Commission Report February 2023

- Our final production numbers for 2022 are in. The VR/SBVI programs had 4,482 applications, which was an increase of 373 from 2021. The total number of employment plans written was 2,833, which was an increase of 64 from 2021. Total successful closures were 1,191, which was an increase of 173.
- Wages were up 3.3% from 2021 on successfully closed cases. The average was $15.78 per hour. Leading the way was our unit in VR that covers McAlester, Idabel, and Poteau with an average of 19.25 per hour.
- The Division Administrator and Field Coordinators in VR continue to meet every other week to work on process improvement and VR progress.
- As mentioned in previous reports our Business Services Team hosted a Career Expo in October which was a big success, with DRS staff and businesses across the state.
- The Business Services team also hosted Facts and Snacks: Critical Occupations, a series of informative sessions by businesses for Job Seekers and Workforce System employees (DRS field staff, Workforce, Voc. Techs, etc.) to provide awareness and education to our job seekers about critical occupations in our State and to our Workforce workers so they can guide job seekers in their employment search. The Businesses have the spotlight to offer their expertise and employment opportunities. First session was done with Ditch Witch last year and the second on January 24 with Mercy Hospitals in a hybrid modality.
- Small Hiring Events: "Get it Right: Smart Recruiting and Career Event." A series of small job fairs with participation of five businesses with free booths and focused on them, their services and employment opportunities. We are putting especial emphasis in marketing these events with 3 weeks in advance. The first one will be done in Tulsa in February with the participation of Amazon and other 3 companies, and we are planning the second one with Ditch Witch in Stillwater.
- Business Advisory Councils: Our first Business Advisory Council was done in Green Country in January with the attendance of 18 businesses and partners. The next two will be South Central on February 23 and Central Region (OKC) on February 28.

- The VR DA and Business Coordinator, Yasmin Avila Guillen met with Department of Commerce staff to start planning a Career Expo targeted form May 2024.
- The Transition Team is in the process of planning career expos, BEST STEP with 28 camps statewide, 6 STEM camps, VIBE with student's participating in their home community for STEP after they get done, and one BEST camp DDS/DHS youth. We are partnering with Central workforce board and southern workforce board to pay the students wages at 10.00 an hour.
- The VR/SBVI Administrators have met with our AWARE Team regarding the online self- referral to begin the process engaging potential applicants.
- The VR/ SBVI Administrators, and Director Fruendt, continue to meet with Ron Vessell and John Walsh who are CSAVR consultants to TAC-QM, Westat. The meetings have been focused on employee engagement, recruitment, and retention.
- The VR/SBVI Administrators along with Rehabilitation of the Blind Specialist Deborah Trout, gave a VR/SBVI overview presentation at the Walkability Summit in Clinton Oklahoma. There were also Business Services, Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Transition, and general VR/SBVI staff in attendance.
- The VR/SBVI Administrators, Employment Support Services staff, VR Field Coordinator Terri Murphy, SBVI Field Coordinator Teresa McDermott, and Transition Coordinator Renee Briscoe continue to meet with Developmental Disability Services staff, to streamline processes to serve clients of both programs. Most recently a meeting was held regarding sequencing of services that could result in a pilot program with VR/SBVI, and DDS.
- The Division Administrator conducted a Program Manager/Coordinator meeting at the Career Planning Center in November. The agenda addressed CSAVR, vacancies and recruitment, Developmental Disability Services waitlist, leadership responsibilities, Business Services and Transition.
- All VR were invited to participate in a Zoom meeting on Nov. 15h. Most of the time was spent focusing on performance, CSAVR, and data.
- The VR/SBVI Division Administrators continue to participate in 14c coalition meetings to focus on the phase out of subminimum wage.

- A discussion was held with Able Tech. employees and Field Coordinator Terri Williams regarding a possible partnership in Assistive Technology.
- Performance Measures – The VR/SBVI program Measurable Skill gain rate was 75.1%, which was 2nd in the nation among VR programs. The national rate is 43.0%. The employment rate after Quarter 2 for VR/SBVI was 50.8%. This is slightly below the 52.5% average. The median earnings variability after Quarter 2 for VR/SBVI was $4,923.00. The national rate was $4,776.00. The employment rate after Quarter 4 for VR/SBVI was 49.3%. The national average was 48.0%. The credential attainment rate for VR/SBVI was 44.4%, which was 8th in the nation. The national rate was 30.8%.
- The Frates Building re-location is almost complete. Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services should be moving in this month.
- VR is looking at a possible relocation of the Midwest City office.
- Mobile Smiles, a volunteer Dental unit came to our VR Enid office in January and provided free dental services to many VR clients. The is the second year in a row that this has occurred.
- SSI/SSDI reimbursement totals – in 2021 the VR/SBVI programs brought in $3,024,755.05, and in 2022 returned with $3,026,459.84. Exceeding $3 million in program revenue in back-to-back years is impressive as the #3 million threshold had only been surpassed twice within the previous quarter-century.
- We continue to have many announcements out for positions. Currently there are 27 vacant counseling positions in the VR/SBVI program. There are 2,049 clients on those caseloads, which represent 25% of our clientele. We continue to see very few applicants, and recently we had at least two occasions people accept employment only to decline before their start date due to receiving a higher salary. This has created many difficulties for us regarding client services.

As always, I am honored to work with our staff. I believe the results this past year show a lot of determination, grit, and dedication. We have had many staff pull double duty, due to vacancies, and yet we still see positive results for our citizens with disabilities seeking employment.

Respectfully submitted,

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