees, but now DBVI is basically like the Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS), it is a clone of DARS. The Commissioner is more interested in hiring people from DARS than he is hiring folks that are very well qualified blind individuals. There is a conflict-of-interest issue involving the Commissioner, his brother, and his daughter which stinks to high heaven. The Mitchell family has earned about \$250,000 working for the agency during the past year and who is going to complain? The clients can't complain, what are they going to say, "We don't want to work with the Commissioner's brother?" They cannot complain if they feel there is a conflict of interest because from what I understand from DBVI Headquarters and other DBVI staff, the Commissioner rules by fear. His arrogance causes him to have staff refer to him as Dr. Mitchell, but Dr. Mitchell's

degrees are in pastoral counseling. His degrees are not in any agency programs that are recognized, such as VR. That just shows his opinion of himself as far as the Norfolk Office. This is the way things have been handled in the Norfolk area for the past 12 years. It's pretty much a joke.

**Agency Response 3:** This comment has been addressed privately with the commentor and has been brought, by the DBVI Commissioner, to the attention of Virginia Secretary of Health and Human Resources.

**Comment 4:** So, \$88,000 a year is what some brilliant person decided to pay the Norfolk Regional Office Manager. Every day I was there, she said one of four things to me, "I know nothing about blindness. I know nothing about technology, adaptive technology. I know nothing about the database. My bosses lied to me every day. I promise you; I won't ever lie to you. Please trust me.". Those are the things she said to me every day, and I think to myself, "How does that happen? How does that happen? And it stems from the top.". I think it was David Bowie that said the worst part of a human being is somebody who strives for and gravitates towards mediocrity. And that's with the Commissioner, in a nutshell. Hmm! Never will be great, he just stays in the middle, buries his head in the sand, and surrounds himself with a bunch of mostly white women who probably make him feel good when obviously he does not. All I want to say is that I hope that today may start the beginning of people finally starting to speak up for any blind, or vision

impaired person the State of Virginia, especially in the Hampton Roads. It is so obvious what has happened there. DBVI is on the fifth Regional Manager right now and there is probably going to be a sixth manager soon and I'm thinking at some point you got it, do I? Pay attention to the person who has done this. Then I can't even say this. Please look at it as the SRC. You have a responsibility to be able to look at the issues. And if you want this DBVI to be DARS, then keep on going. Keep on doing what you're doing. If you actually want to have an agency defined by what you did, you do something different. Thank you.

**Agency Response 4:** Thank you for your comment.

**Comment 5:** I have been blind since 2017 and have had five counselors. I have not received good service and have been referred to the Choice Group. I have not been able to talk with anyone until recently when the VR Director began serving me. I am concerned that she won't have adequate time to provide services because of her job. This is concerning and disheartening. Why don't people stay employed in the Norfolk Office? Making public comment goes nowhere.

**Agency Response 5:** Please see Agency Response 2 regarding VR Counselor turnover in the DBVI Norfolk Field Office. Please note that since these comments were made, staffing in Norfolk has stabilized. DBVI welcomes public comment and indeed does act whenever possible to address concerns, especially individual concerns, when issues are brought to the attention of the agency.

**Comment 6:** I am providing feedback regarding the public comment portion of the June 9<sup>th</sup> SRC Meeting. I also request that you share this communication with the members of the SRC. The DBVI did a nice job publicizing the meeting and informing consumers of the process for making comments to the Council. I am concerned that some who wished to speak did not get an opportunity to do so. I believe that five individuals spoke, but there were at least four individuals who were turned away due to time constraints, and I heard from at least four consumers in the Hampton Roads area who couldn't figure out how to access the meeting.

To clear up the backlog of consumers who want to address the SRC, I request that the SRC expand the time for making public comments to 15 minutes. After all, the SRC serves as the voice for agency consumers, so members need to be aware of the issues that some consumers experience while participating in VR, especially clients in our region (Tidewater).

It would also be helpful for consumers to be advised in the meeting notice that time for public comment is limited so it is necessary to log on early to ensure that they have an opportunity to speak.

Also, please keep in mind that while some blind folks are very capable users of Zoom, there are some who are not well versed concerning the use of the application, and those individuals should still have the opportunity to comment. A simple

solution to this problem is to ask if anyone joining by phone wishes to make a public comment.

These suggestions would enrich the public comment process for consumers.

Finally, the DBVI and the SRC must recognize that the DBVI has not provided quality services to a lot of folks in our region and make a concerted effort to improve the service delivery model in this area. If services improve, consumers are less likely to need to comment through a public forum.

Thanks to the DBVI and the Council for considering this input.

**Agency Comment 6:** Thank you for your comments. These comments will be shared with the SRC to help them determine whether a longer public comment time is needed during SRC meetings. DBVI SRC meetings, agendas, and minutes are posted on the Virginia Town Hall no later than two weeks prior to each meeting. The Public Comment portion of the meeting is announced in the agenda as are the zoom link and telephone numbers for individuals who wish call into the meetings. Additionally, SRC meetings are announced on the agency Facebook page and on the DBVI at [www.dbvi.virginia.gov](http://www.dbvi.virginia.gov) .

**Comment 7:** I was referred to DBVI by a physician after losing vision in one eye because of retinopathy. The physician helped me get a long white cane. I heard about the L.I.V.E program through a DBVI Rehabilitation Teacher. I have been out of work for six months. I receive SSDI. I want to go back to work, I am

only 55 years old. I have gotten glasses and now can read again after receiving vision services. I have learned about rehabilitation technology and low vision aids. I now see hope because of DBVI. I will receive vocational rehabilitation services and I have enjoyed seeing individuals with no vision learning independent living skills.

**Agency Response 7:** Thank you for your comment.

**Comment 8:** I would like to have information about budget and how the agency is funded. There needs to more funding at the VRCBVI. I am concerned about lack of services because of lack of resources. I was told there was not enough money, and I could not come to the Center sooner because of funding.

**Agency Response 8:** DBVI receives a combination of state and federal funds. During 2023, the agency budget for overall service delivery and administration was approximately 23 million dollars and included funds for Rehabilitation Assistance Services (services to individuals through and including VR, RT/IL, Low Vision, Rehabilitation Technology, Deafblind Services, Orientation and Mobility Instruction), Administrative and Support Services, Regional Office Support and administration, State Education Services, and Statewide Library services. Based on federal requirements, if the agency does not have sufficient financial resources to provide services to all eligible individuals applying for VR services, that program closes categories according to requirements of the Order of Selection meaning that a person could be placed on a waiting list. At the time

DBVI was developing these agency responses to 2023 public comments, DBVI had adequate resources to provide services to all eligible individuals; there were no waiting lists for services in any agency program or for any discrete service.

**Comment 9:** I love the services at VRCBVI and would like to come for training full time. As a Senior Citizen, I was surprised I could come to the Center. Mobility services are excellent in just a couple of days. All the trainers are excellent. How many offices does DBVI has across the Virginia?

**Agency Comment 9:** Thank you for your comments. The L.I.V.E. program is good at helping older adults with vision loss to learn independent living skills. There are six Regional Offices across Virginia with one each in Norfolk, Fairfax, Richmond, Staunton, Roanoke, and Bristol.

**Comment 10:** I was so worried when I first found about being blind. I had low vision and could not read. I had car accidents. I learned about VRCBVI through someone at the grocery store. Dr. Baldwin provided me with low vision services. Coming to the Center I have learned a lot but have been overwhelmed with all of the programs. I would rather be able to focus on individualized services than participating in all the services at VRCBVI as required. I want individualized services rather than all of the required services.

**Agency Response 10:** In general, services provided by DBVI are designed to meet the specific needs of individuals receiving services and delivered through an individualized plan developed

between the person and a counselor or teacher. When more intensive services/training are needed, the person may attend VRCBVI. Provided in a residential setting that also includes commuter students for six-to-nine-months, the VRCBVI curriculum includes orientation and mobility, personal home management, braille, keyboarding and access technology, conversations about blindness, vocational services, health education, wellness instruction, recreation, case management, and low vision services. Students to attend the Center are generally expected to participate in the full curriculum.

**Comment 11:** Are these public meetings open to the general public? The question is, what happens next?

**Agency Response 11:** DBVI and the State Rehabilitation Council use public comments to help develop the VR State Plan and to improve services in general.

**Comment 12:** How does the CARE Van system in Richmond works.

**Agency Response 12:** According to their website, information regarding the Greater Richmond Transit Company (GRTC) CARE and CARE Plus services provide origin-to-destination services under the guidelines of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). Further information about CARE and CARE Plus can be found at the GRTC website

<https://ridegrtc.com/services/specialized-transportation/care/> or by calling 804-358-4782.



**Comment 13:** Can DBVI help people set up support groups in their home communities.

**Agency Response 13:** DBVI does not establish or facilitate support groups but does share information about such groups with individuals served by the local Regional Offices.

**Comment 14:** Does DBVI have enough funds to serve everyone? There are not enough providers of vision services in local communities. Why isn't there enough money to serve everyone?

**Agency Response 14:** Thank you for your comment. See Agency Response number eight regarding agency funds.

**Comment 15:** I have three years of experience trying to get services. It has taken too much time and I have not gotten enough services in timely enough fashion. It has been a long-time receiving service. I never heard back from the agency.

**Agency Response 15:** DBVI staff at the public meeting where comment 15 was made met with the individual to make sure necessary connection was established with the Regional Office in the individual's locale.

**Comment 16:** How come a lot of physicians don't really know about this type of organization when the services are fantastic.

**Agency Response 16:** Unfortunately, not all physicians know about DBVI. The agency does make efforts at the Regional Office level to establish contact with local ophthalmologists and

optometrists so individuals receiving treatment or glasses can learn about DBVI.

**Comment 17:** I have heard numerous complaints about the lack of prompt services from the field offices, especially Roanoke and Staunton. I am concerned that there isn't enough money; this is the message that has been given from the field.

**Agency Response 17:** Thank you for your comment. DBVI has had some staff changes in the Roanoke and Staunton offices that may have caused delay in services in some instances. These delays should no longer be occurring. Please see agency response eight regarding budget.

**Comment 18:** Clarify how information will be shared in the future. I would like a recap in writing of what the training days includes and what I have learned. Please explain acronyms.

**Agency Response 18:** Agency acronyms are included near the beginning of this document to help readers. Public Comment and Agency Responses are available to the public upon request and are posted on the agency website. Additionally, this information is shared with the State Rehabilitation Council.

**Comment 19:** There is loneliness that people feel by themselves in the community, we don't even know what to ask about. Losing my sight was overwhelming. It would be helpful to provide people with information about resources and contacts and information from the very beginning. More resources in the very beginning to help with the confidence. Emotional and psychological support in the

beginning would help. How to adjust to the loss of blindness – like counseling support to adjust to blindness. Understanding of blindness. Resource list of community supports. Provide information about the supports in the community.

**Agency Response 19:** Thank you for this comment. DBVI tries to provide resources and supports to adults and students through the Regional Offices, VRCBVI, websites, and newsletters. The agency website, <https://www.dbvi.virginia.gov/>, includes extensive information about services, resources, publications, boards and councils, job opportunities, and other interesting information. Additionally, once entering the site, a pop-up appears that provides readers with the opportunity register to receive email updates from DBVI. VRCBVI has its own website at <https://www.vrcbvi.virginia.gov/>. Information about DBVI’s Enterprise division can be found at <https://www.vibonline.virginia.gov/>. The agency toll free number is 800-622-2155.

**Comment 20:** People need connections with other people going through the same experience. There is not enough time to connect with staff about things other than services. We need to hear about resources more than once. It takes time for older people to learn new things.

**Agency Response 20:** Thank you for your comment. Thank you for the reminder that it is helpful to provide resources more than once. Also, please see Agency Response 19.

**Comment 21:** How about virtual brown bag lunch topics – get the experts to be available to provide support and access to experts. Consider doing podcasts about some of the topics that are interesting to older adults.

**Agency Comment 21:** Thank you for these good ideas.

**Comment 22:** This commentor noted that they have been active as a client for three years and have been happy with services received by their Rehabilitation Teacher, Orientation and Mobility Instructor, and the Health Educator at VR CBVI. The commentor also expressed having had three mobility instructors and would like something done about that.

**Agency Response 23:** Thank you for your comment. DBVI has had turnover in Orientation and Mobility Instructors and is actively recruiting for individuals to fill those positions.

**Comment 24:** For seniors trying to get service from DBVI, it takes six weeks and a whole lot of paperwork. How can DBVI make it faster and easier for seniors to receive services? Several months ago, a consumer asked her RT for an OM referral, was told it was very easy to do, and this was back in May 2023, but still waiting. The consumer is concerned because she is beginning to lose more vision and anxious about going out at night. Wondering how much longer she'll have to wait and what else can she do?

**Agency Response 24:** This comment is very timely as DBVI reviews the need for rapid response across programs and how the agency can expedite services by using qualified staff to make eligibility decisions without as much supporting documentation. DBVI has been selected for intensive technical assistance with Mississippi State University which will include focus groups and a needs assessment. The NFB, the Silver Bells, and other advocacy groups will be included in the focus group activities associated with the technical assistance project.

**Comment 25:** This commentor, who had previous experience working with the Client Assistance Program, had comments about when individuals receive paperwork from DBVI. One person told the commentor that the VR counselor interviewed the person and sent paperwork for the person to sign. Individual had no mechanism to read the documents. The commentor hopes it was an isolated incident and wants to make sure that isn't common practice because the practice is totally unacceptable. VR Counselors need to fully explain paperwork so that individuals can understand. The Regional Manager was very helpful in addressing the issue for the person.

**Agency Response 25:** Thank you for your comment. DBVI agrees that agency staff should explain paperwork and strives to ensure that individuals have any assistance they might need to sign required documents.

**Comment 26:** We are thrilled that you are here. We recognize that DBVI staff have connections with positive role models and people with expertise. DBVI leadership have been attending NFB national conventions and found that valuable and including the ability to recruit throughout the county. We think it would be valuable for every DBVI employee to attend at least one state advocacy meeting to network and build relationships, and also create opportunities for individuals to attend the national convention.

**Agency Response 26:** Thank you for your comment. DBVI values the relationships it has developed with the NFB over the years. While it is not always feasible for DBVI employees to attend state advocacy group meetings, the agency values the opportunities that staff do have to participate in national conventions and to conduct public meetings in conjunction with the NFB state convention.

**Comment 27:** DBVI has supported me as a working adult, both VR and VRCBVI. I work for the military and been able to get JAWS tutoring at home and O&M. This has been very helpful that I've been able to continue to work, haven't had to quit work for 6-9 months. I appreciate it very much and have met so many blind people from across the country. I hear stories of so many blind people who lose their jobs and drop out of the workforce. I'm grateful the department has been here to help me, and I would like to know if there are any programs that can

be promoted to keep working adults in the workforce while they learn the skills of blindness and provide for their families.

**Agency Response 27:** Thank you for commenting and DBVI is glad you've had a good experience. The VR program continues to evolve, particularly when the federal law changes. Job retention is very important and with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, we talk about survival jobs someone needs to support their family, but that may not be the end goal. The VR program can help with that as well by helping people transition into different jobs while still working.

**Comment 28:** Concerned about VR, and wonders if there would be hours that are more feasible for seniors to work. Maybe six hours/day instead of eight and not every day of the week.

**Agency Response 28:** DBVI works with eligible individuals, including seniors, in the VR Program to find the work opportunities that best meet the skills, interests, and abilities of the individual. Some people work part-time jobs if that is what best suits their needs.

**Comment 29:** Good evening and thank you for being here. I have been approached by several people today. How does DBVI define a senior citizen?

**Agency Response 29:** DBVI provides services to older individuals aged 55 or over through the Older Blind Grant, RT, and can provide Orientation and Mobility services, as well. VR

Services are also available to eligible individuals aged 55 and older.

**Comment 30:** What an amazing agency. Thank you for what you do. I've been learning the difference between integrated and not integrated environments. Could you give some clarity and understanding of that guidance.

**Agency Response 30:** The DBVI VR program primarily provides services to assist individuals to obtain, maintain, or regain competitive integrated employment based on federal requirements. Integrated means that people who have disabilities and people who don't work the same types of jobs in the same settings; it isn't just people with disabilities in a separate setting away from people who don't have disabilities. Competitive integrated means employment in the community for which anyone can apply. Jobs that are not competitive integrated include some positions with the Virginia Industries for the Blind (VIB) that only individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind can hold. Some of the jobs at VIB are competitive and integrated and others are not but still pay a competitive wage. Sometimes, there are also jobs in the community that may or may not be competitive integrated employment opportunities. What is important to remember is that individuals receiving services from the VR program have the right to make informed choices about the kind of employment they want whether it is competitive and integrated or not.



**Comment 31:** The Lions Club of Virginia Beach is having a resource fair on November 11, 2023. I think our needs are a little different as seniors; I'm never going back to work.

**Agency Response 31:** Thank you for your comment. DBVI provides services to people aged 55 and older who are not interested in employment and who want to live independently. These services are provided through the Rehabilitation Teaching Independent Living Program which includes the Older Blind Grant. DBVI works very closely and collaborates with the Mississippi State University Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) Technical Assistance Center (TAC). The entire focus of the OIB-TAC is providing resources, training, and courses that focus on serving older individuals who are blind or have low vision. Further information about that program can be found at <https://www.oib-tac.org/>.

**Comment 32:** Does DBVI provide services to undocumented individuals? If so, would it be first come first serve, or would citizen go first?

**Agency Response 32:** Based on federal requirements, the VR Program can only serve individuals who are eligible to work, and it is the responsibility of the individual applying for services to demonstrate that they can work in the United States. In some instances, other programs through DBVI can serve individuals who are not eligible to work in the United States. DBVI has not been in and does not anticipate being in a position where individuals are unable to receive services based on their

immigration status except in the VR program where proof of ability to work in the United States is required. Currently, there are no waiting lists for services in any of the agency programs.

**Comment 33:** Thanks to the Commissioner and staff for email blasts and publicizing events sponsored by the agency. The Coordinator of Senior Bells Program notes that the program is not designed to take the place of DBVI, but to supplement services.

**Agency Response 33:** Thank you for your comment; DBVI appreciates programs that support individuals who are blind, vision impaired, or deafblind.

**Comment 34:** There is a need for more assistive technology training for employment and other reasons. I've heard DBVI has contracted a pilot program for assistive technology training. How do we get access to this training?

**Agency Response 34:** The pilot program referenced in this comment was a program offered through the DBVI VR program by Clusiv. Unfortunately, since the time of this comment, the pilot with Clusiv ended and the company has since closed.

**Comment 35:** This commenter would like more information on Clusiv. He signed up for webinar on 11/07 and is also interested in something NIB has to offer, where you get CCNA certified- would like information on that. Does DBVI have any resources where blind people can get computer certifications for free?

**Agency response 35:** DBVI is always looking for additional resources for training and certifications. DBVI will consider sponsoring training and/or certifications for individuals when those services are required for the individual to accomplish the vocational goal on their Individualized Plan for Employment. For information about computer certification programs, please contact your VR Counselor or DBVI's Director of Rehabilitation Technology.

**Comment 36:** DBVI has a college sponsorship program and sometimes compares the cost of an out-of-state program to the cost of an in-state program. There should be a consistent practice for how the agency supports students participating in programs out of state. There shouldn't be any incentive to choose one university over another.

**Agency Response 36:** Thank you for your comment. The DBVI VR policy on college sponsorship is detailed and complex and includes consideration of whether a student's academic needs to accomplish their vocational goal can be met at an in-state school; it also includes whether the student's academic needs can only be met at an out of state school. The VR program will pay up to the rate of the public in-state school college closest to the college the student wants to or is attending out of state with the student being responsible for the remaining amount unless the student's academic program can only be found at an out of state college in which case, the agency will pay the full cost. The agency is open to reviewing this policy regarding the

sponsorship of out of state programs. The internal agency review would be to determine whether revision is warranted, ensuring the policy conforms to federal requirements, and review and approval by the Commissioner. A substantial change in policy could also include formal public comment on the Virginia Town Hall and review and approval by the Secretary of Health and Human Services.