



Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council



Federal Fiscal Year
2023 Annual Report

The State Rehabilitation Council, commonly known as the Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council (WRC), was established by then Governor Tommy Thompson in 1993 through executive order #196, and reconstituted by the Governor in 1999 under Executive Order #363. The WRC is required under federal law 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) §361.16 and is charged with advising and assisting the Department of Workforce Development's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). Information on the mission and objectives of WRC can be found on page two of this report.

WRC is comprised of appointed members with disabilities, as well as those who represent individuals with a broad range of disabilities, such as family members and advocates representing groups and associations.

WRC is required to deliver an annual report to the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and the Wisconsin Governor of its findings regarding the operations of DVR and its services to consumers throughout the state. The data, graphics, and stories in this annual report are attributed to work conducted by DVR staff, WRC Committees, and the full Council during Federal Fiscal Year 2023, which took place between October 1, 2022 and September 30, 2023.

Data in this report was compiled through daily activities of DVR staff located around the state. DVR staff are trained and required to maintain detailed documentation for each Wisconsin consumer who applies for DVR services. Data is entered and maintained in Wisconsin's Integrated Rehabilitation Information System (IRIS), DVR's official case management system.

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A MESSAGE FROM THE WRC CHAIR

As we conclude the 2022-2023 program year, we can look back at a year of continued change, challenges, and more importantly, successes between the Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council (WRC) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). It has been a privilege to be able to work with DVR to help improve the access and services to consumers needing the vital service DVR provides. It is also good to see the dip in consumers served during the COVID-19 pandemic rebound to more historic levels. Much credit must be given to the dedicated staff at DVR whose work was critical to this accomplishment. Coming out of the COVID-19 pandemic, the WRC has also been able to transition from all virtual meetings to a hybrid meeting model with one of our quarterly meetings being held in person with virtual access, something that I believe will enhance team-building and cooperation within WRC even further.



DICK STRAUB, Chair
Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council

During the past program year, the WRC has been busy as indicated by the following list of activities and accomplishments:

- Facilitated and participated in trainings for Wisconsin’s administrative law judges;
- Instituted bylaw changes allowing departing WRC members to remain on our working subcommittees in an advisory capacity for up to two years to provide institutional continuity;
- Developed training sessions for new and existing WRC members, including development of an acronym glossary;
- Saw the smooth transition of the Client Assistance Program from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection to Disability Rights Wisconsin. Both organizations have provided excellent representatives for the WRC and as part of our quarterly meetings routinely provide an update on requests from consumers;
- Provided input to the DVR portion of the State Plan, which was received and incorporated into the plan’s recommendations;
- Identified the need for transportation assistance for clients, asking DVR to consider policy changes that would allow service providers to help with client transportation. After WRC suggested a survey of service providers, DVR policy was changed to allow this service; and
- Incorporated four new council members with efforts underway to identify replacements for those outgoing members whose terms have expired.

Additionally, DVR staff provided updates on several initiatives and ongoing activities within the agency. Examples included an update on competitive integrated employment activity, review of Federal Fiscal Year 2022 outcomes, and overview of the agency budgets. Other topics included the review of Pre-Employment Transition Services, review of the Existing Business Policy, information on a project to update Self-Employment policy, an overview of DVR’s Diversity, Equity and Inclusion plan, and development of a SharePoint site to allow WRC members to access and share WRC documents.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the work all of our volunteer WRC members contribute to the common goal of supporting and improving services to people with disabilities in our community and their efforts to provide guidance to our DVR to achieve that goal. I would especially like to thank those outgoing WRC members and our past chair, Steven Wheeler, for everyone’s commitment and efforts.

WRC MISSION

To work on behalf of Wisconsin residents with disabilities to review, analyze, and advise DVR regarding the performance of its responsibilities in providing quality services to people with disabilities.

WRC VISION

People with disabilities will enjoy full equality of opportunity, complete integration in the life of our communities, and appropriate employment which fulfills each individual's needs and aspirations.

WRC OBJECTIVES

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS among people with disabilities, providers of employment services, advocacy organizations, and other groups that can and should participate in the accomplishment of the Council's mission and vision.

REACHING OUT TO PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES throughout the state to create a true spirit of inclusion for every Wisconsinite, including an opportunity to contribute to the work of the Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council.

HEARING AND RESPONDING to the concerns and issues raised by people with disabilities, their advocates, and other concerned individuals so that the work of the Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council is as effective as possible and serves as a true catalyst for positive change.

FORGING A SPIRIT OF TRUST AND COOPERATION with the administration and staff of DVR and advocacy organizations for people with disabilities to optimize the use of scarce resources for accomplishing the mission and vision and create conditions for acquiring additional resources.

The WRC performs several functions as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, amendments under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, and the WRC by-laws.

1. Review and analyze state-level data to advise DVR regarding performance in areas that impact the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes using services under this title.
2. Advise and assist DVR in the preparation of the state plan based on the needs assessment, reports, and evaluations.
3. Conduct a review of Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) hearing decisions and available data on consumer satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services.
4. Work with DVR to prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Commissioner on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs.
5. Coordinate the work of the WRC with the activities of other disability-related councils, including the State Rehabilitation Advisory Council, through dual memberships and information sharing.

WISCONSIN REHABILITATION COUNCIL

WRC is comprised of 24 members who are appointed directly by the governor and each serve staggered three-year terms. The WRC bylaws dictate a set amount of seats for specific groups or demographics to ensure proper representation that can provide unique perspectives. Members of WRC include:

- Current or former recipients of vocational rehabilitation services.
- Disability advocacy group representatives.
- Parents, family members, guardians, or authorized representatives of people with disabilities.
- Business, industry, and labor representatives.
- Department of Public Instruction representative.
- Statewide Independent Living Council representative.
- DVR Administrator, serving as an Ex-Officio member.

Megan Bisonette, Hayward
Native American Rehabilitation Program

Alan Kaltenberg, Arlington
Business, Industry, and Labor

Kathy Meisner, Green Bay
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Jacci Borchardt, Shorewood
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Lori Karcher, Milwaukee
Parent Training and Information Center

Delora Newton, Madison
Director of Designed State Unit

Jennifer Espinoza Forlenza, Fitchburg
Client Assistance Program

Liz Kennedy
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Alicia Reinhard, Madison
Department of Public Instruction

Jenny Felty, La Crosse
Community Rehabilitation Service Provider

Kyle Kleist, Menomonie
State Independent Living Council

Alexis Riggs, Madison
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Ann Franz, Kaukauna
Council on Workforce Investment

Lindsey Kreitzman, Waunakee
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Dick Straub, Brooklyn
Business, Industry, and Labor

Natalia Graf, Arbor Vitae
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Dr. Debbie Lee, Middleton
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Gadeen Taylor-Duke, Hayward
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Michael Jackson, Milwaukee
Business, Industry, and Labor

Norene Lueck, Eau Claire
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

Jolene Wanek, Green Bay
Advocate for Persons with Disabilities

WRC is thankful for the individuals who commit their time and talents to serving Wisconsin.

The below members served on the council and their terms ended during Federal Fiscal Year 2023.

Julie Burish, Brookfield
Advocate for Persons with
Disabilities

Deb Henderson-Guenther,
Madison
Client Assistance Program

Joalyn Torgerson, La Crosse
Business, Industry, and Labor

Steven Wheeler, Madison
Advocates for Persons with
Disabilities

WRC COMMITTEES

The Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council has **five** committees that meet regularly to support WRC work.

Executive

CHAIR: Richard Straub

MEMBERS: Jolene Wanek, Liz Kennedy, Kyle Kleist

Purpose: Coordinate activities of the full Council, including identifying and prioritizing areas in which Council review may improve DVR program delivery, maintaining open communication and transparency to ensure the Council is an effective resource for stakeholder oversight of DVR, and identifying and implementing methods to improve Council operations.

Policy Review and Administration

CHAIR: Vacant

MEMBERS: Becky Hebda, Gadeen Taylor-Duke, Jenny Felt, Jolene Wanek, Kathy Meisner, Norene Lueck

Purpose: Review, analyze, and provide input on the policies, practices, and administration operations with a focus on ensuring effective delivery of DVR services, including addressing any administrative matter that does not fall within the scope of the committees. Areas of focus include reviewing state administrative code changes, the DVR program policy and fiscal manuals, advising on the State Plan, and reviewing guidance documents, procedures, and best practices.

Council Engagement

CHAIR: Vacant

MEMBERS: Becky Hebda, Deborah Lee, Dick Straub, Jacci Borchardt, Liz Kennedy, Lori Karcher, Ramsey Lee

Purpose: Encourage WRC member engagement, solicit executive committee nominees, and recruit new members.

Services to Business

CHAIR: Jolene Wanek

MEMBERS: Alan Kaltenberg, Ann Franz, Becky Hebda, Jennifer Felty, Liz Kennedy, Megan Bisonette, Michael Jackson, Natalia Graff, Ramsey Lee

Purpose: Ensure that DVR's services to business are delivered in a way that assists job seekers with disabilities to connect to employment.

Performance Measures & Quality Assurance

CHAIR: Kyle Kleist

MEMBERS: Alexis Riggs, Alicia Reinhard, Becky Hebda, Dick Straub, Jacci Borchardt, Jolene Wanek, Kathy Meisner, Lindsey Krietzman

Purpose: Devise methods for ensuring DVR's delivery of services and data collection are compliant with WIOA and federal reporting standards. The committee also reviews, analyzes, and provides input on the effectiveness of VR services and stakeholder satisfaction with VR services.

DVR MISSION IN ACTION: DOUG STINSON

When Doug Stinson was a young boy, he loved going to his uncle's farm near the community of Holmen in La Crosse County. Whether he was riding up with his grandfather on the weekends, or spending the summer months helping out, he'd tell you it was because of his love for the animals, being outdoors, and the hard work that came with it.

So in the early 1990s, when faced with an opportunity to buy a home on the river or a farm, his family voted to buy a farm.

In 1995, Doug and his wife, Becky, and their two children purchased an 86-acre farm near Westby, in Vernon County, with the plan to turn it into a working cattle farm. At this point, Doug had already put 10 years into a physically demanding, heavy construction job that wore out his body and he was working full-time for the city of Onalaska, where he performed physical and manual labor that included street repair, tree removal, sewer and water projects, as well as many others.

From 1995 to 2021, Doug would wake up at 2:30 a.m. to do chores, get cleaned up, pack a lunch, drive one hour to Onalaska, put in eight hours of work, and drive back to complete more chores. He would be done around 9 p.m., or sometimes later, depending on what needed to be done.

"Once you're farming and you have animals, it's a seven-day-a-week job," he said. "Working two jobs was hard, but hard work doesn't bother me."



After working 33 years, he took an early retirement from the city of Onalaska in June of 2021. At this point, he had developed arthritis, had a full hip replacement in 2019, and he had surgery in 2020 after a cow stepped on his foot.

A good friend would drive out to the farm from time to time, and noticed Doug was having a hard time getting around. The friend had previously received services through DVR and recommended to Doug that he should apply. Doug submitted his DVR referral form in September 2021.

DVR was able to help Doug install a step and handrail kit on a tractor to get in and out with less pain and reduce the chances of further injury. He received a powered sliding door for his shed to help open the door, which reduced his pain and the chance of further injury. DVR also helped him procure a skid steer loader with

joystick controls to perform many different tasks around the farm and make it easier to control, given his lack of upper body strength.

Doug says he has become more efficient and is able to get more work done around the farm. He credits DVR and Easterseals, a statewide program that offers farm and vocational services to increase independence and minimize barriers for Wisconsin farmers.

"I just can't believe how much they have done for me and offering to help however they can," he said. "Without the help, I wouldn't be farming in another five years and I'm not quitting farming, there's no way, if I have to crawl up into a tractor, then I will."

Stinson will eventually turn the farm over to his son, who lives nearby and currently works alongside his father.

DVR ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

In July 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was passed by the U.S. Congress to reauthorize the former public law known as the Workforce Investment Act. WIOA is designed to strengthen and improve our nation’s public workforce system and help get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and help employers hire and retain skilled workers. Title IV of WIOA amended the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. DVR provides the consumer services required under Title IV.

Under WIOA, WRC is required to meet quarterly and participate in the following activities related to DVR’s provision of vocational rehabilitation services:

- Consult with DVR on the development, implementation, and revision of DVR policies and procedures
- Collaborate with DVR staff and administration to annually develop, agree to, and review DVR goals and priorities
- Work jointly with DVR to prepare and submit an annual progress report

WRC AND DVR PARTNERSHIP

MISSION: To obtain, maintain, and improve employment for people with disabilities by working with vocational rehabilitation consumers, employers, and other partners.

PURPOSE: To provide individualized services to Wisconsin residents with disabilities experiencing significant barriers to employment. Primary DVR services include vocational guidance and counseling, job training, assistive technology, and job placement services.

DVR core **VALUES** include:

- Enabling the individual with a disability to increase self-sufficiency through education and employment.
- Working with community partners and collaborators who share the expectation to increase individual self-sufficiency through education and employment.
- Maintaining a team of employees and colleagues who are knowledgeable in rehabilitation and committed to serving individuals with disabilities to increase their self-sufficiency and employment.
- Elevating DVR leaders who demonstrate the commitment, knowledge, and experience to lead the program and employees to increase education and employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.
- Ensuring sound fiscal and administrative practices that support all DVR personnel, community partners, and individuals with disabilities.

HOW DOES DVR PROVIDE SERVICES?

- Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs) identify employment goals and necessary rehabilitative services.
- IPEs are developed and co-signed by a licensed Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and the DVR consumer.
- DVR staff work in teams to assist consumers in achieving their employment goals.

WHAT DOES DVR DO?

- Provides employment services and counseling to people with disabilities.
- Administers or arranges for services to enable an individual to go to work.
- Offers training and technical assistance to employers regarding disability employment issues.

WHO DOES DVR SERVE?

- Individuals with disabilities in Wisconsin who face a significant barrier to employment.
- Wisconsin employers seeking qualified talent.

WHERE IS DVR LOCATED?

- DVR has offices in 22 Comprehensive Job Centers and 19 additional service locations throughout Wisconsin.
- DVR staff are able to provide services in most locations within the state using remote access technology.

MESSAGE FROM DVR ADMINISTRATOR

The Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council offers meaningful input to the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation regarding policies and processes designed to serve individuals with disabilities as they prepare for employment, obtain a job, keep that job, or seek promotional opportunities.

During Federal Fiscal Year 2023 (Oct. 1, 2022, to Sept. 30, 2023), WRC collaborated with DVR on several important issues including:

- The WRC Council Engagement Committee created orientation binders for new members and established a SharePoint website that council members can access to review meeting materials.
- Updated the bylaws to clarify that former WRC members who are approved to continue serving on committees are limited to a single two-year term.
- Reviewed and provided input on the SFY 2024-25 Joint Competitive Integrated Employment Plan as required by 2017 Wisconsin Act 178. The Act requires the state Department of Workforce Development, Department of Public Instruction and Department of Health Services to track employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities served by their respective agencies and to promote seamless transitions based on employment support needs as individuals progress in their desired careers.
- Created eight recommendations for DVR services and outcomes in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act 2024-2027 Combined State Plan. Recommendations covered these topics:
 - Consumer case process and timeline review.
 - Assess computer skills and connectivity needs for consumers whose job goals require computer literacy and home internet connections.
 - Increase the overall average hourly wage and benefits of employed consumers by paying for education and skills development that result in opportunities for higher paying jobs.
 - Recruit additional service providers who can provide supported and customized job development.
 - Ensure that DVR Business Services Consultants receive annual training on disability-related employment supports that will enable the most significantly disabled persons to obtain and maintain employment.
 - Identify regional sources to help reinvigorate training in supported and customized employment for service providers.
- Recommended a presenter to lead training on the vocational rehabilitation appeals process for administrative law judges employed by the Department of Administration's Division of Hearing and Appeals. DVR contracts with this division to conduct impartial hearings requested by consumers who disagree with a decision DVR made regarding their case services. Training topics included, but were not limited to, federally required vocational rehabilitation principles, due process requirements, employment outcomes, and the Individualized Plan for Employment.



DELORA NEWTON, Administrator
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

We thank WRC members for their passionate support of employment for people with disabilities and the advice they offer DVR as policies and processes designed to improve employment outcomes for this populations are revised and created.

DVR OFFICES ACROSS WISCONSIN

DVR is organized into 11 Workforce Development Areas (WDA), each overseen by an area director. In total, DVR operates out of 43 offices located throughout the WDAs based on area population. Below are the cities with DVR office locations, the WDA directors, and main WDA phone numbers.

WDA 1
Elkhorn, Kenosha, Racine
Director: Susan Chandek
262-956-6935

WDA 2
Milwaukee (2), West Allis
Director: Jennifer Fogarty
414-250-6551

WDA 3
Waukesha, Mequon,
Pewaukee, West Bend
Director: Amy May
262-956-6830

WDA 4
Fond Du Lac, Menasha,
Oshkosh
Director: Craig Wehner
920-930-6734

WDA 5
Green Bay, Manitowoc,
Marinette, Shawano, Sheboygan,
Sturgeon Bay
Director: Jennifer Bscherer
920-930-6733

WDA 6
Rhineland, Stevens Point,
Wausau, Wisconsin Rapids
Director: Patricia Noland
715-261-8760

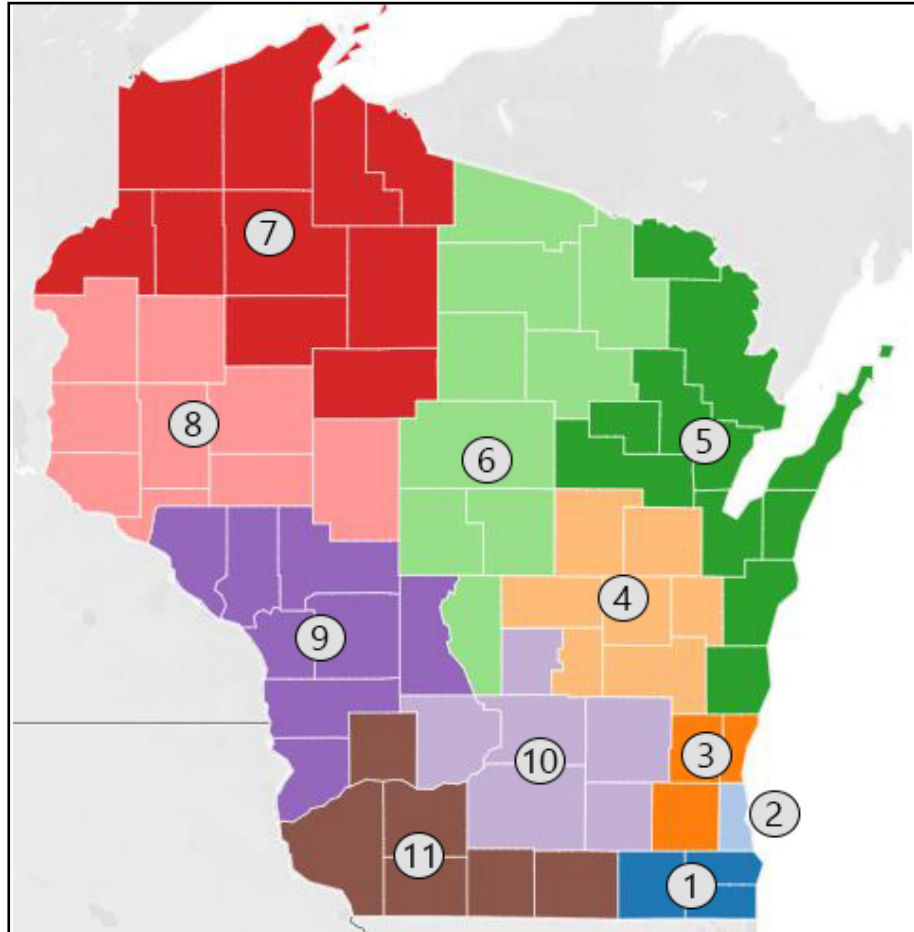
WDA 7
Ashland, Hayward, Ladysmith,
Medford, Superior
Director: Thomas Draghi
715-392-7896

WDA 8
Eau Claire, Menomonie,
Rice Lake
Director: Thomas Draghi
715-836-4001

WDA 9
La Crosse, Viroqua
Director: Amy Grotzke
608-405-4120

WDA 10
Baraboo, Beaver Dam, Jefferson,
Madison (2), Portage
Director: Jennifer Klein
608-242-4800

WDA 11
Dodgeville, Janesville, Richland Center
Director: Andrea Simon
800-228-2648

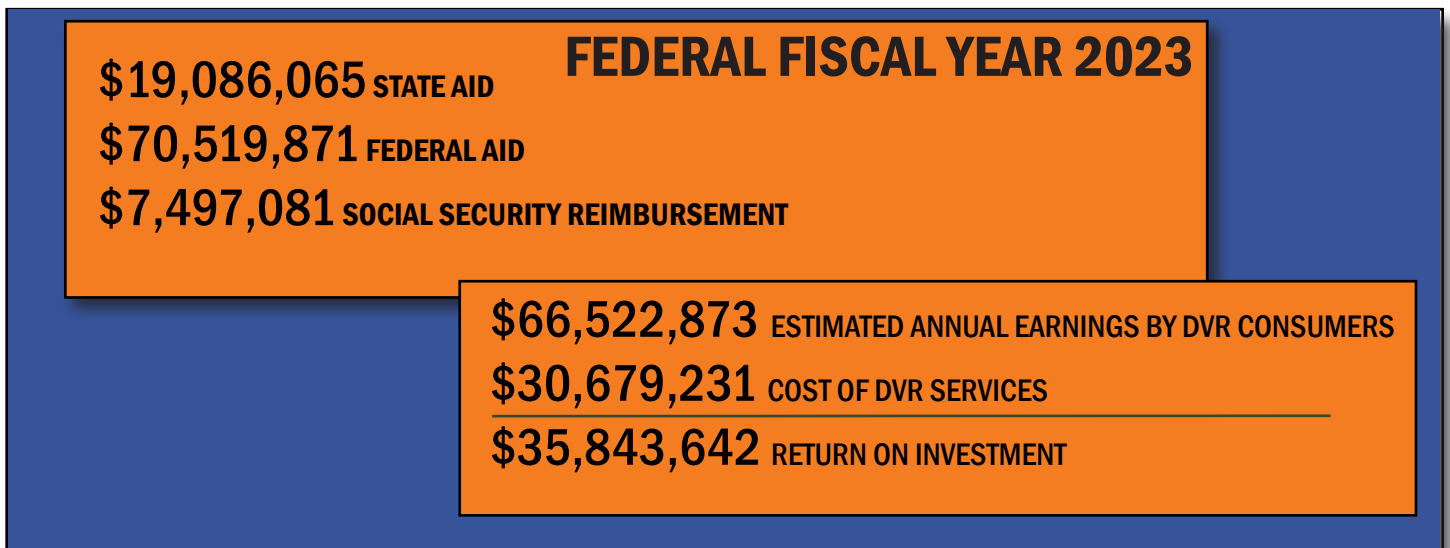


THE DVR IMPACT

DVR receives **78.7%** of its funding from the U.S. Department of Education and a required **21.3%** match from State of Wisconsin General Purpose Revenues. (This statement is required by, and satisfies, Stevens Amendment requirements).

In addition, Wisconsin has the ability to apply for Social Security reimbursement dollars. These dollars are earned when DVR services help to place a consumer in a job that pays a high enough wage that the consumer no longer receives Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). When this occurs, the Social Security Administration (SSA) reimburses DVR for the cost of case services provided to the consumer.

In Federal Fiscal Year 2023, DVR received **\$70,519,871** in federal funding and a **\$19,086,065** state match. In addition to these primary funding sources, in FFY 2023 DVR received **\$7,497,081 million** in Social Security reimbursement dollars.



Why is this important?

Wisconsin Vocational Rehabilitation supports and helps fuel Wisconsin's economy. In Federal Fiscal Year 2023, clients receiving DVR services in Wisconsin earned an estimated \$66 million. After factoring in the cost of DVR services, Wisconsin saw an estimated \$35 million return on investment. DVR services helps individuals generate income and benefits that helps support local economies, while also reducing local and state support for individuals with disabilities.

DVR successfully transitions Wisconsin residents with disabilities off federal programs such as Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI).

In Federal Fiscal Year 2023, 591 DVR consumers successfully maintained employment and transitioned off federal benefits. This figure demonstrates the profound economic impact that DVR has not only on individual consumers, but on the State of Wisconsin as a whole.

DVR MISSION IN ACTION: NATE KUBE

Nate Kube graduated high school in 2009, and at 18 years old went right into working fulltime at the Chula Vista Resort in the Wisconsin Dells, helping with event setup for seven years.

By 2016, Nate moved into a group home in Montello to receive additional assistance with his cerebral palsy, mixed anxiety, and depression. While living in the group home for the next five years, he struggled to figure out what he wanted to do in life, and how he would make a living working full-time while navigating the income restriction requirements that were part of the state and federal benefits he was receiving.

"I lost my support system from the first 25 years of my life," he said. "Everything I had was gone, I wanted to work, but mentally I just felt defeated and didn't know what to do."

Thankfully, he was referred to Project SEARCH, a program administered by DVR to provide skills training and work experience for people with disabilities. In August 2015, Nate applied to DVR to request one year of services to participate in Project SEARCH at the Kalahari Resorts as an adult. Additionally, he received tuition support from his long-term care agency who agreed to split transportation costs with DVR.

He would spend his internship rotations working in the bakery, front desk and hosting. In January of 2016, before his Project SEARCH graduation, he was offered a full-time front desk position where he would work for five years, eventually becoming a supervisor/trainer. That same year, he was recognized as the Kalahari Employee of the Year, which he credits to Project SEARCH and DVR.



Nate and his wife, Natilie Kube.



"Project SEARCH was an awesome opportunity that I needed to slowly build up my confidence, my spirit, and my skills after feeling defeated," he said. "I was able to get outside of thinking about myself and my depression and get the job I wanted."

Nate went on to serve on the Kalahari Resort Project SEARCH steering committee as the student representative and is now a big advocate for the program, telling everyone he can about it.

"It's a great way to get your feet in the workforce if you're scared or uncomfortable about stepping out," he said. "It gives you the options, and opens doors to possibilities that are available to you."

Nate, far right, with his Project SEARCH class. In 2019, Nate applied for DVR services again, working with his previous DVR counselor, Ann. DVR provided Nate with training grant and transportation assistance to pursue his goal of earning a degree in hospitality. He later decided to look at a career in the insurance industry and eventually worked with Ann to find a summer internship. Nate found an assistant underwriter internship in Madison. While it didn't work out for him, he would find a summer job at Kwik Trip in 2022.

Nate requested his DVR counselor's assistance with a Schedule A letter, which is a tool that federal agencies may use to hire qualified individuals with disabilities into positions non-competitively without going through the traditional hiring process. In November 2022, he was hired by the Portage Social Security office as a temporary employee. He accepted a permanent job offer in January 2023 as a customer service representative working 40 hours a week at \$16.14 an hour, receiving health insurance, retirement, and vacation benefits. His second DVR case was successfully closed in April 2023.

"DVR provides a lot of resources to help individuals find jobs where they feel content and feel like they are a benefit to society and can support themselves," Kube said. "The goal is to make an individual feel like they have a purpose and DVR helped me with that."

CONSUMER DEMOGRAPHICS

In Federal Fiscal Year 2023, DVR provided services and support to 27,571 individuals. These individuals received a variety of support and services through DVR offices around the state with 2,962 successfully maintaining employment for at least 90 days while DVR tracked their progress. These individual cases were then successfully closed per DVR policy.

BY AGE

11,453 UNDER 24
11,866 25 - 54
3,261 55-64
991 OVER 64

BY GENDER

15,498 MALES
11,729 FEMALES
344 PREFERRED NOT TO DISCLOSE

BY RACE

842 AMERICAN INDIAN
510 ASIAN
4,473 BLACK
59 HAWAIIAN PACIFIC
1,017 MULTI RACE
560 PREFERRED NOT TO DISCLOSE
20,110 WHITE

BY ETHNICITY

2,234 HISPANIC
24,920 NON-HISPANIC
417 PREFERRED NOT TO DISCLOSE

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, INCLUSION, AND ACCESSIBILITY

In Federal Fiscal Year 2023, DVR adopted a DEI strategic plan with three specific goals, and corresponding objectives to meet those goals over a five year period. The plan is a result of a DVR staff survey, review of DVR's consumer policies, and process and communication recommendations from Roadmap Research Global, who was contracted to support the creation of the plan.

Goal 1

Address the Inequities that Impact Consumers – Create an Equitable Consumer Experience

DVR will systematically identify and address inequities in service delivery. In doing so, DVR will build a system that fosters greater creativity, innovation, and speed in the process of addressing both equity and engagement.

Goal 2

Build a Diverse Workforce

DVR will build a more diverse workforce at all levels, one that is reflective of consumers and provides stronger language support to limited English proficiency consumers.

Goal 3

Build Safe Spaces, Safe Communications, and Safe Reporting for DVR staff

DVR will build mechanisms for safe spaces, safe communication, and safe reporting to create a culture in which employees are comfortable sharing concerns with leadership and management.

DVR CONSUMER

DISABILITY TYPES: FFY 2023

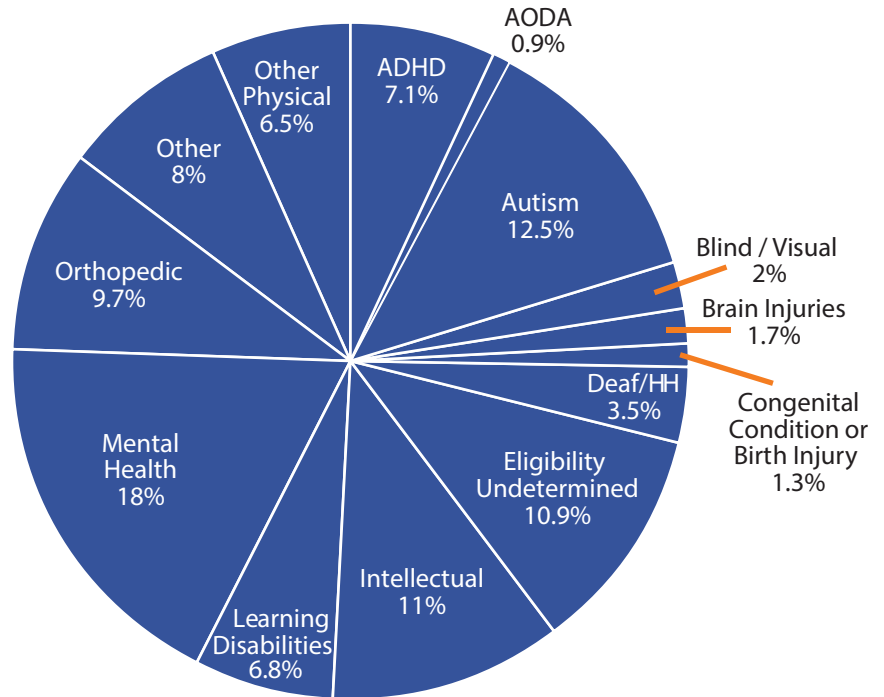
This page demonstrates the diversity of individual consumers who were determined eligible for DVR services in Federal Fiscal Year 2023.

Data is tracked and maintained by DVR and provided to the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration under the U.S. Department of Education. When individuals apply for DVR services, they report their primary disability. A primary disability is determined by a diagnosis from a medical professional, and establishes the primary barriers to employment.

The “Other” category includes disability types that may not fall into another category while the, “Other Physical” category includes individuals with a primary impairment that is not listed, is a general physical debilitation such as fatigue and pain, and have a primary disability cause of a physical condition that is not listed elsewhere.



This visual shows the distribution of disability types reported in Federal Fiscal Year 2023.



Wisconsin Consumers Served in FFY 2023

Disability Type	Total	Percent
ADHD	1,957	7.1%
AODA	258	0.9%
Autism	3,460	12.5%
Blind / Visual	563	2%
Brain Injuries	476	1.7%
Congenital Condition or Birth Injury	360	1.3%
Deaf / HH	953	3.5%
Eligibility Undetermined	3,014	10.9%
Intellectual	3,024	11%
Learning Disabilities	1,863	6.8%
Mental Health	4,969	18%
Orthopedic	2,679	9.7%
Other	2,203	8%
Other Physical	1,792	6.5%
Total	27,571	100%

CONSUMER OUTCOMES

Each of the last three fiscal years, DVR has assisted nearly 3,000 job seekers with disabilities in reaching their employment goals. The chart below shows federal fiscal year 2023 statistics by employment status category. Each employment category saw a year-over-year increase in average hourly wages as more consumers successfully obtained employment in higher-earning positions.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) defines Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) as either part or full time work (including self employment) in which an individual with a disability is paid at or above minimum wage, located in an environment where the individual regularly interacts with people both with and without disabilities. In addition, the employee must have equal access to benefits and opportunities for advancement as peers without disabilities.

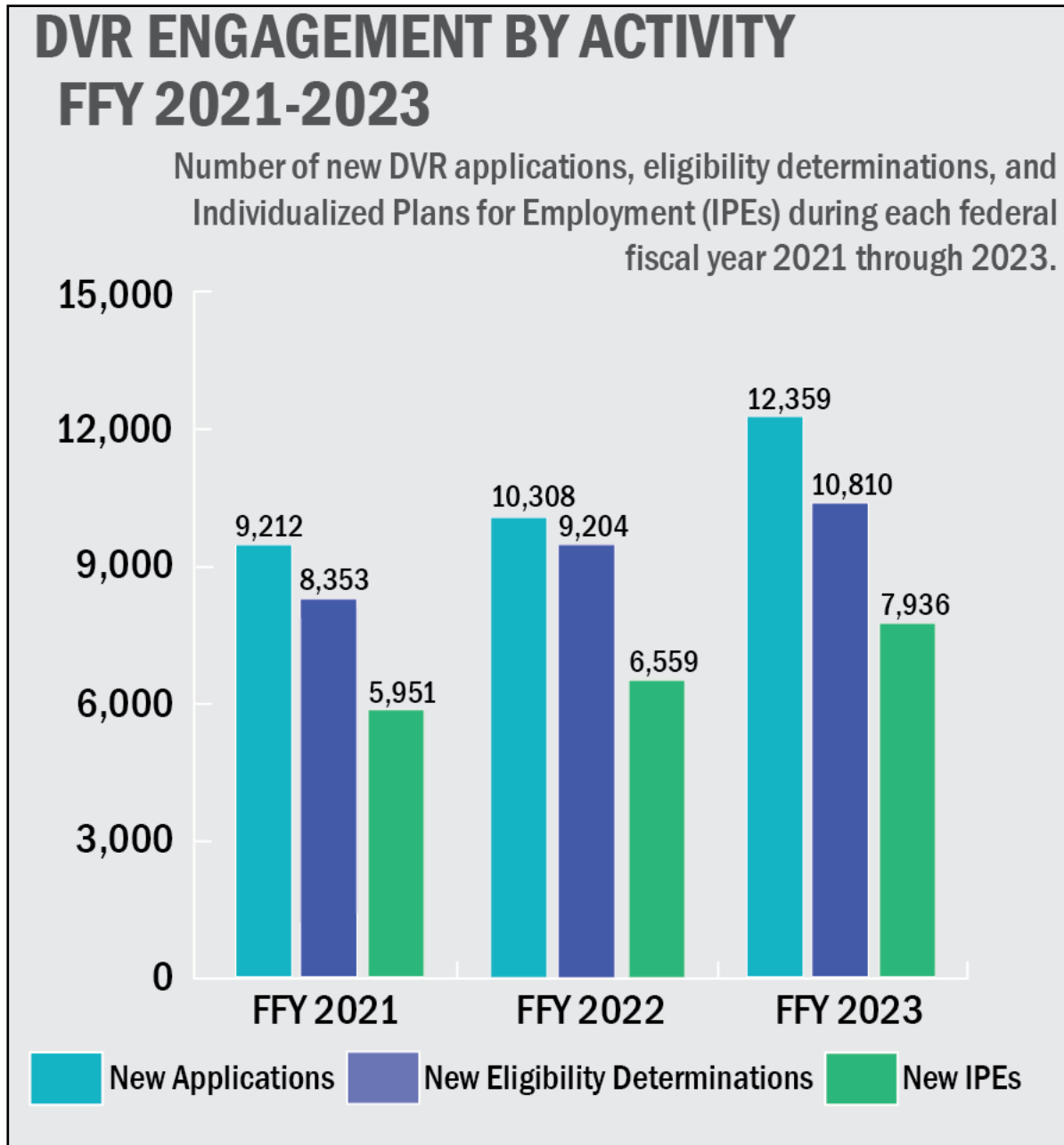
	AVERAGE WEEKLY HOURS	AVERAGE WEEKLY WAGE	FFY23 AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE	FFY22 AVERAGE HOURLY WAGE
Employment without Supports Employment where a consumer is hired by a business.	28	\$507	\$16.83	\$15.81
Employment with Supports Individuals who are hired by a business and receive some supports, such as job coaching, funded by a source other than the business.	14	\$168	\$11.81	\$10.77
Self-employment Involves starting one's own business or receiving help to accommodate the disability so a business owner can continue to operate their business. These numbers do not include data from the Business Enterprise Program.	27	\$1,053	\$32.40	\$24.70
All Consumers	24	\$432	\$15.76	\$14.64

The Business Enterprise Program (BEP) was created by Congress with the enactment of the Randolph-Sheppard Act of 1936. The program was intended to enhance employment opportunities for trained, licensed blind person to operate facilities. The law was subsequently amended in 1954 and again in 1974 to ultimately ensure individuals who are blind a priority in the operation of vending facilities, which included cafeterias, snack bars, and automatic vending machines, that are on federal property.

DVR provides oversight of the program in Wisconsin, providing assistance to visually impaired individuals who want to start and grow their own vending company. More information can be found online at <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/programs/bep/>

DVR PERFORMANCE METRICS

Throughout federal fiscal year 2023, DVR engaged with a total of **27,571** Wisconsin residents. Individuals included in this figure participated in at least one activity with DVR over the course of the year. Engagement activities with DVR include application for services, eligibility determination, Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) development, active DVR services, or case closure, either through successful community employment or informed choice. Of those who engaged with DVR during the 2023 federal fiscal year, **24,557** were eligible DVR consumers.

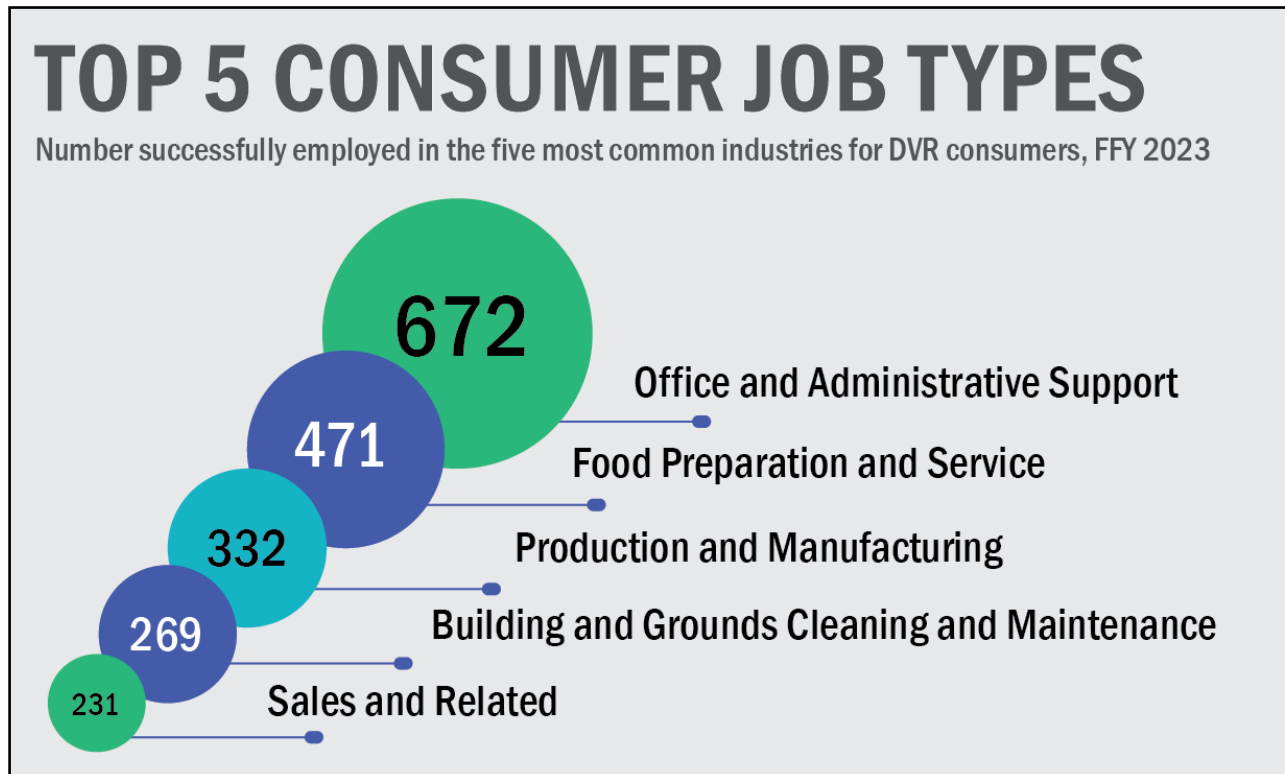


JOB TYPES OBTAINED BY DVR CONSUMERS

The tables below show the types of jobs obtained by the **2,962** DVR consumers who successfully achieved their employment goal in federal fiscal year 2023.

Architecture and Engineering	22
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media	32
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance	269
Business and Financial Operations	47
Community and Social Service	68
Computer and Mathematical	47
Construction and Extraction	28
Education, Training, and Library	81
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry	19
Food Preparation and Service	471
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	66
Healthcare Support	58

Installation, Maintenance, and Repair	57
Legal	4
Life, Physical, and Social Science	16
Management	66
Office and Administrative Support	672
Personal Care and Service	151
Production and Manufacturing	332
Protective Service	21
Sales and Related	231
Transportation and Material Moving	204
TOTAL	2,962



DVR MISSION IN ACTION: EBONY CUNNINGHAM

As an African American woman, Ebony Cunningham says she is part of a consumer demographic that spends billions in the beauty industry, yet less than 1% of store owners are people of color. While shopping at her local beauty supply stores, she often felt unwelcome and uncomfortable, frequently followed around by store employees.

“Why would I want to patronize businesses who treat me like a criminal instead of a customer,” she said. “I felt like this industry and these trends needed to be broken.”

So in late 2016, she started to develop a business plan to own and operate a beauty supply store in Racine. While doing the research and putting together her plan, she was working fulltime on an assembly line at a local manufacturing company when she suffered a hand injury. As a result of a worker’s compensation claim, she visited DVR for assistance in finding a job. “Speaking with her DVR counselor Kitra Thomas, Ebony mentioned her plans to open a business. What Ebony did not know was that DVR could also help her with her entrepreneurial goals.



Beginning in July of 2018, Ebony worked with Kitra to develop an individualized plan for employment, and worked through DVR’s self-employment toolkit. Working with a DVR self-employment specialist to build customer service and retail management skills, she enrolled in a training program through Walgreens and completed an internship with a local clothing store owner.

By 2020, she earned an Associate’s Degree in Business Management along with several technical diplomas and certificates from Gateway Technical College. With assistance from DVR, in December of 2021 she was ready to pursue her dream of owning and operating a beauty supply store, Divine Melanin Beauty Supply.



Melanin is the dark brown to black pigment in hair, skin, and the iris of the eye. Ebony says the motivation behind her store name is to empower those who look like her, and to let them know that they are accepted and worthy to be treated like customers. “It does not matter what your skin tone is,” she said. “When walking through our doors, you will be treated like a customer.”

By September 2022, she signed a lease for her storefront at 422 Main Street in downtown Racine and started filling it with product. Her grand opening took place in February 2023.

While the process to start a business with DVR’s support can take time, she said individuals with disabilities who are seeking employment or seeking to change occupations, should understand that it takes patience. She says this process was a learning experience for her and the DVR team, but it was worth it.

“I knew that everyone who was a part of my process was there to help, and they did help,” she said. “I am grateful for the services I received.”

She says having resources tailored to people with disabilities is important, and it’s a great feeling knowing that DVR is a resource for people of all abilities who are ready to get back to work or find other career opportunities.

“It’s great the community has this support,” she said. “It definitely helped me out a lot and I hope more people take advantage of the services.”

CONSUMER CASE SERVICE EXPENDITURES

DVR provided training grants to 947 consumers in Federal Fiscal Year 2023 to further their education at a four-year university or college, technical or junior college, or obtain a graduate or doctorate-level credential.

“Other Services” include those services that cannot be recorded elsewhere, including foreign language interpreter services, PASS plans, vocational guidance and counseling, post-secondary counseling offered as part of DVR’s pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS), Business Enterprise Program operator supplies, and occupational licenses.

SERVICE	FFY 2022	FFY 2023
Assessment	\$2,189,312	\$2,702,031
Benefits Analysis	\$2,250,332	\$2,070,324
College/University Training	\$1,652,476	\$2,847,675
Disability Skills Training	\$246,143	\$337,739
Eligibility/Order of Selection Assessment	\$1,813,860	\$2,093,044
Interpreter/Note-Taker for the Deaf	\$134,787	\$207,116
Job Development	\$10,559,043	\$9,892,316
Low Vision Aid/Adjustment Services	\$104,764	\$261,843
Maintenance	\$299,149	\$481,316
Occupational/Vocational Training	\$313,291	\$356,878
On-the-Job Supports	\$5,112,816	\$5,960,814
Other Services	\$290,248	
Personal Assistance	\$40,242	\$97,391
Rehabilitation Technology	\$2,460,755	\$2,892,432
Medical Restoration	\$38,422	\$58,892.39
Services/Family Members	\$34,052	\$8,389
Small Business Services	\$42,172	\$134,095
State Limited Term Employment	\$13,533	\$0
Supported Employment	\$8,960,094	\$9,599,697
Temporary Work	\$4,432,617	\$5,246,810
Training	\$2,759,529	\$3,823,551
Transportation	\$1,533,019	\$1,899,814
Work-Related Materials/Tools	\$207,940	\$189,865
Youth OJT	\$48,350	\$18,635
TOTAL	\$45,429,946	\$51,673,912

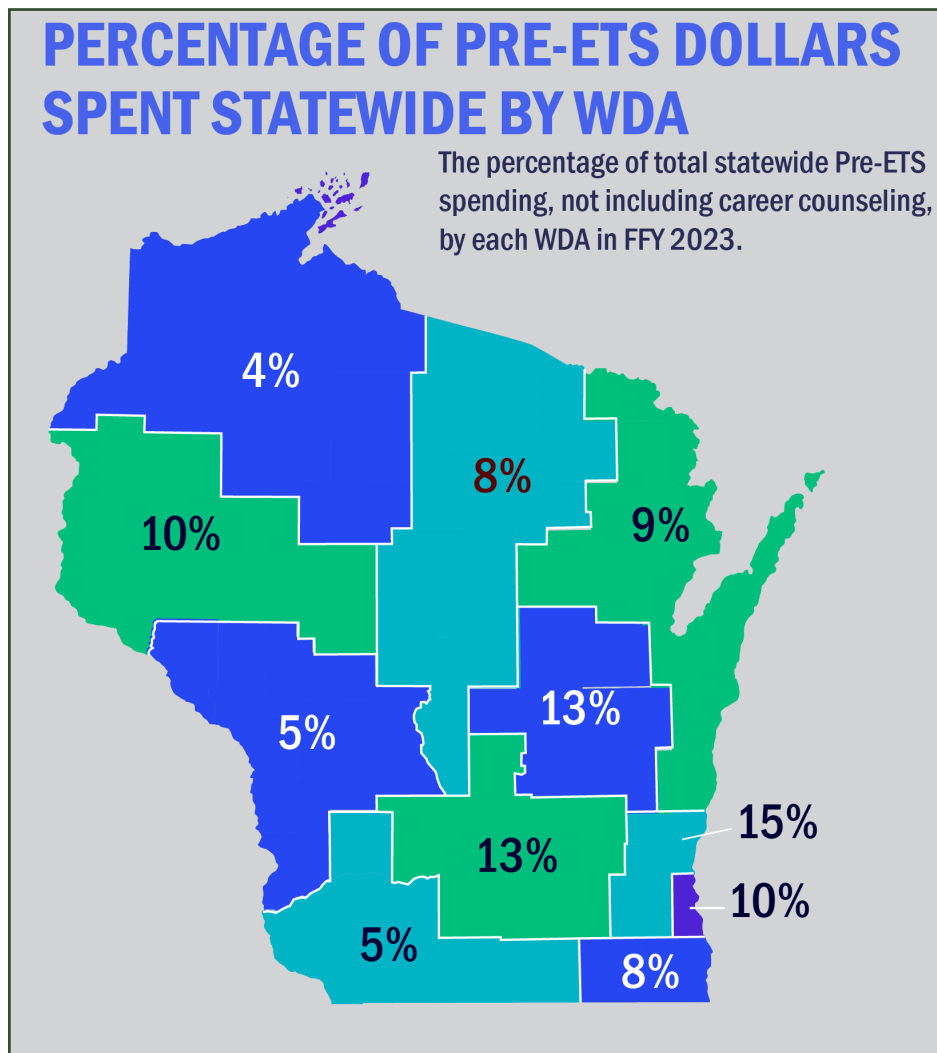
DVR provided services to more consumers in federal fiscal year 2023 than the previous year. This resulted in an additional \$1 million for training. The increase in training expenses was also due to an increase in DVR fees paid to local service providers for training offered to consumers as part of an effort to help retain qualified service providers around the state.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

In Federal Fiscal Year 2023, DVR spent over \$13 million on pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) statewide for students ages 14 to 21.

PRE-ETS CATEGORY	2022 SPENDING	2023 SPENDING
Work-Based Learning	\$6,873,231	\$8,387,447
Job Exploration Counseling	\$601,849	\$893,679
Workplace Readiness Training	\$1,696,757	\$2,501,125
Career Counseling (Staff Time)	\$1,188,405	\$1,352,306
Self-Advocacy Training	\$162,853	\$147,689
Post-Secondary Counseling	\$51,795	\$81,279
STATEWIDE TOTAL	\$10,574,890	\$13,363,252

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) requires vocational rehabilitation agencies to set aside at least 15% of funding to provide services to students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. This table includes all Pre-ETS expenditures outlined in WIOA.



HIGHLIGHT ON BUSINESS SERVICES

Wisconsin's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is committed to helping people with disabilities find a job, keep a job, and get a better job. To do this, DVR Business Service Consultants (BSC) are located in each Workforce Development Area (WDA) around the state, ready to work with employers seeking to hire new employees and create a workplace that is supportive of people of all abilities.

BSCs can assist businesses in many ways:

- Recruit qualified workers with disabilities.
- Build staff diversity through DVR's broad pool of skilled job candidates.
- Retain well-trained and productive employees.
- Access workforce planning resources and labor market information.

Every year, DVR BSCs provide over 7,000 services to more than 2,000 Wisconsin employers.

Employers who would like help recruiting and retaining employees can contact their local BSC using the information below sorted by Workforce Development Areas, to set up a no-cost meeting to begin discussing how DVR can help attract and retain talented employees.

WDA 1

Shaun Lukas

Shaun.Lukas@dwd.wisconsin.gov

262-270-8518

WDA 2

Sameer Bhajji

sameer.bhajji@dwd.wisconsin.gov

414-458-8072

Markus Watts

markus.watts@dwd.wisconsin.gov

414-250-6568

WDA 3

Denise Puffer

denise.puffer@dwd.wisconsin.gov

262-888-0181

WDA 4

Nicole Greetan

nicole.greetan@dwd.wisconsin.gov

920-312-6037

WDA 5

Lynn Hardginski

lynn.hardginski@dwd.wisconsin.gov

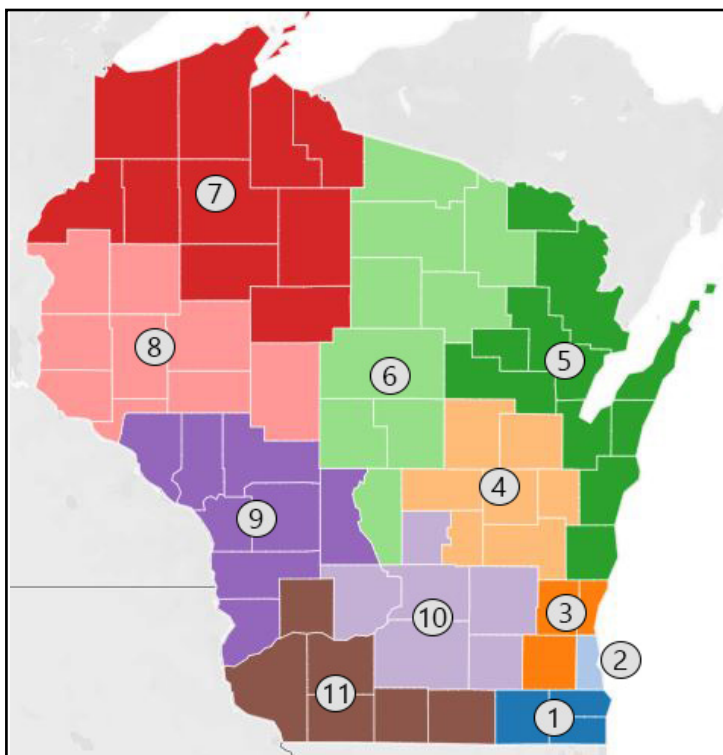
262-977-1021

WDA 6

Mallory Bryan

mallory.bryan@dwd.wisconsin.gov

715-907-2580



WDA 7

Dawn Stocks

dawn.stocks@dwd.wisconsin.gov

715-415-2712

WDA 8

Tara Burns

taram.burns@dwd.wisconsin.gov

715-931-7394

WDA 9

Amy Studden

amy.studden@dwd.wisconsin.gov

608-799-6308

WDA 10

Chantel Kilmer

chantel.kilmer@dwd.wisconsin.gov

608-405-4402

WDA 11

Milo Luna

ismael.luna@dwd.wisconsin.gov

608-931-0765

DVR BUSINESS SERVICES IN ACTION

Every year, DVR recognizes Wisconsin employers for their commitment to creating diverse and inclusive workplaces. These employers receive an Exemplary Employer award from the Governor for their work with DVR and hiring and retaining people with disabilities. Throughout the month of October, DVR Business Services Consultants organize recognition events to present the awards to the deserving employers, and thank each of them for their dedication to supporting people of all abilities. In FFY 2023, DVR recognized 15 employers across the state.



DVR Deputy Director of Consumer Services Anna Eggebrecht, second from left, joined DVR Director Tom Draghi, right, and DVR BSC Tara Burns, second from right, as they award Senasys with an Exemplary Employer award in October 2022.

Federal Fiscal Year 2023 Exemplary Employers

Ace Hardware of Wautoma
Bad River Band of Lake Superior Chippewa
Canteen Vending and Coffee Services - Wausau
Edgerton Care Center
Festival Foods - Kenosha
FyterTech - Green Bay
Hope House of Milwaukee
Iverson's Piggly Wiggly - Oconto Falls
Marcus La Crosse Cinema
Marcus Theaters - Sun Prairie
Marketplace Foods - Rice Lake
RRD Supply Chain Solutions - Plover
Senasys - Eau Claire
Universal Strap, Inc. - Jackson
UW-Platteville

CAREER PATHWAYS ADVANCEMENT GRANT

With a continued focus on helping individuals obtain 21st century skills to increase self-sufficiency and independence, DVR applied for a U.S. Department of Education (DOE) Career Pathways Advancement (CPA) Initiative grant in Spring 2021 and was awarded \$14 million in September 2021. The CPA Initiative has allowed DVR to create resources and opportunities to support consumers to advance in a career in one of four fields: Healthcare, Digital/Information Technology, Construction, and Manufacturing.

Under the Initiative, DVR is focused on using apprenticeships, career pathways, and other programs and services to increase wages, hours worked, and job opportunities and to improve self-sufficiency and reduce the use of public benefits.

By 2023, DVR already met its goal of enrolling 500 individuals into the grant. To avoid creating a waitlist for services, DOE awarded DVR an additional \$6.1 million in September 2023 to support more individuals through the CPA Grant.

The grant also allowed DVR to partner with DWD's Equal Rights Division to create an Accommodation Training Library consisting of brief, informational videos that cover topics, including hiring people with disabilities, the reasonable accommodation process, disclosing a disability, disability discrimination, and other topics related to employment law. The new accommodation training videos can be found on the DWD Career Pathways website at <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/career-pathways/training/>.

BECOME A WRC MEMBER

HOW DO I JOIN?

Members of the Council are appointed by the Governor. The Council may forward recommendations to the Governor after soliciting recommendations from organizations representing the broad range of individuals with disabilities. In selecting members, the Governor shall consider, to the greatest extent practicable, representation of minority populations on the Council.



WHAT QUALIFICATIONS DO I NEED?

A majority of Council members shall be persons who are:

1. Individuals with disabilities; and
2. Not employed by the DWD.

HOW LONG CAN I SERVE?

1. Each member of the Council shall be appointed for a term of no more than three years and may serve no more than two consecutive terms.
2. A member appointed to fill a vacancy occurring prior to the end of the term for which a predecessor was appointed shall be appointed for the remainder of the predecessor's term.
3. The terms of service of the members initially appointed must be for varied numbers of years to ensure terms expire on a staggered basis.

WHERE DO I BEGIN?

To learn more about WRC, and see which seats to apply for, visit the WRC website at www.dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/partners/wrc/members. Send a resume and cover letter expressing your interest in joining the council to dvrwirehabcouncil@dwd.wisconsin.gov.

YOUR INPUT MATTERS: CONTACT WRC

The Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council (WRC) welcomes and appreciates input from the public, using feedback to advise the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and direct the Council's focus. If you have any questions or comments about this report or WRC's work, contact WRC using any of the methods below:



CALL

800-442-3477



FAX

608-266-1133



EMAIL

dvrwirehabcouncil@dwd.wisconsin.gov



WRITE

Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council
201 E. Washington Avenue
P.O. Box 7852
Madison, WI 53707-7852



ATTEND A MEETING

WRC meets quarterly.
Meetings are open to the public,
with schedules available at:
publicmeetings.wi.gov/



BECOME A MEMBER

If you are interested in becoming a WRC member, please contact us using any of the above methods.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

DVR SERVICES FOR JOB SEEKERS WITH DISABILITIES

dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/job-seekers/

DVR SERVICES FOR BUSINESS

dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/business/

WISCONSIN REHABILITATION COUNCIL

dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/partners/wrc/wrc-info.htm

WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITIES ACT

www.doleta.gov/wioa/

REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

rsa.ed.gov/

NATIONAL COALITION OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCILS

www.ncsrc.net/