

State of Washington
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

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Conducted by

Andrew J. Karhan, Ed.D.

Melissa Kronberger, M.S., COTA/L, CRC

Amber McConnell, Ph.D.

Wendy Quarles, B.S.



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Interwork Institute

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Executive Summary

The Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University jointly assessed the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing in Washington. 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 Combined State Plan developed by the core partners across the Washington workforce development systems. The data was gathered, analyzed, and grouped into the following sections. A summary of key findings is contained within each section. The full results are found in the body of the report.

In reviewing this report, the overall findings are best viewed through a lens of systems improvement and enhancement, rather than compliance. Understanding key areas of need and gaps in a system is a key element of the practice of disciplined inquiry, as research on improvement science has shown. Improvement science is a systematic, evidence-based approach to understanding and addressing complex problems by testing changes through iterative cycles, measuring outcomes, and refining interventions over time. It emphasizes learning from variation, identifying root causes, and using data to drive continuous, sustainable improvement in systems and practices (Kumah et al., 2024; Byrk et al., 2017). As DVR and its stakeholders consider these findings and recommendations, and ultimately look to plan for improvement, we encourage these questions to be asked:

1. What are we trying to accomplish?
2. What changes can we make to improve?
3. How will we know a change is an improvement?

Using these as guiding questions will ultimately support more substantial systems improvement and increase the likelihood of improved outcomes for DVR and the customers it serves.

*Note: The summary of findings here and throughout the report primarily identifies the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Washington. **When a need is identified, it is not intended to imply that DVR or other service providers are not meeting it unless explicitly stated.***

The following is a summary of key findings of each of the eight primary sections of the CSNA. These findings are by no means a complete reflection of all the data or conclusions. Readers should refer to the full report (i.e., beginning on page 13) for the in-depth data and analysis that support the primary needs identified in the executive summary, and the recommendations that follow.

Section I: Overall Agency Performance

Stakeholders value DVR's mission and counselor relationships, yet capacity constraints and delays create inconsistent experiences and resulting outcomes. In exploring the overall performance of DVR in advancing competitive integrated employment (CIE) for individuals with disabilities, several themes emerged. There are needs related to:

- Building on the current positive counselor-to-customer relationship to advance the overall mission of DVR.
- Increasing opportunities to stabilize the relative continuity of counselor assignments despite the turnover experienced.
- Exploring opportunities to facilitate additional remote/hybrid services, as these have been identified as effective for certain portions of the population.

- Continuing to invest in benefits planning – the benefits cliffs and housing instability affect readiness and engagement.
- Focusing on financial empowerment and literacy for individuals to ensure movement toward self-sufficiency.
- Emphasizing career training and the assistive technology to support the completion of credential and degree programs.
- Leveraging the professional, mission-driven staff in offices to mentor other counselors and staff. High caseloads and turnover in offices have negatively impacted relationships; focusing on the positive deviance in the system is essential.
- Reviewing all processes and standards associated with eligibility and plan development – delays hinder timely service.
- Exploring current communication standards and protocols for counselors to follow is associated with customer engagement. Timely, clear communication builds client trust, an essential building block for advancing toward employment. Clients expressed a desire for more direct and frequent communication.
- Improving gaps in service quality across regions. No single area demonstrates consistent responses, indicating a balance of positive and negative feedback, likely distributed across a bell curve. However, addressing as many gaps as possible will minimize the overall negative experiences reported.

Section II: Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities & Supported Employment

Supported Employment (SE) is valued when implemented well, but reliance on benefits, provider capacity constraints, and coordination gaps constrain consistency. In discussions about the specific needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, several emerging themes emerged. There are needs related to:

- Focusing on areas within DVR where individuals are making progress toward goals at higher rates.
- Improving the availability of SE and job coaching services for all people with disabilities. Feedback indicated that SE and job-coaching models have proven successful when consistently applied, but there is a need to establish clear definitions of SE and CE eligibility criteria.
- Identifying specific collaborative CRP partnerships and working to emulate those across the state. Customers consistently highlighted the value and improved process when this tone is set.
- Understanding and addressing the specific financial stress of individuals with the most significant disabilities, the SSI/SSDI reliance, and the perceived disincentives.
- Partnering with other state partners serving individuals with disabilities to address the transportation challenges.
- Building a more sophisticated network of partners to support the expressed needs of those with complex disabilities.
- Identifying strategies to address the challenges of limited post-placement supports and the perception that these end prematurely.
- Recognizing that meaningful work promotes stability. Identifying ways to address the dominance of lower-wage, partially segregated, and stereotypical industries in the job market.
- Reviewing the processes for transitions between DVR and DDA. Customers reported challenges in navigating the complexity of these systems.

Section III: Minority and Underserved Populations

DVR serves a culturally diverse base that aligns with the State's overall demographics; however, there are opportunities to deepen representation and build trust. Recurring themes around unserved and underserved populations were varied. There are needs related to:

- Building on the increased outreach to underserved groups. Case management data indicate that DVR is serving a higher percentage of individuals by race/ethnicity (i.e., Black/African American and Hispanic). Still, those voices were not as present in the CSNA process.
- Utilizing the information in the CSNA to understand where to leverage tools to advance access to primary-language services, bilingual staff, and develop additional culturally responsive materials
- Minority groups are underrepresented in DVR services. Establishing partnerships with community organizations (i.e., cultural centers, places of worship, foster care agencies, shelters, food banks, etc.).
- Increasing spaces for culturally relevant service options and awareness. Customers indicated that the complexity of intersectional identities can be overlooked,
- Continuing to build stronger collaboration with Tribal and community organizations is needed to build trust and ultimately, access to DVR services. Historical distrust persists.
- Engaging the population through accessible materials increases willingness to engage. Customers and partners indicate that cultural and linguistic barriers reduce access.
- Staff/vendor demographics do not readily match those of the communities they serve.

Section IV: Individuals with Behavioral Health Needs

The needs of individuals with Behavioral Health were a unique focus of this CSNA process. Behavioral health integration remains limited; stronger partnerships, training, and trauma-informed practice are needed. Recurring themes associated with this population were varied. There are needs related to:

- Understanding the importance of behavioral health across the field. Findings indicate an increased awareness of mental health in the field but identify the need for additional work.
- Addressing the reported access gaps for counseling and medication. For those in the behavioral health population, these two supports can be key building blocks for employment stability and, more broadly, life.
- Addressing the referral and service coordination process. Customers and partners identified that fragmented referrals and inconsistent provider coordination create barriers for engagement.
- Regional and rural disparities remain.
- Equipping the field with the tools to address the identified stigma and employer bias. These elements hinder disclosure and workplace inclusion.
- Building provider capacity with specific expertise in supporting people with behavioral health needs.
- Recognizing the importance of trauma-informed approaches, customers and partners identified the importance of understanding the impact of personal trauma, often in interacting with systems.
- Training for DVR and CRPs on behavioral health.
- Accessing specialized behavioral care can enhance the overall progress toward employment.

Section V: Youth & Students with Disabilities in Transition

Early DVR connection improves outcomes; awareness, coordination, and Pre-ETS consistency need strengthening. As with other specific populations, the needs of students and youth with disabilities necessitate a nuanced approach. There are needs related to:

- Solidifying processes to engage youth and families at earlier ages and/or grade levels. Early engagement correlates with smoother transitions.
- Building options for students to engage effectively. Youth and families reported the need for flexible, virtual, and community-based alternatives.
- Enhancing the current strong partnerships with DSB and local job coaches and emulating them to support the employment of all students and youth.
- Increasing awareness of DVR and Pre-ETS among youth and families. In addition, there is a need to improve processes for the transition from Pre-ETS to adult VR services.
- Facilitating opportunities for students to access safe and reliable transportation. Transportation access for youth may be more limited due to an inability to drive or an over-reliance on “school-like” bus transportation.
- Emphasizing the 18–21-year-old population to identify services that can eliminate existing gaps. Families reported not always having a clear plan for their young person upon leaving school.
- Increasing school collaboration. Overall, the findings suggest a high level of inconsistency across regions and within schools within those regions.

Section VI: Individuals Served via the Statewide Workforce System (WorkSource WA)

The partnership and use of WorkSource are key tools for building systems capacity. As such, DVR customers' use of WorkSource is limited; structured collaboration and joint training could improve results. There are needs related to:

- Building on initial positive collaboration with WIOA partners, but working collectively to address the inconsistency, low engagement, and accessibility concerns raised by customers.
- Accessing WorkSource for people with disabilities. Disclosure of disability is a particular issue.
- Advancing the overall goals of WIOA by focusing on partnership opportunities, shared customers, and establishing clear goals between DVR and the workforce system. Customers reported challenges with coordination.
- Exploring opportunities to leverage training opportunities in WorkSource that are effective for DVR customers. Unfortunately, few participants saw training leading to jobs, which may indicate a mismatch in training, a lack of awareness of the impact of disability, or other systemic issues.
- Building opportunities to fill service gaps by co-enrolling customers in Title I and III.
- Leveraging the individual champions who maintain local partnerships. Partners acknowledge strong pockets of collaboration with specific staff, but this is not consistently evident with WorkSource.

Section VII: Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs)

Overall, CRPs are central to service delivery but face staff shortages, quality variation, and coordination challenges. To leverage this resource effectively, a variety of needs must be addressed. The specific needs are related to:

- Leveraging the strength of CRPs across the state. The overall network of CRPs was characterized as responsive and supportive in the employment process. Job development, coaching, and supported employment are widely offered. While quality may vary, this is an opportunity for growth.
- Exploring the referral process to understand how it is impacting engagement and outcomes. Feedback highlighted inconsistencies in processes and their impact on customer and family engagement.
- Evaluating when and where remote service delivery is additive versus a challenge. Some customers noted the shift toward remote delivery limits community presence.
- Increasing the availability of housing and other life supports. The intersection of general financial need, access to resources, and other needed services creates barriers to employment. While employment-focused CRPs may not offer these services, the articulated need is high.
- Highlighting the successful CRPs across the state. These CRPs were described as essential lifelines.
- Aligning standards, training efforts, and outcomes among CRPs to address the varied experiences that customers experience. With a shortage of job coaches and fidelity issues with CE/SE, overall outcomes and perceptions of service quality are of concern.
- Expanding vendor diversity for specialized populations. On several occasions, the need for a more diverse provider network was highlighted.

Section VIII: Businesses & Employer Engagement

The field of vocational rehabilitation is highly dependent on the supply and demand for a qualified workforce. Understanding employers' needs is critical to DVR's mission. Findings suggest employers value employees with disabilities but lack the education, support, and follow-through to implement accommodations. Needs are specifically related to:

- Leveraging current employers who cite reliability, teamwork, and dedication to serve as champions, and examples of the qualified workforce that DVR has provided them.
- Increasing awareness of DVR business services to address the existing gap with engagement. One challenge with the findings in this area relates to businesses' responsiveness to the CSNA process. The limited engagement in this area is one indication of a need for further development.
- Working with businesses with in-demand jobs that align with the labor market trends in local areas of Washington.
- Addressing the stigma associated with job seekers with disabilities and the bias that businesses have shown in hiring practices, including long application processes or online portals that lack accessibility. Evidence indicates that employer stigma and accommodation concerns persist.
- Unifying an approach to business engagement across all WIOA partners.
- Interest in alternative interviews and strengths-based hiring.
- Broadening the businesses' knowledge of the ADA and the processes for accommodating employees with disabilities.

Recommendations

Section I: Overall Agency Performance

Overall, several key strategies should be considered as DVR proceeds with planning and implementing improvement strategies.

General Service Improvements

1. Launch a **multimedia public awareness campaign** about DVR services.
2. Expand **staff development programs** emphasizing person-centered practices and communication skills.
3. Hire or designate staff for **employer engagement and** enhance employer recognition efforts in partnership with WorkSource.
4. Establish an **interagency resource hub** for housing, mental health, and substance use services.
5. **Streamline intake and service delivery** processes to reduce administrative delays.
6. Establish a continuous-quality-improvement (CQI) process using **quarterly performance dashboards and customer-feedback loops** to demonstrate compliance with RSA PD-23-03.
7. Review and implement **standardized service-delivery protocols** to ensure equitable access and consistent quality across all DVR offices statewide.

Barriers to Individuals with Disabilities Finding Employment

1. Incorporate **comprehensive, mandatory benefits advisement** early in the DVR process to address benefits concerns and address the myths that may hinder employment. This should be accompanied by staff training to ensure they are skilled as work incentive practitioners.
2. **Formalize partnerships with housing authorities** to stabilize clients facing homelessness or instability.
3. **Enhance employer education** efforts to improve awareness of reasonable accommodations and disability inclusion.
4. Provide ongoing **digital literacy and technology training** to enhance clients' job-readiness.
5. Introduce **several improvement strategies to support counselor performance**, including increasing counselor staffing, establishing caseload caps, and developing backfill plans to ensure timely service.
6. Implement triage systems and analyze counselor referral processes to improve client continuity.
7. Create **industry-specialist coaches** and rapid placement pathways for urgent financial needs.

Barriers to Access to Washington DVR Services

1. Review counselor staffing and policies to **reduce intake and service connection wait times**.
2. Implement consistent case management guidelines to **ensure service continuity**. Consider using technology tools to facilitate the case management process.
3. Develop **proactive communication policies** requiring counselors to inform clients of all available services.
4. **Provide easy-to-understand ‘DVR Navigation 101’** materials to help clients understand processes.
5. **Offer mobile and virtual DVR** services to increase accessibility for rural areas.
6. **Partner with transit agencies to improve transportation supports**, including passes and travel training.

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

Access to Services for People with the Most Significant Disabilities

1. Support CRPs to **diversify job placements** and focus on maximizing client employment potential.

2. Enhance **interagency data sharing with DDA** for smoother transitions to extended support systems per §361.55.
3. Ensure **SE services prepare clients for sustainable, high-quality employment outcomes**.
4. **Co-design technology systems** with user feedback and maintain proven supports like assistive equipment.

Supported Employment and Customized Employment

1. Prioritize **Supported Employment (SE) expansion** with clear benchmarks for competitive integrated employment (CIE) under §361.5(c)(9).
2. Implement **job coach retention strategies through funding, training, and wage support**, and enhance partnerships with DDA and DSHS’s mental health programs.
3. Increase **CE training and funding for CRPs** to ensure consistent quality implementation. Consider a statewide training on Discovery and Customized Employment to align with the Essential Elements of Customized Employment.
4. Empower clients with choice in provider selection and ensure person-centered job matching.

Section III: Needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including the needs of individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program

1. Develop **rural transportation solutions** such as rideshare or travel vouchers. This should be explored with all relevant state agencies to leverage resources across areas to support all Washington residents.
2. Explore the development of a **broader statewide language-access plan** (multilingual materials, interpreters, captioning) in line with Section 504. Expand outreach and ensure communication supports address multilingual and ASL needs.
3. Introduce ongoing **cultural competency and trauma-informed training** for all staff and CRPs.
4. Continue to develop **formal partnerships with tribes** to build trust and improve access for tribal members.
5. Recruit **specialized CRP staff** to serve Deaf/Hard of Hearing clients with quality interpreting options.
6. Regularly **analyze disaggregated data** on race/ethnicity, geography, and disability type to identify disparities in eligibility, closure, and wage outcomes.

Section IV: Needs of individuals with behavioral health

1. Establish **formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)** and data-sharing agreements between DVR and behavioral health agencies. The MOUs will strengthen DVR–BH communication and facilitate regular interagency collaboration.
2. Include **behavioral-health representation on local workforce boards** to strengthen system integration.
3. Provide **statewide training for DVR counselors on trauma-informed** and recovery-oriented practices.
4. Expand **telehealth-compatible and mobile DVR services** to improve access in rural and underserved areas.
5. Strengthen accommodations, including technology-based communication options (Zoom, Teams, text).

6. Develop **integrated service models** that combine employment, behavioral health, and peer support services.
7. Implement **joint case conferences and cross-system referral** processes to improve continuity of care.
8. Utilize **Individual Placement and Support (IPS)** principles to enhance supported employment outcomes for individuals with behavioral health needs.
9. Develop strategies to **enhance diagnostic access**, especially for women and minority clients.
10. Identify a dedicated **staff to coordinate** with **behavioral health** organizations.
11. Explore **long-term funding to expand behavioral health** partnerships and service networks.

Section V: Needs youth and students with disabilities in transition

1. Begin **DVR engagement earlier**, with staff attending IEP meetings starting in middle school to introduce services and prepare families before high school transition points.
2. **Strengthen collaboration** between DVR, LEAs, and OSPI to align IEP and IPE planning and ensure consistent expectations for post-school outcomes.
3. Explore the use of **dedicated transition counselors** with smaller caseloads to focus on early outreach, networking, and collaboration with schools and families.
4. Ensure **15% Pre-ETS set-aside compliance** and document all allowable expenditures in alignment with RSA PD-19-03. Explore how Pre-ETS providers can cover travel, rural delivery, and staff time needed for individualized services.
5. **Distribute clear, family-friendly information** about services (e.g., the transition path). This can include **accessible marketing and outreach materials** for schools, parents, and students to increase awareness of available DVR supports.
6. Explore the use of a customer/provider portal that allows families, schools, and DVR staff to track real-time progress throughout the transition journey.
7. Develop structured, **statewide training modules for DVR staff, school personnel, and families**.
8. Offer **ongoing professional development** focused on working with diverse disabilities, trauma-informed practice, assistive technology, and youth engagement.
9. Strengthen **employer partnerships** to create inclusive, paid work-based learning, internships, and apprenticeships that lead to credential attainment.
10. **Coordinate with local workforce boards** and business networks to align WBL opportunities with regional labor-market demand and ensure WIOA Title I programs are leveraged.
11. **Use data-driven evaluation to monitor** regional and demographic disparities in access and outcomes for transition-age youth.

Section VI: Needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the Statewide Workforce Development System

1. Rebuild **the partnership between DVR and WorkSource** across the state. Expand data-sharing agreements among core partners to track common customers and outcomes.
2. Institute **cross-training for WorkSource staff on disability** awareness and DVR services.
3. Encourage **strategic referrals to Title I and III** programs during DVR wait periods.
4. **Develop and distribute promotional materials** that clearly describe WorkSource services and the intersection with DVR services.

5. **Fully integrate DVR services into WorkSource AJCs.** Explore how to co-locate more staff, creating joint intake and referral systems, and using local partnerships to set the foundation of Integrated Resource Teams.
6. Develop **cross-training between DVR and WorkSource** staff to ensure shared understanding of CIE, ADA, and reasonable accommodation.
7. Enhance **accessibility of AJCs** by auditing physical and digital access in accordance with §361.29(c)(4).

Section VII: Need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs.

1. Develop **CRP recruitment and funding strategies** to address shortages of quality providers. Explore **value-based payment structures** that reward CRPs for achieving high-wage, long-term placements and emphasize the value of the placement.
2. Implement **quality assurance systems** that link CRP contract renewals to performance metrics. Develop standardized CRP quality metrics (e.g., retention rates, median wages, job quality).
3. Emphasize **person-centered job matching** and prioritize job quality in CRP contracts.
4. Broaden **training opportunities to the CRP network** to ensure they are using best practices.

Section VIII: Need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs.

1. Launch a **statewide employer education** initiative emphasizing inclusion and ADA compliance.
2. Create an **ADA toolkit and recognition incentives** for accessible employers.
3. **Normalize disability disclosure** through participant coaching and employer training.
4. Provide clear **anti-retaliation guidance** and accessible alternatives to interviews.
5. Train HR and recruiters on **inclusive hiring practices** and accommodation procedures.
6. Collect **employer-satisfaction data** per §361.82(d)(3) to include in RSA performance reports.
7. Develop **sector-based partnerships** (technology, healthcare, manufacturing) to improve CIE placements and wage levels.
8. Publicize success stories through an '**Employer of Excellence**' **recognition program** to incentivize inclusive hiring.

CSNA Full Report – Findings and Recommendations

Impetus for Assessment

Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) contains the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended. It requires all State vocational rehabilitation agencies (SVRAs) to assess the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities within their State, and to plan and establish goals and priorities for programs and services to address 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 4 years, with biannual modifications as needed. In addition, Title 34 of the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 361.29 requires that the State Plan include the results of a jointly conducted comprehensive Statewide needs assessment (CSNA) every three years, describing the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing in the State.

In response to these mandates and to ensure adequate efforts are made to serve the diverse needs of individuals with disabilities in Washington, the DVR executed a contract with the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University to jointly develop and implement a CSNA of the vocational rehabilitation needs of Washington's residents with disabilities.

Purpose of the CSNA

The CSNA aims to identify and describe the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Washington state. While the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) requires an investigation into specific areas, the DVR made distinct decisions to place additional emphasis on factors (those factors marked with an* below represent these areas):

- I. The **overall performance of DVR** in meeting the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in the State.
- II. The rehabilitation needs of **individuals with the most significant** disabilities include the need for supported employment services.
- III. The rehabilitation needs of **individuals with disabilities who are minorities** and those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program, including those from Native American and Alaskan Native heritage*.
- IV. The rehabilitation needs of **youth and students with disabilities** in transition*, including their need for pre-employment transition services.
- V. The rehabilitation needs of **individuals with behavioral health disabilities***.
- VI. The rehabilitation needs **of individuals with disabilities** are served through other components of the **statewide workforce development** system.
- VII. The need to establish, develop, and improve **community rehabilitation programs** within the State.
- VIII. The needs of **businesses** in recruiting, hiring, accommodating, and retaining individuals with disabilities.

The data from the needs assessment process is expected to provide DVR information to inform the creation of the VR portion of the Unified State Plan and support planning for future program development, outreach, and resource allocation. This CSNA covers quantitative and qualitative data obtained in 2025.

Methodology

The comprehensive Statewide needs assessment was conducted using qualitative and quantitative methods of inquiry. The specific techniques used to gather data in this assessment are detailed below.

Individual and Listening Session Interviews

Instrument: The instruments used for individual and listening session interviews were developed by a research team at SDSU and reviewed and revised by the DVR team before use in the assessment process.

Interview Population: The group included DVR staff, partner organizations, individuals with disabilities, families, and businesses. Four hundred thirteen (413) people expressed interest in being interviewed for the assessment, and 163 attended the interview or listening sessions. These interviews were held both in person and virtually across Washington in August and September 2025. In-person interviews and listening sessions were held in various locations across the state to accommodate travel needs and ensure broad access.

Data collection: The interview format was consistent across all customers, regardless of their group, and followed a pre-determined question protocol. First, customers were asked questions to assess their personal and professional experience with or knowledge of DVR. Then, they responded to open-ended questions about their perceptions of the needs of individuals with disabilities in Washington, including youth and students, those requiring supported employment, and people from underserved and underrepresented groups. Finally, customers shared their views on how DVR could enhance its efforts to meet these needs, particularly in helping individuals with disabilities find and keep employment.

Efforts to ensure respondent anonymity: The interviewers did not share names or other identifiable information with anyone. Customers were informed of their rights and told that all results would be reported anonymously. All collected data were combined with other responses before reporting the results.

Data analysis: The interviewers took notes and, when the environment and setup permitted, used Zoom AI companion to record conversations for a complete transcription of the discussions. The notes were analyzed by SDSU researchers using a thematic analysis approach. As themes or concerns emerged, the SDSU team compiled these responses to highlight common themes in the report. To be recognized as a recurring theme, it had to appear at least three times, across groups, when it related to the study's diverse populations.

Surveys

Instruments: The project team created the instruments used for electronic surveys of individuals with disabilities and families, community partners, DVR staff, and businesses. The DVR reviewed and revised these surveys before they were disseminated.

Survey Population: Individuals eligible for this survey are described as people with disabilities who are potential, current, or former customers of DVR. Community partners include representatives from organizations that provide, coordinate, or advocate for individuals with disabilities in Washington state. DVR staff members refer to those employed by the organization as of August 2025. Businesses include employers with a valid email address registered with DVR during the survey period.

Data collection: Data were gathered from different populations via an online survey in Qualtrics. DVR and community programs serving individuals with disabilities widely distributed the electronic survey via e-mail invitations. DVR identified individuals with disabilities, partners, staff, and businesses, and invited them to participate through e-mail, letters and (with QR codes). These communications and surveys were provided in both English and Spanish. Once the survey was active, DVR sent an email invitation and link to the survey tools. About two weeks after the initial invitation was distributed, a follow-up electronic notice was sent as a "thank you" to those who completed the survey and a reminder to those who had not. Responses collected via the electronic survey were analyzed using Qualtrics software. Efforts to protect respondent anonymity: Customers were not asked to identify themselves when completing the survey. Additionally, the project team at SDSU combined responses to the electronic surveys before reporting the results, further concealing the identities of individual survey customers.

Accessibility: The electronic survey was created using an accessible, internet-based survey platform. Respondents were given the name and contact details of the Project Director at SDSU to request alternative survey formats. Additionally, the surveys were offered in both English and Spanish to gather responses from a broader range of individuals. Data analysis involved computing frequencies and descriptive statistics for survey items with fixed response options. The researchers examined open-ended survey questions that elicited narrative responses from respondents to identify themes or concepts consistently expressed.

Number of completed surveys: A total of 1,226 valid survey responses were submitted across all groups. A survey was considered valid if an individual completed it, even if they did not answer all the questions. If an individual started and did not complete the study, it was considered invalid. Measuring the survey return rate is challenging. Many of the email notices and invitations to take the survey may have originated from forwarded emails. The research team was not provided with the complete list of invited individual respondents to ensure data privacy and confidentiality were maintained throughout the process.

One thousand three hundred eighty-nine individuals participated in this CSNA process (see Table 1.a). The project team is confident that the information gathered accurately and thoroughly captures the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in Washington. It should be noted that the findings in Section VIII on the needs of businesses in recruiting, hiring, accommodating, and retaining employees with disabilities and impairments should not be generalized to the population of companies and employers in Washington, as the sample size of 12 businesses is not ideal for generalizable findings. Despite significant efforts to increase business engagement, this population has historically been challenging to reach.

Table 1a: Total CSNA Engagement

Population	Survey	Listening Sessions or Interviews	Total
Individuals with Disabilities	1032	82	1114
Partner Agencies & CRPs	126	71	197
DVR Staff	56	10	66
Businesses	12	0	12
	1226	163	1389

Analysis and Triangulation of Data

The project team's researchers analyzed data from surveys, interviews, and Listening Sessions. They identified common themes related to the needs of individuals with disabilities across all data sources. They compared them to validate the existence of needs, especially as they pertained to the target populations of this assessment. In some instances, DVR provided additional data to the SDSU project team, and whenever possible, the data was included in the analysis.

Dissemination Plans

The CSNA report is delivered to DVR and the State’s Rehabilitation Council. We recommend that DVR publish the report on its website for public access. The SDSU team will present the findings at the SRC meeting, where the public can provide comments and feedback directly to the DVR on potential ways to use this data effectively to meet the employment needs of individuals with disabilities.

Study Limitations

Every research effort has limitations that affect the value of the data. It is essential to highlight the main issues that affect the extent to which the findings of the needs assessment can be generalized to larger groups. Bias in choosing customers is built into the methods used to gather data. The results show only the responses of those who could be reached and decided to participate. Respondents' information may only partially reflect the broader opinions or concerns of all potential stakeholders. For example, consumer data might reflect only the needs of those already receiving services, leaving out individuals who are not currently served. Although

efforts were made to collect input from various stakeholders in the vocational rehabilitation process, it would be unwise to assume that those involved in the listening sessions and key informant interviews make up a fully representative sample of all potential stakeholders in Washington.

Section I: Overall Agency Performance

The first section of the CSNA discusses the overall performance of DVR. This refers to how effectively DVR fulfills its mission of helping people with disabilities gain independence and employment. It also examines how effectively DVR manages the processes to move customers through the various stages of rehabilitation, how closely it adheres to the timelines specified in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Title IV of WIOA, and its own established policies and procedures. Additionally, overall performance includes how successfully DVR meets its standard performance measures and the quantity and quality of employment outcomes its customers achieve.

Overall, one key area to observe in the CSNA process is the DVR's performance on key WIOA indicators. Still, these data points should always be viewed in the context of the other findings articulated in this report. Over the last three years, improvement in key metrics can be observed (see Table 1):

Table 1: Three-Year Span - Performance

Performance Data Elements	2022	2023	2024
Percent of female participants	42.37%	41.52%	40.53%
Percent of male participants	57.63%	57.23%	55.95%
Percent Not Disclosed	0%	1%	1.95%
Employment rate at exit – females	51.01%	46.72%	40.45%
Employment rate at exit – males	54.38%	49.62%	41.25%
Employment rate at exit – not disclosed	N/A	60%	23.08%
Median earnings (rehabilitated) – females	\$3,830	\$3,738	\$4,295
Median earnings (rehabilitated) – males	\$3,936	\$3,740	\$4,316
Avg. cost of cases closed rehabilitated – females	\$8,353	\$7,561	\$9,090
Avg. cost of cases closed rehabilitated – males	\$7,206	\$7,751	\$8,602

*Source: DVR Direct Case Data Analysis

Employment Outcomes Decline Across All Groups

Over the past three years, DVR has seen a decline in employment rates at exit across all genders. Several factors may be associated with these declines, including a slower labor-market recovery for people with disabilities, increased case complexity, staffing capacity issues, and delays in providing services. During this same period, the employment rate for people with disabilities nationwide has risen by small percentages and has recently shown little movement.

Median Earnings Improve Despite Declining Employment

In contrast, while employment rates have decreased in Washington, the median earnings for rehabilitated participants increased for both genders in 2024. Even with fewer participants gaining employment, those who did were placed in higher-paying or more stable jobs. This may indicate better job matching or greater industry

diversification among successfully rehabilitated cases. It may also indicate the availability of employment opportunities with fewer hours and wages that align with labor market standards.

Average Cost per Rehabilitated Case Increases

However, while earnings have increased, the average cost per case has risen between 2023 and 2024. This should be further examined with DVR counselors to understand the nuances that might be contributing to higher costs. Since DVR reportedly serves individuals with greater needs, this increase may reflect a need for more intensive services. Although cost growth is anticipated, the data highlights the importance of efficiency analyses to balance investments with employment outcomes, especially given the decline in employment rates.

Survey Results and Findings: Structure

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

1. *Data about the section in question, including observations based on the data*
2. *Summaries of all survey data collected*
3. *Recurring themes that emerged during the listening sessions*
4. *Recommendations to address the findings in each area of the assessment.*

Section I: Survey Results

Individual Survey: Respondent Demographics

Age of Respondents

Individual survey respondents were asked to identify their age. A total of 841 respondents indicated their age. The most significant percentage of respondents was in the 25-64 age range (73.9%), followed by those under 25 (20.7%). Table 2 summarizes the respondents' ages.

Table 2: *Individual Survey: Age of Respondents*

Age Range of Respondents	Number	Percent
25-64	621	73.8%
under 25	174	20.7%
65 and over	46	5.5%
Total	841	100.0%

Gender

Respondents were also asked to specify their gender. A total of 842 respondents answered this question. The majority (92.2%, n = 776) identified as either male or female. Twenty respondents chose not to disclose their gender. Table 3 presents the survey results related to the gender question.

Table 3: *Individual Survey: Gender*

Gender	Number	Percent
Female	414	49.2%
Male	362	43.0%

Gender	Number	Percent
Non-binary	30	3.6%
Prefer not to say	20	2.4%
Transgender	9	1.1%
Genderqueer	5	0.6%
Gender not listed	2	0.2%
Total	842	100.0%

As a point of comparison, looking at the DVR's current census, there are some differences between those receiving services and those who responded to the survey (see Table 4 below). There is a higher representation of females in the survey responses (9%), and those who identified with a gender other than the binary male/female (8%).

Table 4: *VR Participants and Washington Residents by Gender*

VR Participants and Washington Residents by Gender		
	DVR Participants	WA Residents with a Disability
Male	56.69%	49.45%
Female	40.93%	50.55%
Non-Binary*	1.28%	*
Other/Does Not Want to Identify*	1.11%	*
Total	100%	100%

*Source: DVR Direct Case Data Analysis

Region of Residence

Respondents were asked to identify the local region where they live to determine which DVR service region provides their vocational rehabilitation services and understand regional nuances. The results show that about 47% of respondents live in Region 2, while less than 19% live in Region 1. Table 5 presents the survey results.

Table 5: *Individual Survey: Region of Residence*

Region of Residence	Number	Percent
Region 2: Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	353	47.1%
Region 3: Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum	258	34.4%
Region 1: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima	137	18.3%
Total	748	99.9%

Individual Survey: Specific Disability Types

Specific Disabilities

Individual survey respondents received a checklist and were asked to identify their disabilities if they had more than one. A total of 756 people reported having a disability. The most cited disability was mental health, with a 13.4% difference from autism spectrum disorder, the second most cited disability. Comments for the "other" option included various disabilities: ADHD, anxiety, amputee, apraxia, cancer, cerebral palsy, blindness,

autoimmune disorder, epilepsy, executive function impairment, Sjogren’s Syndrome, kidney failure, learning disability, scoliosis, sciatica, sensory issues, missing chromosome, back pain, and tinnitus. Table 6 presents the survey results for this question. The data reflecting the high prevalence of those reporting mental health disabilities, while not a positive factor, does support DVR’s intuition to explore the needs of this population specifically in this CSNA.

Table 6: Individual Survey: Specific Disabilities

Specific Disabilities	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Mental Health	331	43.8%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	230	30.4%
Physical	227	30.0%
Developmental Disability (DD)	220	29.1%
Intellectual Disability (ID)	189	25.0%
Other (please describe)	162	21.4%
Mobility	133	17.6%
Communication	130	17.2%
Traumatic Brain Injury	86	11.4%
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	73	9.7%
Substance use disorder	34	4.5%
No impairment	12	1.6%
Deaf-Blind	9	1.2%
Total	1,836	

Individual Survey: Association with DVR

Participants who answered the survey were asked two questions about their connection to DVR. One question requested them to identify the statement that best represented their current customer status, and the other asked how long they have been receiving support or services from DVR.

Customer Status

Nine hundred fourteen individuals responded to the question regarding their customer status. A large majority of respondents (70.1%, n = 641) reported being current DVR customers. Fifty-four individuals who selected the “other” option and provided a narrative response stated that they were past customers, parents of customers, or awaiting eligibility. The responses to this question appear in Table 7.

Table 7: Individual Survey: Customer Association with DVR

Customer Association with DVR	Number	Percent
I am a current customer of DVR	641	70.1%
I am a previous customer of DVR. My case has been closed	170	18.6%
Other (please describe)	60	6.6%
I have never used the services of DVR	33	3.6%
I am not familiar with DVR	10	1.1%
Total	914	100.0%

Length of Time Received DVR Support or Services

The survey asked respondents to identify the statement that best described the length of time they have received DVR support or services. Although approximately 32.5% of respondents reported receiving support or services from DVR for less than a year, roughly 34% of the 862 respondents reported receiving support or services from DVR for 2 to 5 years. The responses to this question are shown in Table 8.

Table 8: *Individual Survey: Length of Time Received DVR Support or Services*

Length of Time Received DVR Support or Services	Number	Percent
2-5 years	294	34.1%
Less than 1 year	280	32.5%
1 year	184	21.3%
10 years or greater	59	6.8%
6-9 years	45	5.2%
Total	862	100.0%

Individual Survey: Relationship with Counselor

Meeting Location

When asked where they usually meet with their counselor, nearly half (49.3%) of the respondents said they meet at the DVR office, and less than 29% of the 677 respondents reported meeting with their counselor via video conference. Table 9 summarizes the meeting locations reported by respondents.

Table 9: *Individual Survey: Meeting Location*

Counselor Meeting Location	Number	Percent
I go to the DVR office	334	49.3%
We meet remotely by video conference (e.g., Zoom, Teams, FaceTime)	195	28.8%
We meet remotely by phone	82	12.1%
I don't have a DVR counselor	45	6.6%
In my community/school	21	3.1%
Total	677	100.0%

Number of DVR Counselors

A separate question asked respondents to indicate how many counselors they have had – 43% of the 682 respondents reported having one counselor, and 6.6% reported having more than four counselors. Table 10 includes the survey results.

Table 10: *Individual Survey: Number of DVR Counselors*

Number of DVR Counselors	Number	Percent
1	293	43.0%
2	182	26.7%
3	108	15.8%
More than 4	45	6.6%
4	39	5.7%
I have never had a DVR counselor	15	2.2%

Number of DVR Counselors	Number	Percent
Total	682	100%

Ability to Reach Counselor

Individual survey respondents were given a five-point scale (ranging from "always" to "never") and asked to indicate how often they could reach their counselor when needed. Approximately 40% of respondents reported being able to contact their counselor, although not immediately. Conversely, 13.9% of respondents found it very difficult to reach their counselor. The responses to this question are shown in Table 11.

Table 11: *Individual Survey: Ability to Reach Counselor*

Ability to Reach Counselor	Number	Percent
Somewhat easy: I usually get access to my counselor, but not always right away	267	40.2%
Very easy: I can get access to my counselor quickly and without barriers	196	29.5%
Somewhat difficult: I can sometimes get access to my counselor, but it's not easy	109	16.4%
Very difficult: I can rarely or never get access to my counselor when I need it	92	13.9%
Total	664	100.0%

Ability to Get Along with Counselor

Respondents were given another five-point scale (ranging from "very well" to "not at all") and asked to rate their ability to get along with their counselor. However, nearly 8% of respondents preferred not to answer; over 64% selected "very well" in response to the question. The response results are shown in Table 12.

Table 12: *Individual Survey: Getting Along with Counselor*

Getting Along with Counselor	Number	Percent
Very Well – We get along great; there's mutual respect and no major issues.	425	64.4%
Mostly – We get along well most of the time, with only a few issues.	112	17.0%
Prefer not to say	51	7.7%
Sometimes – We get along occasionally, but there are some problems.	43	6.5%
Not at All – We don't get along at all; there's frequent conflict or discomfort.	29	4.4%
Total	660	100.0%

Individual Survey: Effectiveness of DVR Services Delivered Remotely

Respondents who used remote services were asked to rate their effectiveness. Two hundred seventy-one respondents answered the follow-up question. A 13.7% gap and a difference of 37 respondents separate the "effective" and "somewhat effective" ratings for DVR's remote services. Table 13 shows the effectiveness ratings for the remote services.

Table 13: *Individual Survey: Effectiveness of Remote Services*

Effectiveness Remote Services	Number	Percent
Effective – It worked well and did what it was supposed to do.	107	39.5%
Somewhat Effective – It worked a little, but not very well.	70	25.8%
Highly Effective – It worked very well and even better than expected.	52	19.2%

Effectiveness Remote Services	Number	Percent
Not Effective – It didn’t work at all or made no difference.	42	15.5%
Total	271	100.0%

Community Partner Survey Results

Partner Survey: Respondent Demographics

Partner survey respondents were asked three questions to gather demographic information about their organizations, including the regions and customer populations they serve.

Organizational Classification

The first survey question in this block asked partners to classify their organization. All organization categories were represented in the survey except for medical or health providers and veterans. About 50% of respondents identified their organization as “community rehabilitation program/provider of VR services.” Four organizational types appeared in the narrative comments: behavioral health and developmental disability, local workforce board, primary school, and tribal government. Table 14 displays the kinds of organizations reported by partner respondents.

Table 14: *Partner Survey: Organizational Classification*

Classify Organization	Number	Percent
Community Rehabilitation Program/Provider of VR Services	52	50.5%
Individual Service Provider	14	13.6%
Other Federal, State, or Local Government Entity	10	9.7%
Tribal VR Agency	6	5.8%
Developmental Disability Organization	5	4.9%
Other Public or Private Organization	5	4.9%
Other (please describe)	4	3.9%
Postsecondary School	3	2.9%
Secondary School	2	1.9%
Behavioral or Mental Health Organization	1	1.0%
Client Advocacy Organization	1	1.0%
Medical or Health Provider	0	0.0%
Veteran's Organization	0	0.0%
Total	103	100.0%

Regions Served

Partners were provided a list and asked to identify the part of the State their organization serves. There was no limit to the number of areas a partner could choose. A total of 103 respondents answered the question. The results suggest that partner agencies are serving the entire state, with almost equal numbers and percentages of respondents across regions. Table 15 includes this information.

Table 15: Partner Survey: Regions Served

Region Served	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Region 1: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima	47	45.6%
Region 3: Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum	41	39.8%
Region 2: Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	39	37.9%
Total	127	

Customer Populations Served

Partners were given a list and asked to identify the customer populations with which they worked regularly. There were no limitations on the number of customer populations a partner respondent could choose. A numeric difference of nine partners (n=9) and a 9-point difference exist between the customer populations of “individuals with autism spectrum disorder” (85%, n=85 partners) and “individuals with mental or behavioral health disorders” (76%, n=76 partners) in response to the question. Seventy to seventy-four percent of partners serve individuals who access supported employment and transition-age youth. The customer population of “individuals served by WorkSource” was identified least frequently by partners. Table 16 details the results.

Table 16: Partner Survey: Customer Populations Served

Customer Populations	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Individuals with autism spectrum disorder	85	85.0%
Individuals with mental or behavioral health disabilities	76	76.0%
Individuals who access supported employment	74	74.0%
Transition-age youth (14-24)	70	70.0%
Individuals with the most significant disabilities	69	69.0%
Individuals from unserved or underserved populations	66	66.0%
Individuals who are racial or ethnic minorities	62	62.0%
Individuals who are deaf	37	37.0%
American Indian or Alaska Native communities	35	35.0%
Individuals who are blind	33	33.0%
Veterans	22	22.0%
Individuals served by WorkSource WA - American Job Center (formerly referred to as One-Stops or Career Centers)	10	10.0%
Other (please describe)	4	4.0%
Total	643	

Staff Survey Results

Staff Survey: Respondent Demographics

Job Classification

The first survey question asked staff to identify their job classification. Slightly over 35% of staff respondents identified as vocational rehabilitation counselors. Table 17 details the job titles and selections made by the staff respondents.

Table 17: Staff Survey: Job Classification

Job Classification	Number	Percent
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor	19	35.2%
Rehab Tech	11	20.4%
Program Manager	6	11.1%
Regional Transition Consultant	5	9.3%
Office Administrator	3	5.6%
Other Administration	3	5.6%
Executive Leadership Team	2	3.7%
Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor	2	3.7%
Regional Administrator and Deputy Regional Administrator	2	3.7%
Business Specialist	1	1.9%
Assistive Technology and Assessment Practitioner	0	0.0%
Total	54	100.0%

Years in Current Role

The second survey question asked staff to specify how many years they had held their current position at DVR. The results in Table 18 show that most staff members are relatively new to their roles, with less than one year to up to three years in their current positions (56.6%).

Table 18: Staff Survey: Years in Current Role

Years in Current Job	Number	Percent
1-3 years	20	37.7%
Less than one year	10	18.9%
4-6 years	10	18.9%
7-10 years	6	11.3%
11-20 years	6	11.3%
21+ years	1	1.9%
Total	53	100.0%

Regions Served

The third survey question asked staff respondents to identify the region they serve. There was no limit to the number of response options a respondent could select. A total of 42 staff responded to this survey item. Staff chose Region 1 the fewest times in response to the question. Table 19 provides the details.

Table 19: Staff Survey: Region Served

Region Served	Number	Percent
Region 3: Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum, Northeast	16	38.1%
Region 2: Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	15	35.7%
Region 1: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima	11	26.2%
Total	42	100.0%

Staff Survey: Services that DVR is Most Effective in Providing**Services DVR is Most Effective in Providing**

Respondents were provided a list of 18 items related to the organization’s overall performance and asked to identify the services that DVR delivers most effectively to customers, either directly or through community partners. There was no limit to the number of items a staff respondent could choose. A total of 35 staff members responded to the question. Roughly 77% of staff cited “benefit planning assistance,” and over 74% cited “job training services” as the services DVR provides most effectively to customers. The open-ended category “other” was selected by two respondents and the items mentioned are quoted:

- “Counseling and guidance”
- “Nothing is immediate. The process to be in plan and eligible to receive services can take 3 to 5 months.”

Table 20 lists the services, the number of times each item was selected, and the percentage of respondents who answered the question.

Table 20: Staff Survey: Services DVR is Most Effective in Providing

Services DVR Most Effective in Providing	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Benefit planning assistance	27	77.1%
Job training services (TWE, Job Coaching, OJT, etc.)	26	74.3%
Job development services	25	71.4%
Assistive technology	23	65.7%
Other transportation assistance	20	57.1%
Other education services	15	42.9%
Career Ladder/Pathways counseling	14	40.0%
STEM skills training	7	20.0%
Vehicle modification assistance	6	17.1%
Mental health treatment	5	14.3%
Financial literacy training	4	11.4%
Income assistance	2	5.7%
Medical treatment	2	5.7%
Other (please describe)	2	5.7%

Services DVR Most Effective in Providing	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Substance use treatment	1	2.9%
Personal care attendants	0	0.0%
Health insurance	0	0.0%
Housing	0	0.0%
Total	179	

Effectiveness of DVR Services

In addition to identifying the services for which DVR is most effective, staff survey respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of these services on a four-point Likert scale (ranging from “very effective” to “not effective”). A total of 35 staff answered the question. Sixty percent of staff survey respondents indicated that DVR services are mostly effective. Conversely, roughly 17% cited that DVR services help a little. Table 21 details the staff’s responses to the question.

Table 21: Staff Survey: Effectiveness Rating – DVR Services

Effectiveness Rating - DVR Services	Number	Percent
Mostly Effective – Services help a lot	21	60.0%
Very Effective – Services fully meet the need	7	20.0%
Somewhat Effective – Services help a little	6	17.1%
Not Effective – Services do not help at all	1	2.9%
Total	35	100.0%

Staff Survey: Age Populations DVR Serves

Service Across Age Groups

Staff were asked, “In your opinion, how effective is DVR in serving individuals across age groups?” Over 74% (n = 26) of the 35 staff members who responded to the question indicated that DVR services are primarily effective in helping most age groups. Table 22 summarizes the staff responses to the question.

Table 22: Staff Survey: Service Across Age Groups

Service Across Age Groups	Number	Percent
Mostly Effective – Services help most age groups	26	74.3%
Somewhat Effective – Services help some age groups, but not others	5	14.3%
Very Effective – Services meet the needs of all age groups well	3	8.6%
Not Effective – Services do not meet the needs of any age group	1	2.9%
Total	35	100.0%

DVR: Most Successful Age Cohort

The final survey question on age asked staff respondents to select the age group they believed DVR served best. A total of 35 staff answered the question. Three of the 35 respondents cited Gen X (ages 45-60), and staff did not select “boomers” in response to the question. Table 23 details the age groups that DVR serves the best.

Table 23: Staff Survey: Age DVR Serves Best

Age Group DVR Serves Best	Number	Percent
Millennials: Entire generation fits (29–44)	18	51.4%
Gen Z: 16–28-year-olds (only part of Gen Z)	14	40.0%
Gen X: Entire generation fits (45–60)	3	8.6%
Boomers: Mostly aged out (Boomers are 61–79 in 2025, so only a small portion under 65)	0	0.0%
Total	35	100.0%

Staff Survey: Top Three Changes that Enable Staff to Better Serve Customers

Staff were presented with a list of 17 options and asked to identify the top 3 changes that would enable them to assist customers better. A total of 33 staff members responded to this question. The top two changes identified by staff were smaller caseloads and better data management tools. An equal number of respondents cited more streamlined processes and more community-based providers for specific services as the third top change. Table 24 presents staff responses, identifying the top three changes that would enable them to serve DVR customers better. The three narrative responses received are quoted:

- *“A referral process or “pre-application” intake system”*
- *“Better case noting in DVR”*
- *“More CRPs that are trained and experienced in helping customers reach high-level career jobs. Our CRPs are great at getting people entry-level minimum-wage jobs, but they have no clue how to help someone who is highly educated or experienced but needs support in getting a career-level job. This is where business specialists can be helpful, but sometimes these customers still need more support than they can provide.”*

Table 24: Staff Survey: Top Three Changes that Enable Staff to Better Serve Customers

Top Three Changes Better Serve Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Smaller caseload	19	57.6%
Better data management tools	15	45.5%
More streamlined processes	11	33.3%
More community-based service providers for specific services	11	33.3%
More effective community-based service providers	6	18.2%
More administrative support	5	15.2%
Accountability for poor performance by service providers	5	15.2%
Increased collaboration with other workforce partners including WorkSource	5	15.2%
Improved business partnerships	4	12.1%
Additional training	3	9.1%
Other (please describe)	3	9.1%
Increased outreach to customers	3	9.1%
Incentives for high performing service providers	3	9.1%
Increased options for technology use to communicate with customers	2	6.1%

Top Three Changes Better Serve Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Better assessment tools	1	3.0%
More supervisor support	1	3.0%
Total	97	

Section I: Survey Findings Summary

The overall survey findings on agency performance provide a rich data set and warrant full consideration. A summary of the findings includes:

Age Distribution

- Not surprisingly, 74% of respondents (n=621/841) fall within the 25–64 age range, indicating DVR’s reach into the core working-age population. Furthermore, 20.7% (n=174) are under 25, a smaller share than expected for the required Pre-ETS focus, yet still potentially aligned with the required 15% expenditure goal in this domain. Finally, 5.5% (n=46) are 65+, suggesting low engagement among older adults and potential outreach gaps, yet still relatively high compared with national data.

Gender Distribution

- Female 49.2% (n=414) slightly exceeds Male 43% (n=362), showing near parity, but respondent rates did not match the population served by DVR, nor the total state population statistics.
- Other respondents by gender identification included: Nonbinary 3.6%, Transgender 1.1%, Genderqueer 0.6%, and ‘Not listed’ 0.2%—indicating modest gender-diverse representation. 2.4% prefer not to say, reinforcing the importance of inclusive and confidential survey practices.

Geographic Considerations

- Of those involved in the survey, 47.1% live in Region 2 (King, Snohomish, etc.), which aligns with urban density and service presence, while 34.4% live in Region 3 and only 18.3% in Region 1. This imbalance suggests potential disparities in outreach or access to technology to complete the survey.

Complex and Co-Occurring Needs

- Mental health was the most cited (43.8%), followed by Autism Spectrum (30.4%), Physical (30.0%), Developmental (29.1%), and Intellectual (25.0%). Further, data on respondents demonstrate high comorbidity and the need for integrated behavioral health and employment supports. This aligns with DVR’s interest in understanding the needs of this population, and Section IV (i.e., the needs of those with behavioral health) should be considered further.
- Populations with less representation in the responses included those with the following disability categories: Mobility (17.6%), Communication (17.2%), TBI (11.4%), and SUD (4.5%), which are smaller but critical service areas. However, it is essential to recognize ‘Other’ (21.4%) responses. These included ADHD, anxiety, epilepsy, autoimmune conditions, etc., showing DVR’s broad disability base, but also a variance in how people view their own disability identity and classification.

Counselor Access and Relationship Quality

- Overall, responses to the interaction with counselors were positive. Data on meeting location indicates that people prefer: 49.3% in-person, 29% video, 12% phone, and 40% remote options.
- There is relative continuity of counselors, which is positive in a field with high turnover: 43% had one counselor, 26.7% had two, and 22% had three or more. This indicates turnover in key counselor roles, which aligns with national trends. Further, 70% rated access to the counselors easy or somewhat easy, while 13.9% found it very difficult.
- Respondents rate the overall quality of relationships as 64% very well and 17% mostly well, indicating a generally positive response.

Remote Service as Promising Practice

- Among 271 respondents, 39.5% rated remote services as effective, 19.2% as highly effective, and 25.8% as somewhat effective; 15.5% found remote services ineffective—suggesting moderate success and potential for improvement.

Themes of Success

- High levels of client satisfaction and positive counselor–client relationships (over 80% report getting along well with counselors).
- Effective use of benefit planning assistance, job development, job training, and assistive technology.
- Staff commitment and professionalism despite workload challenges; strong alignment with DVR’s mission.
- Increasing use of remote services—viewed as generally effective and expanding access statewide.

Themes of Improvement

- Need for smaller caseloads, more streamlined processes, and improved data management systems.
- Delays in eligibility determination and plan development processes are affecting the timeliness of service delivery.
- Gaps in communication and follow-up between counselors and customers.
- Service reach and inconsistent quality among community-based providers.

Section I: Listening Session Findings

While the survey responses provide a rich and robust picture of people’s perceptions of Washington DVR’s overall agency performance, the listening session findings offer additional insight and sometimes context for what the surveys highlight. Broad themes emerged across all participants in the listening sessions (i.e., DVR customers, families, DVR staff, community partners, and businesses).

What we heard...

Benefits Cliff and Financial Issues

- People need to understand public benefits. As seen nationwide, there is significant fear of losing benefits (Medicaid, EBT/food assistance) upon gaining employment. Specifically in Washington, the requirement

to work 20 hours a week to keep EBT benefits creates a challenge for customers, and this fear has translated into concerns about what the new federal policy may mean for other public benefits.

Housing Instability

- Housing is a massive barrier, with many clients facing homelessness or housing insecurity. Customers know that DVR does not provide housing services and stated that this creates a foundational obstacle to employment success. While housing is not the mission, many customers expressed a desire to be better connected to resources.

Discrimination and Job Mismatch

- Clients encounter bias and an "empathy gap" from employers. Despite having high skills, clients are often repeatedly offered only low-wage or physically demanding roles. Finding skilled jobs remains particularly challenging. Others pointed out that job matching doesn't account for professional experience or career trajectories, and the positions they were offered didn't match their skill level.
- Other members commented that the limited remote/hybrid options are for those with health needs requiring flexibility. Additional complexity arises when considering the scarcity of sustainable part-time positions; financial urgency conflicts with slow placement timelines, and wages are often perceived as insufficient to replace disability benefits.

Technology and Information Gap

- As everything moves online, maintaining full functionality while keeping up with the rapid pace of technological change is challenging. Information about services is limited, and many clients are unaware of available services unless they take the initiative.

Work Environment and Legal Barriers

- Clients with felony histories face barriers. Small businesses (with fewer than 15 employees) often fail to comply with labor protections and provide reasonable accommodations.

Mental Health and Neurodivergence

- There is a lack of recognition and support for individuals with social and behavioral needs (e.g., autism), and proper support for taking mental health days is lacking in some workplaces

Staffing and Caseloads

- Persistent staffing shortages and counselor turnover are among the most significant issues facing the state. Many customers described long delays between initial contact and service delivery, often waiting several months for appointments or device approvals.
- Customers reported facing a "waiting game," with waits ranging from six months to over a year for services, appointments, or devices (e.g., glasses took 6 months to be delivered). Intake appointments can take up to five months to schedule.
- Caseloads frequently exceed 150–180 customers per counselor, limiting follow-through and individualized planning. Customers reported 'seeing multiple counselors and never the same one twice leading to gaps in support and inconsistent service quality.

- Staff transitions result in the loss of institutional knowledge and contribute to uneven implementation of policies and procedures across DVR offices.

Communication and Navigation

- Customers consistently emphasized communication as a defining factor in the quality of their experience. When counselors responded promptly and explained next steps, customers felt valued and hopeful; when responses were delayed or unclear, they felt 'lost in the system.'
- Many customers waited 1 to 2 weeks for email replies or never received confirmation that their messages had been received—several described being confused about how to close a case or request plan updates.
- The complexity of DVR’s processes left many customers unsure of how to initiate or advance services. They expressed the need for a straightforward roadmap outlining timelines, counselor responsibilities, and escalation procedures.

Program Structure and Service Consistency

- Stakeholders acknowledged DVR’s commitment to its mission but noted significant variation in service delivery across offices and counselors.
- Assessing functional limitations and using other assessments (e.g., the WOWI) can sometimes "put people in a box" and may not accurately reflect a client's potential.
- Inconsistent application of policies—such as funding approvals, service coverage, and vendor referrals—contributes to perceptions of inequity and unpredictability.
- Customers in rural areas reported experiencing longer delays in authorizations and fewer service options than their urban counterparts.

Client Experience and Perceptions

- Customers repeatedly praised individual counselors who 'went above and beyond,' demonstrating genuine dedication and empathy.
- However, many also felt pressure to pursue job goals developed without sufficient collaboration, describing a 'one-size-fits-all' approach that did not reflect their abilities or aspirations.
- Customers expressed frustration at feeling rushed through processes designed more for administrative compliance than for personalized employment outcomes.

Transportation

- You can have the perfect job match, but if someone cannot get there reliably, it will not work. Transportation barriers are especially acute in rural areas and for people working non-traditional hours.

In Their Own Words
<i>“DVR has some really committed staff, but it’s inconsistent — some counselors go above and beyond while others don’t return calls for months.”</i>
<i>“There are great individual counselors, but the system as a whole doesn’t move fast enough to meet people where they are.”</i>
<i>“It feels like DVR is more focused on the process than on progress — the paperwork outweighs the people.”</i>

In Their Own Words
<i>"I've been waiting nearly a year for job placement support; every time I reach out, I'm told they're short-staffed."</i>
<i>"People lose hope because there's no communication. DVR needs to keep clients informed even when there's no progress."</i>
<i>"I can't work in a typical office; most roles still demand in-person work."</i>
<i>"Part-time jobs are rare; full-time requirements exclude many."</i>
<i>"Recommendations were inappropriate for my high-tech career."</i>
<i>"I need a job now to pay for community college."</i>
<i>"Finding a livable wage that allows leaving benefits is a huge barrier."</i>
<i>"Speed quotas disqualify roles despite assistive tech."</i>
<i>"I'm not sure what services exist; I may be missing help I qualify for."</i>
<i>"Coaching in my plan never materialized during the pandemic."</i>
<i>"DVR funded home office gear, books, and printing - huge help."</i>
<i>"Inconsistent childcare makes attending appointments and jobs difficult."</i>
<i>"DVR cannot offer housing, but there is a huge gap between the homeless and the housed."</i>
<i>"New database causes more work and headaches for staff and customers."</i>
<i>"I can't work in a typical office; most roles still demand in-person work."</i>
<i>"Part-time jobs are rare; full-time requirements exclude many."</i>
<i>"Recommendations were inappropriate for my high-tech career."</i>
<i>"I need a job now to pay for community college."</i>
<i>"Finding a livable wage that allows leaving benefits is a huge barrier."</i>
<i>"Speed quotas disqualify roles despite assistive tech."</i>
<i>"Emails can take a week or two; customers worry messages are lost."</i>
<i>"Please acknowledge emails and give a realistic timeframe for replies."</i>
<i>"After the first meeting, I didn't know what I was supposed to do next."</i>
<i>"The case moved only after I repeatedly called; nothing happened on its own."</i>
<i>"I didn't know how to tell DVR I no longer needed services."</i>
<i>"School changes weren't captured because plans weren't updated."</i>
<i>"Shift times start early/late; buses don't run when I need them."</i>
<i>"Transit pass and travel support were very helpful."</i>
<i>"I need help learning how to get a driver's license to reach jobs."</i>
<i>"Living outside town limits significantly affects service access."</i>
<i>"Reliable phone/internet would cut down travel to appointments."</i>

Section I: Recommendations

Overall, several key aspects should be considered as Washington DVR proceeds with planning and implementing improvement strategies.

General Service Improvements

1. Launch a **multimedia public awareness campaign** about DVR services.
2. Expand **staff development programs** emphasizing person-centered practices and communication skills.

3. Hire or designate staff for **employer engagement** and enhance employer recognition efforts in partnership with WorkSource.
4. Establish an **interagency resource hub** for housing, mental health, and substance use services.
5. Streamline intake and service delivery processes to reduce administrative delays.
6. Establish a continuous-quality-improvement (CQI) process using **quarterly performance dashboards and customer-feedback loops** to demonstrate compliance with RSA PD-23-03.
7. Review and implement **standardized service-delivery protocols** to ensure equitable access and consistent quality across all DVR offices statewide.

Barriers to Individuals with Disabilities Finding Employment

1. Incorporate **comprehensive, mandatory benefits advisement** early in the DVR process to address benefits concerns and address the myths that may hinder employment. This should be accompanied by staff training to ensure they are skilled as work incentive practitioners.
2. **Formalize partnerships with housing authorities** to stabilize clients facing homelessness or instability.
3. **Enhance employer education** efforts to improve awareness of reasonable accommodations and disability inclusion.
4. Provide ongoing **digital literacy and technology training** to enhance clients' job-readiness.
5. Introduce **several improvement strategies to support counselor performance**, including increasing counselor staffing, establishing caseload caps, and developing backfill plans to ensure timely service.
6. Implement **triage systems** and analyze counselor referral processes to improve client continuity.
7. Create **industry-specialist coaches** and rapid placement pathways for urgent financial needs.

Barriers to Access to Washington DVR Services

1. Review counselor staffing and policies to **reduce intake and service connection wait times**.
2. Implement consistent case management guidelines to **ensure service continuity**. Consider using technology tools to facilitate the case management process.
3. Develop **proactive communication policies** requiring counselors to inform clients of all available services.
4. **Provide easy-to-understand ‘DVR Navigation 101’** materials to help clients understand processes.
5. **Offer mobile and virtual DVR** services to increase accessibility for rural areas.
6. **Partner with transit agencies to improve transportation supports**, including passes and travel training.

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

Individual Survey Results

Individual Survey: Receipt of Social Security Benefits

Individual survey respondents were given a checklist and asked to indicate whether they received Social Security disability benefits. The total number of respondents who answered this question is 737. According to the table data, over one-third of the survey respondents do not receive Social Security benefits. Table 25

summarizes the responses to this question. Note that individuals were allowed to select multiple options in the series of items (e.g., in the case of an individual who received both SSI and SSDI).

Table 25: *Individual Survey: Customer Social Security Benefit Status*

Customer Social Security Benefit Status	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
I do not receive Social Security disability benefits	297	40.3%
I receive SSI (Supplemental Security Income. SSI is a means-tested benefit generally provided to individuals with little or no work history)	198	26.9%
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)	189	25.6%
I don't know if I receive Social Security disability benefits	43	5.8%
I have received benefits in the past, but no longer receive them	37	5.0%
I receive a check from the Social Security Administration every month, but I do not know which benefit I get	36	4.9%
Total	800	

Individual Survey: Finances and Money Management

The survey team included questions to assess respondents' financial management skills and the extent to which economic issues affect their independence. Each survey participant was asked four questions about finances and money management.

Financial Situation: Respondents were provided with a list of statements and asked to identify which ones describe their financial situation. A total of 620 respondents participated in answering this survey item. Note that more than half of the respondents selected two statements in the table. Table 26 presents the ratings for each statement.

Table 26: *Individual Survey: Financial Situation*

Financial Situation	Number	Percent of number of respondents
I am just getting by financially	366	59.0%
I am concerned the money I have, or will have, won't last	347	56.0%
Because of my money situation, I feel like I will never have the things I want in life	274	44.2%
Total	987	

Managing Money

Individual survey respondents were presented with a checklist of statements about money management and asked to indicate whether each item reflected how they manage their money. Although roughly 48% of respondents indicated they have monthly budgets in addition to checking accounts, the results suggest that about 90% of respondents need to invest money. Approximately 30% of the respondents expressed interest in learning more about managing their finances. Table 27 presents the number of times respondents selected each item and the corresponding percentage rates.

Table 27: Individual Survey: Managing Money

Managing Money	Number of times chosen	Percent of total number of respondents
I have a checking account	461	69.2%
I have a savings account	326	48.9%
I have a monthly budget	319	47.9%
I would like to learn more about managing my money	197	29.6%
I invest my money	69	10.4%
Total	1,372	

Money Left by the End of the Month

Respondents were asked: “How often do you have money left over at the end of each month?” Out of the 673 individuals who answered, a little more than one-quarter chose the rating “never,” while about one-quarter selected “rarely” and “sometimes.” Table 28 summarizes the details of the survey question.

Table 28: Individual Survey: Money Left by the End of the Month

Money Left at the End of the Month	Number	Percent
Never	179	26.6%
Rarely	172	25.6%
Sometimes	166	24.7%
Often	80	11.9%
Always	76	11.3%
Total	673	100.0%

Financial Control

In the final survey question on finances and money management, respondents were presented with a five-point Likert scale (from “no control” to “completely in control”) and asked how often they feel that finances influence their lives. Six hundred seventy respondents answered the question. Most chose “mostly in control,” while 11.8% selected “no control.” Table 29 provides this information.

Table 29: Individual Survey: Financial Control Life

Money Control Life	Number	Percent
Mostly in Control – Money has control over most aspects of my life.	284	42.4%
Some Control – Money has little control in my life	165	24.6%
Completely in Control – Money has complete control of my life and decisions.	142	21.2%
No Control – I don’t feel that money controls my life.	79	11.8%
Total	670	100.0%

Individual Survey: Barriers to Employment

Identifying Barriers to Getting a Job

Respondents were presented with a list of 19 potential barriers to obtaining a job and asked whether each item had been a barrier to their ability to secure a job. Three items on the list—employer concerns about my ability,

employers’ hesitation to hire people with disabilities, and lack of available jobs—were cited by over 43% of respondents. The rates range from 43.5% to 46.1% among the total respondents (n = 687) who answered the question. The three lowest-ranking barriers were limited English skills, substance use, and lack of childcare. Table 30 summarizes the barriers and their impact on getting a job.

Table 30: *Individual Survey: Identifying Barriers to Getting a Job*

Identify Barriers to Getting a Job	Times identified as a barrier	Percent of number of respondents
Employer concerns about my ability to do the job due to my disability	317	46.1%
Employers hesitant to hire individuals with disabilities	303	44.1%
Lack of available jobs	299	43.5%
Lack of job skills	272	39.6%
Lack of training	251	36.5%
Mental health concerns	216	31.4%
Lack of job search skills	181	26.3%
Lack of education	178	25.9%
Age	168	24.5%
Lack of reliable transportation	150	21.8%
Concern over loss of Social Security benefits due to working	113	16.4%
Lack of assistive technology	65	9.5%
Lack of housing	56	8.2%
Lack of reliable Internet access	53	7.7%
Criminal Record	43	6.3%
Lack of attendant care	38	5.5%
Limited English skills	29	4.2%
Substance use	18	2.6%
Lack of childcare	12	1.7%
Total	2,762	

Top Three Barriers to Getting or Keeping a Job

Subsequently, individual survey respondents were asked to identify their top three barriers to obtaining or maintaining employment. Six hundred sixty-eight individuals responded to this question. The top three barriers to securing or holding a job, as reported by individuals, are listed among the three most frequently cited causes in the question about barriers: employer concerns about my ability, lack of available jobs, and employers’ hesitation to hire individuals with disabilities. The two items with the lowest ranks, each with a response rate of less than 2%, were also the last two in the previous Table 31 (substance use; lack of childcare).

“Age” was not presented to survey respondents as an option in response to the question regarding top barriers, although it ranked 9th out of 19 on the “identify barrier” list. Table 31 presents the numeric counts and percentage rates for the items selected by individual survey respondents in response to the question.

Table 31: *Individual Survey: Top Three Barriers to Getting or Keeping a Job*

Top Three Barriers to Getting or Keeping a Job	Times identified as a barrier	Percent of number of respondents
Employer concerns about my ability to do the job due to my disability	238	35.6%
Lack of available jobs	235	35.2%
Employers hesitant to hire individuals with disabilities	224	33.5%
Lack of job skills	210	31.4%
Lack of training	184	27.5%
Mental health concerns	161	24.1%
Lack of education	121	18.1%
Lack of job search skills	109	16.3%
Lack of reliable transportation	88	13.2%
Concern over loss of Social Security benefits due to working	79	11.8%
Criminal Record	39	5.8%
Lack of assistive technology	39	5.8%
Lack of housing	32	4.8%
Limited English skills	17	2.5%
Lack of attendant care	16	2.4%
Lack of reliable Internet access	16	2.4%
Substance use	12	1.8%
Lack of childcare	12	1.8%

Other Barriers to Obtaining or Keeping a Job

Individuals were asked an open-ended question to identify any other barriers they faced in obtaining a job. Two hundred sixty-one individuals provided a narrative response. Content analysis of these responses revealed the following as “other barriers” preventing respondents from obtaining or maintaining employment: ageism; lack of a job coach; gaps in employment history; disability-related issues; discrimination from employers or coworkers; not being selected after interviews and not being offered interviews; DVR as a barrier; lack of accommodations; limited remote job opportunities; insufficient financial support for additional training or education; lack of experience; and absence of apprenticeships or internships.

Individual Survey: Barriers to Accessing DVR Services

Top Three Barriers to Accessing DVR

Respondents were presented with a list of 12 questions describing potential barriers to accessing DVR services and asked to identify the top three barriers. A total of 662 respondents answered the question. Although “difficulty reaching DVR staff,” “lack of information about available services,” and “difficulties scheduling meetings with my counselor” were the three most frequently cited barriers to accessing DVR services, slightly more than one-half of the respondents cited not having any barriers to accessing DVR services, which was the most selected response to the question. The least common barrier respondents reported was language barriers at 1.8%. Table 32 lists the barriers, along with the number of times each barrier was cited.

Table 32: *Individual Survey: Top Three Barriers to Accessing DVR Services*

Top Three Barriers to Accessing DVR Services	Times identified as a barrier	Percent of number of respondents
I have not had any barriers to accessing DVR services	340	51.4%
Difficulty reaching DVR staff	139	21.0%
Lack of information about available services	138	20.8%
Difficulties scheduling meetings with my counselor	119	18.0%
Other difficulties with DVR staff	110	16.6%
Lack of disability-related accommodations	68	10.3%
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)	52	7.9%
DVR's hours of operation	33	5.0%
Difficulties completing the DVR application	19	2.9%
Reliable internet access	19	2.9%
The DVR office is not on a public bus route	14	2.1%
Language barriers	12	1.8%
Total	1,063	

Other Challenges to Accessing DVR Services

Respondents were asked a yes/no question about whether there were any additional challenges or barriers not previously mentioned that made it difficult to access DVR services. Of the 613 responses received, 187 indicated “yes,” and 179 respondents provided a narrative reply. Content analysis of the narrative responses revealed that 118 respondents (63.1%, n = 187) detailed specific difficulties with DVR counselors and the DVR process that made accessing or receiving services challenging. Twenty-four responses cited personal and disability-related issues that prevented access to services. Eleven comments cited problems with community employment service providers. The remaining comments included a lack of state funds, the DVR office being too far from home, transportation issues, the need for training, waitlists, the need for accommodations, and a lack of knowledge about DVR and its services.

Individual Survey: Employment Goals

Current Employment Goal

Individual survey respondents were presented with a yes/no question asking them if they had an employment goal. Five hundred twenty out of six hundred eighty survey respondents indicated “yes” in response to the question.

Respondents who answered “yes” were asked an open-ended question to identify their current employment goal. A total of 467 individuals described their goal in a narrative. Over 50% of these comments did not specify a particular career. However, they included comments such as, but not limited to: “get a job,” “work part-time,” “full-time employment with benefits,” “go to college and get a career,” and “income.” Specific jobs mentioned in the comments included: grocery store clerk, EKG technician, assistant to the comptroller, data analyst, LCSW, music therapist, manufacturing engineer, owning my own business, customer service representative, phlebotomist, counselor, cybersecurity specialist, and owning a travel and event planning business. Content analysis of the responses indicates that more than half of the respondents are unsure about the type of job or career path they want to pursue.

DVR Helped with Progress Towards Employment Goal

Respondents were asked a yes-no question: "Has the DVR helped you make progress toward your employment goal?" Over 61% (n = 415) of the respondents indicated that DVR helped them progress toward their employment goals, and 9.6% (n = 64) stated that they did not work with DVR to develop an employment goal. Table 33 details the number of times a response choice was selected, along with the percentage rate based on the total number of respondents who answered the question.

Table 33: *Individual Survey: DVR Helped Progress to Employment Goal*

DVR Helped Progress to Employment Goal	Number	Percent
Yes	415	61.4%
No	196	29.0%
I have not worked with DVR to develop an employment goal.	64	9.6%
Total	675	100.0%

Thought Towards Next Job

Individual survey respondents were asked whether they had considered their next job after reaching their employment goal. Respondents were given three response options. Although over 41% of the respondents said "yes," about 30% did not know if they had thought about their next job. Table 34 shows the number and percentage of respondents who answered yes, no, or "I don't know."

Table 34: *Individual Survey: Thoughts Towards Next Job*

Thought Towards Next Job	Number	Percent
Yes	277	41.5%
I don't know	202	30.2%
No	189	28.3%
Total	668	100.0%

Need Additional Training for Next Job

Respondents were also asked whether they would need additional training or assistance to secure their next job. Roughly 55% of the 371 respondents who answered the question indicated "yes." Table 35 details the results.

Table 35: *Individual Survey: Need More Training or Help to Get Next Job*

Need More Training or Help to Get Next Job	Number	Percent
Yes	371	55.4%
I don't know	221	33.0%
No	78	11.6%
Total	670	100.0%

Individual Survey: How Can DVR Change to Help Get, Keep, or Obtain a Better Job

Individual respondents were asked an open-ended question, requesting suggestions on how DVR could modify its services to help customers find a job, retain their current job, or secure a better job. A total of 466 survey respondents answered the question.

Over 80 comments contained no suggestions, citing phrases such as “I do not know/none/not sure.” Keywords identified in the narrative comments included “be active,” “better communication,” “listen,” “help,” “find,” “stay in touch,” and “support.” Narrative comments also included requests for housing, financial aid, gas, long-term support, increased availability, and more training opportunities. Seventeen comments expressed appreciation for DVR and its services, while others highlighted specific frustrations with DVR counselors or offered suggestions for improvement. Quotes from the narrative comments are:

- *“I think that my DVR counselor did a good job. I think their contractors do a horrific job. They were completely unable to secure me a job. I was hired within 2 months of ending DVR’s services (after using DVR for about 3 years).”*
- *“Fine with DVR service. I wish there were more options for employment.”*
- *“Edit my IPE when I ask.”*
- *“DVR could train its staff to understand the job search environment better.”*
- *“It could train its staff to understand the job search environment better.”*
- *“If you offer something repeatedly, then stand by your word.”*
- *“Call us back. Tell us who our rep is. From day one, it has been a mess.”*
- *“Long, more sustainable support -- not just going for the easy, quick fix”*
- *“How DVR can help is either by checking on the client if they need assistance, or addressing any concerns that customers have would be nice.”*
- *“Understand unique disabilities like mine more fully. Don't just put a person in jobs like a peg in a predestined hole.”*
- *“Do not rely on a placement test to pick possible job opportunities. Look at what schooling and or experience a person has, and brainstorm jobs that would fit their background.”*
- *“DVR can set up a job employment subsection where they assist customers with applying for positions that are actively hiring; act as a third-party recruiter to companies; and, even at times, be physically present to support the client through the interview process when they are to be interviewed.”*
- *“I closed my case voluntarily because zero progress was being made. I was frustrated with all the appointment cancellations and changes, and there were no other DVR counselors available. I'm unable to answer this question because I have no idea how the process is supposed to work — if it can. I was in a holding pattern for so long, I was getting anxiety and depression from what seemed like disinterest on behalf of the counselor.”*

Community Partner Results

Partner Survey: Age Populations DVR Serves

Service Across Age Groups

Partners were given a four-point Likert scale (ranging from “very effective” to “not effective”) and asked to rate how effective DVR is in helping individuals across different age groups. Although most partners selected “mostly effective” in response, the percentage is 25 points lower than the staff rate for the same question. Just over one-third (n = 27) of the 73 partners indicated that DVR services assist some age groups but not others. Table 36 summarizes the partners' responses to the question.

Table 36: Partner Survey: Service Across Age Groups

Service Across Age Groups	Number	Percent
Mostly Effective – Services help most age groups	36	49.3%
Somewhat Effective – Services help some age groups, but not others	27	37.0%
Very Effective – Services meet the needs of all age groups well	6	8.2%
Not Effective – Services do not meet the needs of any age group	4	5.5%
Total	73	100.0%

Age DVR Serves Best

Partners were also asked to select the age group they believed DVR served best. A total of 71 partners responded to the question. Overall, the partner percentage responses were like those of the staff, except for the category “boomers.” Three out of the 71 partners mentioned “boomers” in their response. Table 37 outlines the age groups that partners think DVR serves best.

Table 37: Partner Survey: Age DVR Serves Best

Age Group DVR Serves Best	Number	Percent
Millennials: Entire generation fits (29–44)	36	50.7%
Gen Z: 16–28-year-olds (only part of Gen Z)	26	36.6%
Gen X: Entire generation fits (45–60)	6	8.5%
Boomers: Mostly aged out (Boomers are 61–79 in 2025, so only a small portion under 65)	3	4.2%
Total	71	100.0%

Partner Survey: Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals

Most Common Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – General Customers

Partner survey respondents were provided with a list of 20 barriers and asked to identify the most common obstacles to achieving employment goals for DVR customers. Respondents could select as many barriers as they liked. Both partner and individual survey customers were asked similar questions about common barriers and had slightly different lists to choose from. Both groups agreed that more training, employer concerns about customer abilities, and job skills were common or top barriers to employment. Five narrative comments in the “other, please describe” category mentioned the customers’ motivation, participation, and expectations as barriers to employment. Quotes from the remaining comments are:

- “Assistive Technology needs are not considered enough.”
- “Customers are often caught in the middle of VRC and vendor dynamics. Disagreements can happen about what is the best route for the client, semantic arguments.”
- “Funding for programs both at the school and for summer services”

Table 38: Partner Survey: Most Common Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – General DVR Customers

Most Common Barriers to Employment Goals - General	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Little or no work experience	63	84.0%

Most Common Barriers to Employment Goals - General	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Not having job skills	60	80.0%
Employers' perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities	60	80.0%
Disability-related transportation issues	44	58.7%
Not having education or training	43	57.3%
Poor social skills	43	57.3%
Not having job search skills	41	54.7%
Not enough jobs available	39	52.0%
Mental health issues	36	48.0%
Other transportation issues	34	45.3%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	33	44.0%
Convictions for criminal offenses	30	40.0%
Lack of assistance with disability-related personal care	28	37.3%
Housing issues	25	33.3%
Not having disability-related accommodations	24	32.0%
Language barriers	19	25.3%
Substance use issues	18	24.0%
Other health issues	14	18.7%
Childcare issues	12	16.0%
Other (please describe)	8	10.7%
Total	674	

Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – Most Significant Disabilities

Partner survey respondents were given a list of 20 barriers, including an option for “other.” Partners were asked to identify the obstacles that prevent DVR customers with the most significant disabilities from achieving their employment goals. The sample size was 74 respondents. The top four barriers to achieving employment goals, as identified by partners for customers with the most significant disabilities, align with the top four obstacles that partners cited for the general population of customers. Table 39 summarizes the partners’ responses to the question. Two narrative comments in response to the item “other, please describe” are quoted:

- *“One of the most common reasons for job loss is theft of snack food or money to buy a snack. It's a significant enough problem; I wish there were resources to address this problem specifically.”*
- *“Disagreement or uncertainty about goals”*

Table 39: *Partner Survey: Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – Most Significant Disabilities*

Barriers to Employment Goals – MSD	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Employers' perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities	65	87.8%
Little or no work experience	59	79.7%
Not having job skills	53	71.6%

Barriers to Employment Goals – MSD	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Disability-related transportation issues	44	59.5%
Poor social skills	41	55.4%
Mental health or behavioral health issues	39	52.7%
Not enough jobs available	38	51.4%
Not having job search skills	37	50.0%
Not having education or training	35	47.3%
Not having disability-related accommodations	34	45.9%
Lack of assistance with disability-related personal care	30	40.5%
Other transportation issues	29	39.2%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	25	33.8%
Language barriers	23	31.1%
Other health issues	17	23.0%
Housing issues	15	20.3%
Convictions for criminal offenses	10	13.5%
Substance use issues	7	9.5%
Other (please describe)	6	8.1%
Childcare issues	4	5.4%
Total	611	

Partner Survey: Top Three Challenges in Accessing DVR Services

Partner respondents were presented with a question prompting them to indicate the top three reasons people with disabilities might find it challenging to access DVR services. Fourteen response options were provided. “Slow service delivery” was identified by almost 55% of partners and ranked as the top reason by partners why people with disabilities have difficulty accessing DVR services. The second top reason, selected by slightly more than one-third of the partners, relates to problems completing the application. A narrow margin of difference (n = 3, 4.2%) exists between the third and fourth items selected by partners as the top reason why people with disabilities find it challenging to access DVR services.

Table 40: Partner Survey: Top Three Challenges in Accessing DVR Services

Top Three Challenges in Accessing DVR Services	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Slow service delivery	39	54.9%
Difficulties completing the application	26	36.6%
VR staff do not meet customers in the communities where the customers live	21	29.6%
Challenges with referrals being processed by partners such as other state agencies, schools, or community organizations.	18	25.4%
Limited accessibility of DVR office locations via public transportation	16	22.5%

Top Three Challenges in Accessing DVR Services	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Cultural barriers	13	18.3%
Lack of options for the use of technology to communicate with DVR Staff, such as Zoom, Teams, text, etc.	12	16.9%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DVR office	10	14.1%
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)	10	14.1%
Other (please describe)	9	12.7%
Difficulties accessing training or education programs	7	9.9%
Language barriers	6	8.5%
Inadequate assessment services	6	8.5%
Inadequate disability-related accommodations	2	2.8%
Total	195	

Partner Survey: Changes DVR Could Make to Better Serve Individuals with Disabilities

Partner survey respondents were asked an open-ended question to suggest improvements DVR could make to better serve individuals with disabilities. Forty-six respondents provided narrative responses. Their comments included suggestions for better communication, faster response times, more and higher-quality DVR counselors and staff, quicker processing, thorough assessments of customer skills and work readiness, improved listening and collaboration with customers and vendors, increased funding for providers to obtain training and customer supports, enhanced community outreach, greater presence in the community and more staff working on-site at schools, long-term benefits planning, ending the use of a waitlist, meeting in person, attending Tribal Vocational conferences and meetings, sharing cases with Tribal VR, and establishing another office location on Whidbey Island.

Staff Survey Results

Staff Survey: Barriers to Employment

Staff survey respondents were presented with a series of questions about the barriers customers experience when working toward their employment goals.

Most Common Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – General DVR Customers

Staff survey respondents were given a list of 26 barriers to employment and asked to identify the most common barriers to achieving employment goals for the general population of DVR customers. The number of obstacles a respondent could choose was unlimited.

Although the list presented to the staff was longer than the list given to partners, the top item selected by staff survey respondents matches the top barrier identified by partners. One item that tied for seventh position on the staff results list, “employers' perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities,” tied for second position on the partner results list of common barriers for the general population of customers. Lack of internet access was reported by 38.2% of staff (n = 13) and 21.8% of individual respondents (n = 150) who identified common barriers to employment. Table 41 details the results of the staff questions from the survey.

Table 41: Staff Survey: Identify Most Common Barriers to Employment - General Customers

Most Common Barriers - General Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Little or no work experience	28	82.4%
Poor social skills	27	79.4%
Mental health issues	26	76.5%
Not having education or training	23	67.6%
Not having job skills	22	64.7%
Housing issues	21	61.8%
Not having job search skills	19	55.9%
Employers' perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities	19	55.9%
Convictions for criminal offenses	19	55.9%
Other transportation issues	17	50.0%
Not enough jobs available	15	44.1%
Not having disability-related accommodations	14	41.2%
Disability-related transportation issues	14	41.2%
Substance use issues	14	41.2%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	13	38.2%
Lack of reliable Internet access	13	38.2%
Lack of knowledge about career ladders/pathways	12	35.3%
Lack of access to technology	12	35.3%
Language barriers	11	32.4%
Other health issues	11	32.4%
Childcare issues	11	32.4%
Lack of assistance with disability-related personal care	10	29.4%
Lack of financial literacy	10	29.4%
Community or systemic racism	8	23.5%
Not having STEM skills	7	20.6%
Other (please describe)	3	8.8%
Total	399	

Five Most Significant Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals - General DVR Customers

Staff survey respondents received a list of 26 barriers, including an option for “other.” They were asked to identify the five most significant obstacles preventing DVR customers from achieving their employment goals. There was no limit to the number of barriers a respondent could select. A total of 34 staff members answered the question. The five most significant barriers identified by staff include mental health issues, lack of education or training, and little or no work experience. The items “poor social skills” and “not having job skills” ranked fourth and fifth as barriers to achieving employment goals for the overall customer population, as chosen by staff in response to the question.

Note that the three top barriers to employment identified by individual survey respondents do not match the three top barriers listed by staff for customers. Additionally, the lack of training and education was presented as a separate item in the survey. These items ranked fifth and seventh, respectively, in the personal survey results table. Table 42 shows the barriers presented to staff, along with the number of times staff survey respondents cited each one.

Table 42: Staff Survey: Five Most Significant Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals - General DVR Customers

Five Most Significant Barriers - General Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Mental health issues	21	61.8%
Not having education or training	16	47.1%
Little or no work experience	16	47.1%
Poor social skills	15	44.1%
Not having job skills	13	38.2%
Employers' perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities	12	35.3%
Not enough jobs available	9	26.5%
Housing issues	8	23.5%
Disability-related transportation issues	7	20.6%
Substance use issues	7	20.6%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	7	20.6%
Other transportation issues	6	17.6%
Convictions for criminal offenses	5	14.7%
Not having job search skills	4	11.8%
Lack of knowledge about career ladders/pathways	4	11.8%
Lack of access to technology	4	11.8%
Not having disability-related accommodations	3	8.8%
Other health issues	3	8.8%
Language barriers	2	5.9%
Community or systemic racism	2	5.9%
Childcare issues	1	2.9%
Lack of reliable Internet access	1	2.9%
Lack of financial literacy	1	2.9%
Lack of assistance with disability-related personal care	0	0.0%
Other (please describe)	0	0.0%
Not having STEM skills	0	0.0%
Total	167	

Five Most Significant Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – Most Significant Disabilities

Staff respondents were also asked to identify the five most significant barriers to helping customers with the most severe disabilities reach their employment goals. Compared to the partner survey, the list included six

additional options for staff. A total of 34 staff members answered the question. Staff selected three of the same five most significant barriers to employment for those with the most significant disabilities as staff identified for the general population of DVR customers. Four of the five most significant barriers the staff identified for those with the most significant disabilities match four of the top five barriers the partner respondents identified as common. Partners ranked the barriers differently. Table 43 summarizes the ranking of obstacles for individuals with significant disabilities as reported by staff respondents.

Table 43: Staff Survey: Five Most Significant Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – Most Significant Disabilities

Five Most Significant Barriers – MSD	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Employers' perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities	19	55.9%
Little or no work experience	15	44.1%
Disability-related transportation issues	14	41.2%
Mental health issues	14	41.2%
Not having job skills	13	38.2%
Not enough jobs available	11	32.4%
Not having disability-related accommodations	10	29.4%
Not having education or training	9	26.5%
Poor social skills	9	26.5%
Lack of assistance with disability-related personal care	8	23.5%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	7	20.6%
Housing issues	6	17.6%
Not having job search skills	5	14.7%
Other transportation issues	4	11.8%
Other health issues	4	11.8%
Language barriers	3	8.8%
Convictions for criminal offenses	3	8.8%
Lack of access to technology	3	8.8%
Substance use issues	2	5.9%
Not having STEM skills	1	2.9%
Lack of knowledge about career ladders/pathways	1	2.9%
Community or systemic racism	1	2.9%
Childcare issues	0	0.0%
Other (please describe)	0	0.0%
Lack of reliable Internet access	0	0.0%
Lack of financial literacy	0	0.0%
Total	162	

Five Most Significant Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – Rural Customers

Staff were presented with a list of 26 barriers and asked to identify the five most significant barriers to achieving employment goals for customers who reside in rural areas of the state. Thirty-two staff respondents answered the question.

Staff selected “not enough jobs available” and “other transportation issues” equally, resulting in a tie for the most significant barrier to employment for those residing in rural areas of the state. Note that none of the top five barriers staff selected for the general population of customers match the top barriers staff chose for rural customers. However, “disability-related transportation issues” appears in the top five most significant barriers staff chose for individuals with the most significant disabilities. Table 44 presents staff responses to the question about rural DVR customers.

Table 44: *Staff Survey: Five Most Significant Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – Rural Customers*

Five Most Significant Barriers – Rural Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Not enough jobs available	25	78.1%
Other transportation issues	25	78.1%
Lack of reliable Internet access	17	53.1%
Lack of access to technology	15	46.9%
Disability-related transportation issues	10	31.3%
Not having education or training	8	25.0%
Not having job skills	8	25.0%
Little or no work experience	8	25.0%
Housing issues	6	18.8%
Not having job search skills	5	15.6%
Employers' perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities	5	15.6%
Mental health issues	4	12.5%
Lack of knowledge about career ladders/pathways	4	12.5%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	3	9.4%
Other health issues	2	6.3%
Not having disability-related accommodations	1	3.1%
Substance use issues	1	3.1%
Childcare issues	1	3.1%
Poor social skills	1	3.1%
Convictions for criminal offenses	1	3.1%
Lack of financial literacy	1	3.1%
Community or systemic racism	1	3.1%
Language barriers	0	0.0%
Lack of assistance with disability-related personal care	0	0.0%
Other (please describe)	0	0.0%
Not having STEM skills	0	0.0%
Total	152	

Staff Survey: Top Three Challenges in Accessing DVR Services

Staff were given a question asking why individuals with disabilities might find it hard to access DVR services. Thirteen response options were provided. Thirty-four respondents answered the question. Like partners, “slow service delivery” was identified most often by staff and ranked as the top reason why people with disabilities have difficulty accessing DVR services. Limited accessibility of the DVR via public transportation and other challenges related to the DVR office's physical location ranked second and third, respectively, on the staff results list.

Six comments were received in the category “other, please describe.” Four comments cited a lack of knowledge about DVR, including its services, who can apply, the process, and the time required to become eligible and receive service. Table 45 summarizes staff responses to the question. The remaining two comments are quoted:

- *“Lack of CRPs, Health providers, and mental health providers”*
- *“Lack of understanding from VRC regarding disability and support for employment goals”*

Table 45: Staff Survey: Top Three Challenges in Accessing DVR Services

Top Three Challenges in Accessing DVR Services	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Slow service delivery	24	70.6%
Limited accessibility of DVR via public transportation	15	44.1%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DVR office	9	26.5%
DVR staff do not meet customers in the communities where the customers live	8	23.5%
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)	7	20.6%
Difficulties accessing training or education programs	7	20.6%
Lack of options for the use of technology to communicate with DVR staff, such as text, videoconferencing applications (Zoom, Teams, FaceTime, etc.)	6	17.6%
Other (please describe)	6	17.6%
Difficulties completing the application	3	8.8%
Inadequate assessment services	3	8.8%
Language barriers	2	5.9%
Community or systemic racism	2	5.9%
Inadequate disability-related accommodations	1	2.9%
Total	93	

Section II: Survey Findings Summary

The needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities can be viewed through various lenses, including benefit receipt, financial dependency, barriers to employment, and barriers to access. Key findings reported by individuals include:

Social Security Benefits

Given the presumed eligibility for VR services associated with receipt of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), we can infer that over 50% of respondents gained eligibility through their SSA benefits. As a result, among the 737 respondents, 800 selections were made (multiple responses allowed), over 50% receive benefits: SSI 26.9% (198); SSDI 25.6% (189). In contrast, 40.3% (297) reported not receiving Social Security disability benefits.

Financial Stress

There is significant evidence of the financial need customers are experiencing as they engage with DVR for services.

- Of 620 respondents (987 selections across statements), 59.0% (366) are 'just getting by financially', 56.0% (347) worry their money will not last, and 44.2% (274) feel money limits their ability to have the things they want — indicating longer-term financial insecurity.
- On a positive note, customers reported that 69.2% (461) have a checking account and 48.9% (326) have a savings account. However, only 10.4% (69) report investing money — a very low level of asset building.
- In the context of financial stress, it is essential to view these survey results alongside statewide data from the American Community Survey. For instance, in Table 46, we see an interesting intersection with federal poverty levels. For example, the 2025 federal poverty level (FPL) for a family of four in the 48 contiguous states, including Washington, is \$32,150. The FPL varies by household size: for a single person, it is \$15,650, and for a family of three, it is \$26,650. To this end, a person with a disability in Washington, on average, is earning above the FPL. However, when looking at DVR’s median quarterly earnings, the 2nd quarter after exit, we see earnings levels that fall much closer to the FPL: females earn \$17,180 annually, and males earn \$17,264. This indicates that while these quarterly earnings are increasing for DVR participants, they are being outpaced by those of their peers with disabilities outside the DVR system.

Table 46: *Median Earnings*

Median Earnings, Washington Residents with and Without Disability, Organized by DVR Region, By Sex and Disability Status							
Region	Total w/ earnings	With disability	Male w/ disability	Female w/ disability	No disability	Male no disability	Female no disability
Region 1	\$40,412	\$33,894	\$40,293	\$26,389	\$41,261	\$47,979	\$34,407
Region 2	\$46,135	\$37,748	\$46,071	\$28,473	\$47,037	\$58,661	\$37,658
Region 3	\$42,465	\$32,593	\$36,836	\$28,911	\$45,464	\$53,658	\$36,205

*Source: American Community Survey

Barriers to Employment

Overall, the survey data demonstrates a variety of gaps in employment, including a lack of jobs, a lack of job coaches, gaps in work history, disability-related issues, employer/coworker discrimination, interview selection issues, aging, DVR process delays, a lack of accommodations, and a few remote jobs. Other barriers included funds for training/education, lack of experience, and limited apprenticeships/internships.

One program model that is designed to mitigate some of these employment barriers is Supported Employment. Looking at the SE outcomes in PY 2024, we see a small percentage served by the program, moderate hours

worked, and median hourly wages that align with entry-level CIE opportunities. Overall, the investment in this arena is one indicator of how well the VR agency is engaging people with the most significant disabilities in employment.

Table 47: Supported Employment PY 2024

Region	Number Served	# Exiting Services	Median Hourly Wage at Exit	Median # of Hours at Exit	% of DVR Participants in Plan PY24
Region 1	79	33	\$16.66	16	3.01%
Region 2	217	63	\$18.66	12	3.70%
Region 3	123	51	\$16.73	13.5	3.09%
Statewide	419	147	\$16.90	13.5	3.34%

*Source: DVR Direct Case Data Analysis

DVR Partner and Staff Summary

Effectiveness Across Age Groups

Both partners and staff perceive DVR as moderately effective across age groups, though staff tend to rate it higher. Both groups identified Millennials (ages 29–44) and Gen Z (16–28) as DVR’s strongest-served populations.

Most Common Employment Barriers

Shared themes across staff and partners included little or no work experience, lack of job skills and training/education, employer perceptions or stigma around disability, mental/behavioral health challenges, and transportation issues (especially disability-related).

Partners also emphasize system barriers (employer hesitation, job scarcity, and social skills), while VR staff emphasize customer-readiness factors (education, training, housing stability, and criminal records). Finally, there are rural-specific challenges, including job scarcity and transportation limitations (each at 78%), and the digital divide, with limited internet access (53%) and technology access (47%).

Themes of Success

- DVR effectively assists many individuals in setting and progressing toward employment goals.
- Supported employment and job-coaching models are considered beneficial when implemented consistently.
- Collaborative relationships with community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) and job developers show promise.

Themes of Improvement

- Persistent employer stigma and concerns about disability-related accommodations.
- Need for more specialized CRPs trained to support complex disabilities and high-skill employment.
- Transportation barriers, limited job availability, and long service wait times hinder outcomes.
- Desire for longer-term supports and follow-up beyond initial placement.

Section II: Listening Session Results

Again, while the survey responses offer key insights, the listening session also highlighted additional themes. There were broad themes across all participants (i.e., DVR customers, families, DVR staff, community partners, and businesses):

What we heard...

Limited Job Opportunities

- Respondents reported that individuals with the most severe disabilities are often segregated and assigned to a limited range of low-wage industries, mainly janitorial, landscaping, and food service. This trend aligns with other national data, which confirms that these are the primary industries where individuals with the most significant disabilities gain employment.

Eligibility for Supported Employment (SE)

- Stakeholders understand that only individuals with three or more functional limitations across major life areas qualify for supported employment. While the eligibility criteria are clear, the timeline to gain eligibility is delayed, creating a challenge for individuals and practitioners working with customers who want employment but must wait for eligibility and plan development to be completed before receiving this support.

Transition to DDA

- Moving to the Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) for extended services can be difficult because obtaining early childhood records needed to prove eligibility is complicated. This process creates complications on the front end of service delivery for those who meet MSD criteria and are looking to access DVR services.

Access and Opportunity

- Like the survey data, listening session participants reported that individuals with the most significant disabilities face persistent barriers to employment, including transportation limitations, a lack of accessible job opportunities, and insufficient accommodations in the workplace.
- Employment options remain concentrated in low-wage or segregated industries such as janitorial services, landscaping, and food service, limiting pathways to economic self-sufficiency.

Supported Employment and Long-Term Support

- Supported Employment (SE) services are constrained by limited provider capacity and geographic disparities. In some regions, customers have only one Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) option.
- Customers noted that DVR's involvement is often short-term, leaving those with complex needs without sustained follow-along support once DVR funding ends.
- Many families and providers view DVR's focus on 'stability before employment' as counterproductive, arguing that meaningful work can promote stability.

Coordination and System Navigation

- Service duration varies and can be confusing for customers: DVR offers limited-time support before clients move to Medicaid-funded options, such as DDA.
- Confusion persists among customers about the differences between DVR and the Division of Developmental Disabilities (DDA) in terms of roles, eligibility criteria, and the transition to extended services.
- Customers and families often struggle to obtain early childhood records required for DDA eligibility, resulting in service gaps.
- There is a need for counselors to understand better and support individuals who use alternative communication methods, including American Sign Language and assistive communication technology.

In Their Own Words...

“There aren’t enough providers who know how to work with individuals with significant disabilities — the services just don’t exist in some areas.”

“People who need supported employment the most are the ones waiting the longest.”

“We need more job coaches who actually understand behavioral support and communication differences.”

“Transportation is a huge issue. If you use a wheelchair or have mobility needs, DVR can’t find employers willing or able to accommodate that.”

“There’s almost nothing for people with complex support needs who can’t work full-time — they get told they’re ‘not ready for DVR.’”

“Parents of young adults with significant disabilities feel abandoned after high school because DVR doesn’t have the intensive services schools provided.”

“DVR’s vendor pool is too small; people with significant disabilities are referred to agencies that don’t have the staff or expertise.”

“Supported employment providers are stretched too thin — one staff person might be working with ten clients who all need one-on-one support.”

Section II: Recommendations

Access to Services for People with the Most Significant Disabilities

1. Require CRPs to diversify job placements and focus on maximizing client employment potential.
2. Enhance interagency data sharing with DDA for smoother transitions to extended support systems per §361.55.
3. Ensure SE services prepare clients for sustainable, high-quality employment outcomes.
4. Track services to completion and implement childcare vouchers and transportation supports.
5. Co-design technology systems with user feedback and maintain proven supports like assistive equipment

Supported Employment and Customized Employment

1. Prioritize Supported Employment (SE) expansion with clear benchmarks for competitive integrated employment (CIE) under §361.5(c)(9).

2. Implement job coach retention strategies through funding, training, and wage support, and enhance partnerships with DDA and DSHS’s mental health programs.
3. Increase CE training and funding for CRPs to ensure consistent quality implementation. Consider a statewide training on Discovery and Customized Employment to align with the Essential Elements of Customized Employment.
4. Empower clients with choice in provider selection and ensure person-centered job matching.

Section III: Needs of individuals with disabilities who are minorities, including the needs of individuals who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program

Individual Survey Results

Individual Survey: Race, Ethnicity, and Preferred Language

Individuals were asked to identify their primary race or ethnic group and their preferred language of communication.

Race or Ethnic Group

The number of respondents who answered the ethnicity question was 841. Over 68% of respondents identified as White. Nearly an equal percentage of respondents (just one respondent difference) cited either Black, African American, or Hispanic/Latino. Of the twenty-one narrative responses received in the “other” category, three comments cited “mixed race.” The remaining comments included mentions of Jewish and Anglo mix, Celtic, Native American, and Jewish, as well as Colombian, French, Haitian American, Italian, Mexican, Polish, German, Irish, English, Romanian, Somali, Spanish, and Jewish.

Table 48: *Individual Survey: Race or Ethnic Group*

Primary Race or Ethnic Group	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
White or Caucasian	577	68.6%
Black or African American	70	8.3%
Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or of Spanish origin	69	8.2%
Asian or Asian American	59	7.0%
Prefer not to answer	51	6.1%
Native American or Alaska Native	46	5.5%
Prefer to self-describe	26	3.1%
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	19	2.3%
Another race or ethnicity (please specify): _____	13	1.5%
Middle Eastern or North African	7	0.8%
Total	937	

In comparison, the DVR census shows slightly different population numbers by race and ethnicity. For instance, the survey sample showed a 5% higher representation of Caucasians than in the general population, and a 3% higher representation of Native Americans or Alaska Natives. This is likely due to the concerted effort to reach these communities throughout the CSNA process. In contrast, there was a 5.7% lower

representation of those of Hispanic, Latino/a/x, or Spanish origin, despite the survey and outreach materials being offered in Spanish to ensure access for Spanish speakers. There was also a slightly lower representation of those who identify as Asian or Asian American.

Table 49: Race/Ethnicity

DVR Participants and Washington Residents by Race/Ethnicity					
Race/Ethnicity	Count	% of DVR Participants	Washington Residents with a Disability Who Are	Margin of Error	% of Washington Residents with a Disability
Black or African American alone	1,400	8.35%	39,686	1,770	3.80%
American Indian and Alaska Native alone	444	2.65%	15,521	786	1.49%
Asian alone	965	5.75%	55,063	1,897	5.27%
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander alone	59	0.35%	6,024	672	0.58%
Two or more races	924	5.51%	94,802	2,593	9.08%
White alone, not Hispanic or Latino	10,656	63.53%	734,389	7,029	70.29%
Hispanic or Latino (of any race)	2,328	13.88%	98,993	2,649	9.48%

**Source: DVR Service Data*

Primary Language

Customers were asked about their primary language for communication. Nearly 95% of the 842 respondents who answered the question identified English as their primary language. American Sign Language and “non-verbal” were each mentioned three times in the narrative comments in response to the item “other, please describe.” The results of the question and the options provided to respondents are shown in Table 50.

Table 50: Individual Survey: Preferred Language for Communication

Primary Language	Number	Percent
English	799	94.9%
American Sign Language	16	1.9%
Other	14	1.7%
Spanish	11	1.3%
Korean	2	0.2%
Chinese (Mandarin or Cantonese)	0	0.0%
Vietnamese	0	0.0%
Tagalog	0	0.0%
Total	842	100.0%

Access to Services in Primary Language

Individual survey respondents were then asked a subsequent question about their primary language: “Were you able to access services in the primary language you speak?” A total of 839 respondents answered the question. Approximately 94% of the respondents reported being able to access services in their primary language. Table 51 details the results.

Table 51: *Individual Survey: Access Services in Primary Language*

Access Services in Primary Language	Number	Percent
Yes	785	93.6%
No	54	6.4%
Total	839	100.0%

Individual Survey: Personal and Cultural Identity

Honor and Respect for Cultural Identity

Individuals were asked whether DVR honors and respects their cultural identity. Less than 12% of the respondents cited either “strongly disagree” or “disagree” in response to the question. The results are found in Table 52.

Table 52: *Individual Survey: Honor and Respect Cultural Identity*

DVR Staff Respect Value Culture ID	Number	Percent
Strongly agree - this is consistently true in my experience	420	50.5%
Agree - this is mostly true for me	319	38.3%
Strongly disagree - this has not been my experience	50	6.0%
Disagree - this is sometimes true, but often not	43	5.2%
Total	832	100.0%

Demonstrate Understanding of Cultural and Personal Identity Impact

Respondents were presented with a statement regarding DVR staff’s ability to understand the impact of personal and cultural identity on their needs and experiences and asked to select from a 4-point Likert scale (ranging from “strongly agree” to “strongly disagree”) whether they agree or disagree with the statement. A total of 825 individuals responded to the question. The results differ from the previous question and are uniquely distributed. An equal number of respondents selected 'agree' or 'strongly agree' in response to the statement. Conversely, nearly as many respondents selected options indicating disagreement with the statement. Overall, the results suggest that individual survey respondents believe DVR staff demonstrate awareness of how personal and cultural identity impact customers’ experiences.

Table 53: *Individual Survey: DVR Staff Understanding of Cultural and Personal Identity Impact*

DVR Staff Understand Cultural & Personal ID Impact	Number	Percent
Agree - this is mostly true for me	344	41.7%
Strongly agree - this is consistently true in my experience	344	41.7%
Strongly disagree - this has not been my experience	69	8.4%
Disagree - this is sometimes true, but often not	68	8.2%
Total	825	100.0%

Ways that DVR Acknowledges or Supports Personal Identity or Cultural Background

Individuals were asked an open-ended question about ways DVR staff have acknowledged or supported their personal identity or cultural background. A total of 415 individuals responded, roughly half the number who responded to the same question in the previous Table 53.

Out of the 415 narrative responses received, 109 mentioned “NA/don’t know/unsure/no examples/no clue/nothing/.” Two comments stated that “I do not require special attention,” and two others described the question as “silly/ludicrous.” Seventeen responses indicated that DVR does not acknowledge or support an individual’s personal identity or cultural background and cited specific negative experiences. Conversely, 285 comments were positive and affirming in response to the question. Content analysis of the remaining quotes revealed specific keywords indicating acknowledgment or support of the individual’s race, culture, religion, sex, disability, or ideas for a job or career path. Keywords include but are not limited to listen, respect, kind, asked, by treating, helped, took time, showed, acknowledged, and supportive. Table 54 presents twenty-eight quotes—almost 10% of the 285 positive comments—that illustrate the wide range of warm and kind sentiments expressed by respondents in reaction to the question.

Table 54: Individual Survey: Ways DVR Acknowledges or Supports Personal or Cultural ID

Ways that DVR Acknowledges or Supports Personal Identity or Cultural Background
<i>“Taking her time with me and explaining with each step”</i>
<i>“I’m treated as an individual with individual needs”</i>
<i>“In the ways they talk and communicate with me”</i>
<i>“They have not done anything that bothers me”</i>
<i>“By simply being nice and attentive with every meeting we’ve had! Taking the time to ask my pronouns and being patient because I have a hearing disability.”</i>
<i>“Most of my experience with DVR has been amazing. I have felt seen, heard and respected.”</i>
<i>“I’m a disabled veteran, and they respected that”</i>
<i>“My counselor has helped me as a woman who is 100% totally and permanently disabled veteran. She has gone out of her way to get my application processed, if not in an expedited manner.”</i>
<i>“Perhaps it’s been more indirect, yet I do appreciate it: namely, to have been associated with an employment vendor knowing my “background” that I have experience as an exchange student in Germany, (w/music)”</i>
<i>“They picked an Asian supermarket because it could help me to socialize with people based on my background”</i>
<i>“The DVR staff has acknowledged aspects of my personal identity, though there is still room for deeper cultural understanding. As a Black woman and an autistic individual, I sometimes navigate the world differently than others. I’ve appreciated when staff members have taken the time to listen to my communication preferences or been patient when I needed more time to process information.”</i>
<i>“My counselor has a disability as well. It’s wonderful working with someone who understands what that is like.”</i>
<i>“My counselor is aware of my numerous diagnoses and how they affect my work. And accepted my gender identity”</i>
<i>“My DVR counselor is always sensitive to the barriers in my life due to my disability and personal identity. She always tries to tailor support around these things.”</i>

Ways that DVR Acknowledges or Supports Personal Identity or Cultural Background
<i>"By understanding my limitations due to aphasia from a stroke"</i>
<i>"I am an older client, and they never showed any doubt in my ability to become a nurse"</i>
<i>"Allowing me to use my AAC and patient while I reply with it"</i>
<i>"Called me by my tribe – Nisqually"</i>
<i>"By showing interest or reaffirming things that are important to me"</i>
<i>"I am a Christian and they have understood my needs to attend a school that supports my beliefs"</i>
<i>"My religion which is very important"</i>
<i>"My cultural background/personal identity were never specifically addressed, but I felt fully supported"</i>
<i>"They have respected pronouns and chosen name; including my choices regarding sharing those things with employers."</i>
<i>"Food stamps to help me with food when I have none"</i>
<i>"My counselor was so helpful and full of knowledge of how to help me decide to stop my social security and become a regular tax paying citizen."</i>
<i>"By asking me if I have any preferences regarding my culture or personal identity. By being considerate and compassionate towards my needs"</i>
<i>"Just listens well without judgement"</i>
<i>"Provided me 2 hearing aids so I could return to work prepared"</i>
<i>"Even though I have a spinal cord injury and over half of my body remains paralyzed, it's hard for me to identify as paralyzed. DVR saw how excited I was to get back out in the workforce by taking my role serious as their customer and working ahead of them often. I chose a path to employment that was like my past 20 years of experience, and my DVR counselor helped me by believing in me and offering me assistance with paying for tuition, internet service, books and class materials and even helped with fuel reimbursement because my wheelchair accessible van isn't shy when it comes to consuming fuel. These were all barriers I wouldn't have been able to overcome so quickly without help. I don't think I will ever forget how much DVR has believed in me over the last 2+ years and helped me believe in myself."</i>

Situation: When DVR Did Not Understand or Respect Identity

Customers were asked a follow-up open-ended question: "Are there any times you felt your identity was not fully understood or respected by the organization?" Seventy-five people responded. Twenty-two of these responses included the words, "N/A; no; not at all." The other 53 comments provided specific examples of DVR staff failing to understand or respect the respondent's identity. About 20% of these 53 comments (n=10) are included in Table 55.

Table 55: *Individual Survey: Situation When DVR Did Not Understand or Respect ID*

Situation When DVR Did Not Understand nor Respect ID
<i>"Every interaction with them made it clear my identity was not fully understood or respected. They insist on in-person intake, they ignore communication unless it is in the format and standard they demand, and they weren't willing to meet me where I was at in terms of capability."</i>
<i>"I believe that my identity was completely understood and then disrespected"</i>

Situation When DVR Did Not Understand nor Respect ID
<i>“As an older person who has experienced long-term illness and struggles to survive on SSI, my DRV counselors make me feel like a square peg and they try to squeeze me into a round hole, instead of finding places where square pegs fit.”</i>
<i>“I'm an older man seeking work. I don't think there are enough resources and education about retraining for work”</i>
<i>“Many ageist comments. For two years I was repeatedly reassured that my age was not an obstacle to re-education. After several instances of dropping the ball, forcing me to drop classes each quarter, I complained. They retaliated by cancelling my IPE, citing my age. I wasted over a thousand hours and lots of material costs - for nothing! I will never recover from the debt they caused.”</i>
<i>“Upon submitting my demographic information to be considered for DVR services, I had to reconcile my identity with DVR in an unprofessional manner. My name last is "---," but I am a Mexican adopted by Jewish-American parents as an infant. DVR required proof of my Latino heritage (rather than take it at face value) because they failed to conceive that a Mexican could carry a Jewish last name, like 'Claudia Sheinbaum,' the President of Mexico. This was incredibly insulting as a combat veteran and long-time Federal public servant.”</i>
<i>“When the caseworker switched the new one and her supervisor made me feel bullied harassed and wanted to completely change my plan. Making me lose job offers, contract jobs, and self-esteem. My info was released on my medical conditions to businesses; I was sent to businesses that weren't even business for clothes ...”</i>
<i>“I changed my name and the staff I dealt with continuously calls me by my previous name and seems very patronizing and sardonic towards me. Making it not possible for me to work with them”</i>
<i>“Yes. As a justice-impacted, disabled woman and grieving mother navigating complex trauma, I have repeatedly experienced systemic erasure and bureaucratic hostility. My identity is not just misunderstood, it is disregarded as inconvenient. DVR staff have questioned my legitimacy, ignored my professional credentials, and failed to account for the layers of structural violence I endure. Instead of receiving support tailored to my lived realities, I've been filtered through a cold, ableist lens that views my complexity as a barrier rather than a strength.”</i>
<i>“They did not provide adequate services, nor provide any help or services of much use and close out my case because they refused to provide the help and services, I need to accommodate my disabilities. They were trying to push their view of what I should be able to do but ignored my medical restrictions and limitations I need due to my disabilities. When I pushed back, they state I was non communicative, of which I have proof to that I continued to communicate even when they kept reassigning me to different people that did not respond, or if they did happen to respond, they gave me the run-around and didn't give me any answers.”</i>

Helping DVR Staff Understand Cultural Backgrounds, Identities, and Communities

The final question related to cultural identity presented to individual survey respondents was an open-ended question that asked, “What can DVR or its staff do to understand and support cultural backgrounds, identities, or communities of the people they serve?”

Four hundred fifty narrative responses were received. One hundred ninety-six comments contained phrases such as “does not apply,” “not sure,” and “I don't know.” Fifteen comments were positive, affirming that DVR understands and respects culture, personal identity, and communities. Content analysis of the remaining comments noted that the word “ask” was cited more than 15 times within the narrative comments. The word “continue” was mentioned in eleven comments, along with specific items that DVR is currently implementing. Quotes are provided in Table 56.

Table 56: *Helping DVR Staff Understand Cultural Backgrounds, Identities, and Communities*

Helping DVR Staff Understand Cultural Backgrounds, Identities, and Communities
<i>“Ask me questions to get to know me as a person, focusing on my character rather than my skin color.”</i>
<i>“Continue to be supportive of customers that has been assigned to them. Be available to hear out any situation that may occur.”</i>
<i>“Continue listening to the client's specific situations. Avoid painting with a broad brush when offering support.”</i>
<i>“By respecting everyone no matter who they are and no matter their cultural background.”</i>
<i>“Do not assume that because I am Asian that I speak an Asian language fluently”</i>
<i>“Do what you say you are going to do! Don't take advantage of disabled people!”</i>
<i>“Equal treatment despite cultural differences, gender and disabilities would feel the best for me. I would just like to receive the same standard of service as any other person.”</i>
<i>“Hire people that know what they are doing. Have more staff in the building for all programs that is on the client profile.”</i>
<i>“Hire staff who speak English as their first language. Cultural diversity training.”</i>
<i>“Ensure privacy when communicating with outside businesses. Provide supports without bullying. Have compassion and understanding that people in this program are struggling. And stop talking about your fancy vacations you are frequently taking.”</i>
<i>“Investigate more and put yourselves in the shoes of other people. Not everyone is the same, but the more you learn the history the more you can solve the issue.”</i>
<i>“Know how to deal with customers that are bipolar”</i>
<i>“Pair BIPOC customers with BIPOC/queer staff members since they can better understand their customers’ needs and represent them better.”</i>
<i>“Provide better services, make sure all stake holders understand the process and what needs to be done to support the person with disabilities”</i>
<i>“They could be better listeners. More proactive and less reactive when dealing with their customers”</i>
<i>“They need bring live interpreter back”</i>
<i>“Understand where I come from and what I am looking for in employment goals too”</i>

Helping DVR Staff Understand Cultural Backgrounds, Identities, and Communities

“Work in the specifics of special needs, not so much cultural. Catering to the individual needs is rarely seen”

Community Partner Results

Partner Survey: Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals - Minorities

Partners received a list of 20 barriers and were asked to identify those that hindered employment goals for customers who were racial or ethnic minorities. Respondents could select an unlimited number of items.

The top-ranked item, “language barriers,” was chosen by just over 67% of the partners. The next two most frequently cited barriers were “Employers’ perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities” and “little or no work experience.” Less than twelve out of the 64 partners who responded mentioned “Other health issues,” “convictions for criminal offenses,” and “substance use issues.” Six comments were received in the category “other, please describe,” which are quoted below.

“Cultural competency is important. Some people are not connected to services, or there is a misconception about what it means to be connected to services. Lack of awareness of available services in some communities, and I am unsure what that outreach looks like.”

“Distrustful of the service system”

“Employer bias, conscious or unconscious”

“Funding for the program”

“Most want to work for the tribe, and there are not enough jobs.”

“Tiny percentage of ethnic diversity”

Table 57: Partner Survey: Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – Minorities

Barriers to Employment Goals – Minorities	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Language barriers	43	67.2%
Employers’ perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities	41	64.1%
Little or no work experience	40	62.5%
Not having job skills	36	56.3%
Not having education or training	35	54.7%
Not having job search skills	30	46.9%
Disability-related transportation issues	30	46.9%
Other transportation issues	28	43.8%
Not enough jobs available	26	40.6%
Mental health or behavioral health issues	26	40.6%
Housing issues	24	37.5%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	24	37.5%
Not having disability-related accommodations	21	32.8%

Barriers to Employment Goals – Minorities	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Poor social skills	21	32.8%
Lack of assistance with disability-related personal care	16	25.0%
Childcare issues	13	20.3%
Other health issues	11	17.2%
Convictions for criminal offenses	11	17.2%
Substance use issues	10	15.6%
Other (please describe)	6	9.4%
Total	492	

Staff Survey Results

Staff Survey: Five Most Significant Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals - Minorities

Staff were given a list of 26 items and asked to identify the five most significant barriers to reaching employment goals for customers who were racial or ethnic minorities. There was no limit to the number of items a staff respondent could select. Thirty-three respondents answered the question.

Staff cited “community or systemic racism” as the most significant barrier preventing customers who are racial or ethnic minorities from reaching their employment goals, a factor not offered to the partners to select. Staff and partners agreed that “not having education or training,” “not having job skills,” and “language barriers” are among the top five obstacles to employment for minorities. A specific “fifth most significant barrier” could not be identified, as staff mentioned three items equally often when responding to the question.

Note that 285 (68.7%) of the 415 respondents reported positive experiences regarding DVR, which showed respect for cultural and personal identity. In comparison, 137 (16.6%) of 825 individual respondents disagreed when asked whether DVR staff understand the impact of personal and cultural identity on individual needs and experiences. Table 58 summarizes the staff choices for the five most significant barriers to employment for minorities.

Table 58: Staff Survey: Five Most Significant Barriers to Achieving Employment Goals – Minorities

Five Most Significant Barriers - Minorities	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Community or systemic racism	21	63.6%
Language barriers	16	48.5%
Not having education or training	14	42.4%
Not having job skills	12	36.4%
Employers' perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities	12	36.4%
Mental health issues	12	36.4%
Housing issues	9	27.3%
Not enough jobs available	8	24.2%
Lack of knowledge about career ladders/pathways	8	24.2%
Little or no work experience	6	18.2%

Five Most Significant Barriers - Minorities	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Lack of access to technology	6	18.2%
Poor social skills	5	15.2%
Other transportation issues	4	12.1%
Other health issues	4	12.1%
Not having job search skills	3	9.1%
Disability-related transportation issues	3	9.1%
Childcare issues	2	6.1%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	2	6.1%
Convictions for criminal offenses	2	6.1%
Lack of reliable Internet access	2	6.1%
Lack of financial literacy	2	6.1%
Not having disability-related accommodations	1	3.0%
Substance use issues	1	3.0%
Other (please describe)	1	3.0%
Not having STEM skills	1	3.0%
Lack of assistance with disability-related personal care	0	0.0%
Total	157	

Section III: Survey Findings - Summary

As with other sections of the report, predominant themes emerge from the data on the needs of underserved and unserved communities. These themes span several areas.

Racial and Ethnic Representation

While over two-thirds of respondents identified as White or Caucasian, the remaining responses reflect a wide range of racial and ethnic identities that go beyond standard demographic categories. The inclusion of mixed identities and detailed heritage descriptions (e.g., Jewish and Anglo mix, Haitian American, Somali, Polish, or Colombian) demonstrates rich cultural diversity among DVR participants. However, the lower engagement of the Hispanic or Latino (of any race) population is a point to consider in future outreach efforts to ensure this community's voices are accurately reflected. DVR serves a higher percentage of Black or African American individuals than the general population, indicating an attempt to engage a historically underserved community.

Strong Linguistic Accessibility

The high prevalence of English as the primary language (almost 95%) highlights a largely monolingual service population. However, the presence of respondents who use American Sign Language, Spanish, and other communication methods (including non-verbal communication) indicates a small yet significant multilingual and multimodal subgroup. These individuals might need specialized supports that go beyond traditional language translation—such as sign language interpretation, assistive communication technology, or visual communication tools.

High Satisfaction with Language Access

An impressive 94% of respondents reported accessing services in their primary language, suggesting that DVR's systems for linguistic inclusion are generally effective. However, the 6% who were unable to do so may reveal systemic blind spots—particularly for individuals using ASL, emerging immigrant languages, or communication modes not officially recognized in translation protocols. This small group's experiences might highlight equity gaps in implementation rather than in official policy.

Interplay Between Identity, Culture, and Access.

The intersection of racial, ethnic, and linguistic data shows how cultural identity relates to service accessibility. DVR's customer base includes culturally diverse individuals, yet the overall makeup is mostly White, English-speaking participants. This pattern may reflect broader structural inequities in outreach, awareness of eligibility, or trust in public systems. Respondents' self-described heritage details indicate a willingness among diverse communities to self-identify—but also highlight the need for organizations to better understand intersectional cultural identities.

Themes of Success

- Growing outreach efforts to underserved and minority communities, including partnerships with Tribal VR and local organizations.
- Increased attention to cultural responsiveness and language accessibility (surveys available in English and Spanish).

Themes of Improvement

- Underrepresentation of minority customers in DVR services and leadership positions.
- Barriers include a lack of awareness about DVR, limited culturally relevant services, and language access gaps.
- Need for stronger engagement with Tribal nations and communities of color through co-located or community-based services.

Section III: Listening Session Results

What we heard...

Cultural and Linguistic Barriers

- Customers across diverse communities identified a lack of cultural understanding among DVR staff as a key barrier to access.
- Recent immigrant populations, including Asian, Pacific Islander, Native American, and Hispanic communities, often hold stigmas toward publicly funded services and face language barriers that deter participation.
- Many customers reported that outreach materials are not available in their preferred language or are not culturally relevant, which reduces trust and engagement.

Representation and Trust

- Customers noted that DVR staff and vendors are not demographically reflective of the communities they serve. This lack of representation diminishes comfort and confidence in sharing personal goals or barriers.
- For Native American customers, historical distrust of government programs complicates engagement, particularly where tribal VR programs operate under different eligibility rules.

Emerging Populations and Intersectionality

- Stakeholders cited growing needs among gender-diverse individuals and those with intersecting identities (e.g., disability + LGBTQIA + immigrant status).
- Intake and assessment processes do not consistently identify or address the unique experiences of these populations, resulting in under-identification and underserved individuals.

What was said, in their own words...

“Language access is a big problem — interpreters aren’t always available, and forms are only in English.”

“Cultural competence is missing. Staff don’t always understand how disability is viewed differently in some communities.”

“There’s distrust in the system because people feel their voices aren’t heard — especially people of color with disabilities.”

“Rural and tribal communities don’t have the same access to DVR or WorkSource — we’re forgotten out here.”

“People from immigrant backgrounds face extra barriers; they’re afraid that using services could affect their status.”

“I’ve seen bias in who gets attention — white clients are often helped faster than Black or Latino clients.”

“Undocumented individuals with disabilities have nowhere to go — no access to benefits, and DVR doesn’t have a clear process for them.”

“Community-based organizations that serve minorities should be outreach partners — people trust them more than government offices.”

Section III: Recommendations

1. Develop **rural transportation solutions** such as rideshare or travel vouchers. This should be explored with all relevant state agencies to leverage resources across areas to support all Washington residents.
2. Explore the development of a **broader statewide language-access plan** (multilingual materials, interpreters, captioning) in line with Section 504. Expand outreach and ensure communication supports address multilingual and ASL needs.
3. Introduce ongoing **cultural competency and trauma-informed training** for all staff and CRPs.
4. Continue to develop **formal partnerships with tribes** to build trust and improve access for tribal members.
5. Recruit **specialized CRP staff** to serve Deaf/Hard of Hearing clients with quality interpreting options.
6. Regularly **analyze disaggregated data** on race/ethnicity, geography, and disability type to identify disparities in eligibility, closure, and wage outcomes.

Section IV: Needs of individuals with behavioral health.

Section IV of the assessment is a unique component compared to the “required” areas of inquiry in the CSNA process. In the planning process for the CSNA, DVR wanted a specific investigation of the needs of individuals with behavioral or mental health disabilities. While some population-related results are evident throughout the report, this section highlights findings and recommendations.

Individual Results: Behavioral Health

A key factor in the recovery process for individuals with significant behavioral health needs is employment. To understand how behavioral health needs intersect with the DVR employment process, customer respondents were asked several questions. First, when asked ‘How well do your behavioral health services support your progress toward employment or career goals?’ Over 56% (of 263 responses) (see Table 59) indicated that current behavioral health services support employment. This is a positive indicator but leaves room for growth.

Table 59: *Support with Career Goals*

Field	Percentage
Not at all – They don’t help me with my job or career goals in any way.	27.38%
A little – They help a tiny bit, but not enough to make a big difference.	15.59%
Somewhat – They help in some ways, but I still need more support.	33.46%
Very much – They really help me move forward with my job or career goals.	23.57%

An indicator of the need for additional support by DVR was highlighted in the responses to ‘Have you ever needed behavioral health support (such as counseling, medication management, or crisis support) that wasn’t available or easy to access while working with VR?’ In responses to this question (see Table 60), 35% of customers indicated that this support was needed, and wasn’t available.

Table 60: *Need for Behavioral Health*

Responses	Percentage
Yes (if yes, please explain what wasn't available)	34%
No	41%
Not Sure	25%

However, it is also essential to understand the specific needs that respondents requested that were not met (see Table 61). DVR can use this feedback to leverage improvement efforts and build its overall approach to serving individuals with behavioral health needs.

Table 61: *Feedback on Needs that Were Not Met*

<i>Individual therapy-skills-based, crisis-based, 1-1</i>
<i>Counseling, medication management, crisis support</i>
<i>None of that is easy to access</i>
<i>It was never offered</i>
<i>I just wanted someone to listen to me and tell me I'm not useless or unintelligent.</i>
<i>The DVR counselor said to look at my insurance when I asked about counseling.</i>

<i>I needed behavioral health support, such as counseling or medication management, that wasn't always available or easy to access while working with VR. This sometimes made it challenging to fully participate in services and stay on track with my employment goals.</i>
<i>I have not received this support from DVR</i>
<i>One-on-one counseling</i>
<i>Therapy is hard to get.</i>
<i>I did not know these services existed.</i>
<i>My counselor at the mental health clinic was out of town for two months, and I was having a hard time with pressures from the studies I was taking. I told my DVR counselor, "I am losing my mind!!!" Literally, he said, "I can't help you, go talk to Disability Services at your school!"</i>
<i>DVR provided general counsel with trusted advisors: a Godsend, nearly...</i>
<i>It's the system, not the DVR's fault.</i>

Community Partner Results: Behavioral Health

The exploration of the effectiveness of DVR in meeting the employment needs of customers with behavioral health needs was an initial broad area of inquiry. Respondents (77%) overwhelmingly reported that DVR is partially meeting these needs, indicating that some of the needs are being addressed. Still, significant gaps remain (See Table 62), and an additional 5% reported they were not met at all. However, it is essential to examine the specific barriers from a regional perspective to identify relevant nuances that DVR leadership can leverage to drive improvement.

Table 62: Effectiveness in Meeting Needs

Effectiveness in Meeting Needs	Percentage
Not at all met – The needs were not addressed in any meaningful way.	5%
Partially met – Some needs were addressed, but important gaps remain.	77%
Mostly met – Most needs were addressed, with only minor gaps.	19%
Fully met – All identified needs were successfully addressed.	0%

The next question (Table 63) in this section asked respondents to identify the top three reasons why individuals with behavioral or mental health disabilities struggle to access DVR services. A regional analysis highlights specific nuances across the state, and given DVR's particular interest in this area, it can help inform a nuanced approach.

For example, in Region 1, the top struggles identified included language barriers (100%), DVR staff not meeting customers in community locations (64%), and limited access to the DVR office via public transportation (50%), as well as other challenges in the area (50%). These findings indicate a potential underlying issue: reaching individuals from diverse backgrounds or communities who may be hesitant to engage with services.

As in Region 1, respondents in Regions 2 and 3 highlighted limited access to DVR offices via public transportation as a primary challenge. It should be noted that while DVR offices may be situated on public transportation lines, this does not mean that those lines are accessible to the broader customer base. Therefore, understanding the context of these response rates is crucial. The key challenge identified in Regions 2 and 3 was the inadequate provision of disability-related accommodations, with 60% and 80% of respondents,

respectively, recognizing this as an issue. This indicates a specific barrier that warrants exploring local-level solutions to mitigate it in the future. Other struggles identified in region 3 include Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) (57%), inadequate assessment services (64%), and a lack of options for the use of technology to communicate with DVR Staff, such as Zoom, Teams, text, etc. (67%).

Table 63: *Top three reasons individuals with MH struggle to access DVR Services.*

Reasons	Region 1: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima	Region 2: Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	Region 3: Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum
Limited accessibility of DVR office locations via public transportation	50%	50%	50%
Other challenges related to the physical location of the DVR office	50%	38%	25%
Inadequate disability-related accommodations	40%	60%	80%
Language barriers	100%	33%	33%
Difficulties completing the application	42%	46%	46%
Difficulties completing the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)	43%	29%	57%
Inadequate assessment services	45%	45%	64%
Slow service delivery	46%	46%	50%
Difficulties accessing training or education programs	50%	50%	30%
Lack of options for the use of technology to communicate with DVR Staff, such as Zoom, Teams, text, etc.	33%	0%	67%
VR staff do not meet customers in the communities where the customers live	64%	27%	27%

Reasons	Region 1: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima	Region 2: Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	Region 3: Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum
Other (please describe)	38%	50%	38%

Question three in this section further explores the barriers individuals face, aiming to understand the specific factors that impede achieving employment goals. While there is relative uniformity in the findings on common barriers to employment, including a lack of education, skills, and work experience, there are some interesting regional nuances worth exploring.

Region 1

In observing responses from this region, the most prominent barrier is the language barrier (100%), highlighting a significant need for multilingual outreach, interpretation, and culturally responsive communication, especially for those with behavioral health needs. Notably, this contrasts with the 1.8% of total survey responses that reported language as a barrier. Additionally, transportation and geographic barriers (50%) remain widespread, reflecting rural isolation and limited access to DVR offices. This challenge is likely exacerbated by existing staff outreach gaps, with 64% reporting that 'VR staff do not meet customers in their communities,' underscoring the need for greater community-based engagement.

Region 2

Compared to region 1, accommodations were cited by only 60% of respondents but remained the main barrier—indicating that even in well-resourced areas, disability-related accommodations are still lacking. Likewise, physical accessibility challenges (38%) and transportation issues (50%) continue, possibly reflecting other transportation barriers even in more urban areas.

Region 3

Finally, respondents from region three identified accommodations (80%) as the most common barrier, highlighting the need for DVR to be more proactive about the accommodations it offers. Additionally, customers reported that assessment services were inadequate (64%) and that developing the IPE was challenging (57%). Lastly, there is a need to examine how staff use technology to communicate, as 67% reported difficulties, which may be worsened by transportation barriers (50%) and slow service delivery (50%) in the region.

Table 64: Barriers preventing DVR customers with behavioral or mental health disabilities from reaching their employment goals?

Barriers	Region 1: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima	Region 2: Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	Region 3: Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum
Not having education or training	43%	39%	39%
Not having job skills	52%	31%	45%
Little or no work experience	50%	38%	41%
Not having job search skills	50%	42%	33%
Convictions for criminal offenses	38%	25%	63%
Language barriers	55%	45%	45%
Poor social skills	41%	41%	44%
Not enough jobs available	50%	25%	44%
Employers' perceptions about employing individuals with disabilities	44%	48%	40%
Not having disability-related accommodations	50%	57%	57%
Lack of assistance with disability-related personal care	43%	43%	71%
Disability-related transportation issues	47%	47%	40%
Other transportation issues	42%	42%	42%
Mental health or behavioral health issues	45%	45%	39%
Substance use issues	47%	35%	41%
Other health issues	36%	45%	36%
Childcare issues	50%	25%	25%

Barriers	Region 1: Adams, Asotin, Benton, Chelan, Columbia, Douglas, Ferry, Franklin, Garfield, Grant, Kittitas, Klickitat, Lincoln, Okanogan, Pend Oreille, Spokane, Stevens, Walla Walla, Whitman, Yakima	Region 2: Island, King, San Juan, Skagit, Snohomish, Whatcom	Region 3: Clallam, Clark, Cowlitz, Grays Harbor, Jefferson, Kitsap, Lewis, Mason, Pacific, Pierce, Skamania, Thurston, Wahkiakum
Housing issues	37%	37%	37%
Perceptions regarding the impact of income on Social Security benefits	35%	47%	47%
Other (please describe)	57%	57%	29%

In reviewing the responses of those with behavioral health needs, we see specific regional differences worth noting and potential further exploration by DVR.

Region 1

Region 1 faces significant skill and experience gaps. The top three barriers—not having job skills (52%), limited or no work experience (50%), and lacking job search skills (50%)—highlight significant challenges in workforce readiness and access to training—additionally, a high percentage of individuals (55%) face language barriers. As expected in a rural area, job availability and transportation issues (47–50%) are common obstacles. Furthermore, involvement with the justice system and substance use (38–47%) are also notable challenges, reflecting overlapping needs for reentry and behavioral health support.

Region 2

Overall, responses from this region indicate a lower prevalence of barriers to training and work experience. Specifically, only 39–42% of respondents in this region mentioned skill-related barriers, which is significantly lower than in the other areas—likely because of proximity to workforce and educational resources. In contrast, respondents expressed stronger concerns about employer bias and benefit disincentives. For example, 48% cited employers’ perceptions as a barrier, and 47% indicated that concerns about income impact on Social Security benefits were an issue. This underscores the potential presence of systemic or structural bias rather than individual skill gaps. Lastly, others reported language barriers (45%) and disability-related transportation issues (47%) at levels like those in other regions.

Region 3

Analysis of this region’s data shows that it has the highest rates of justice involvement and personal care barriers. For example, those with convictions for criminal offenses (63%) and lacking assistance with disability-related personal care (71%) are disproportionately high, indicating intersectional barriers related to justice involvement, behavioral health needs, and service infrastructure. Additionally, there is a significant need for accommodations (57%) and language access (45%). These factors could affect engagement with

employers who are not easily able to meet the needs of individuals with disabilities. This highlights the importance of stronger employer engagement and inclusive hiring practices.

Next, when respondents were asked “What is the level of collaboration between DVR and behavioral health providers?” (see Table 65), we gained insight into a potential area for DVR to explore. The reported level of collaboration between the Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and behavioral health providers is generally moderate to low. The quantitative results indicate the following:

Table 65: *Perceived Level of Collaboration - DVR and BH*

Min	Max	Mean	Standard Deviation	Variance
1.00	4.00	2.05	0.71	0.50

Given the 4-point Likert scale used in most DVR partner surveys (1 = Not at all effective, 4 = Very effective), the mean score of 2.05 indicates that most respondents rate collaboration as somewhat effective or less than average. This suggests that coordination between DVR and behavioral health systems remains inconsistent or transactional, likely occurring on a case-by-case basis rather than being part of formalized partnerships, data sharing, or joint service planning. However, with a standard deviation of 0.71 and a variance of 0.50, some partners perceive meaningful collaboration. These findings highlight a significant opportunity for system-level alignment between DVR and behavioral health agencies, especially in joint referral and case-conferencing protocols, integrated employment and mental health recovery models, and training on behavioral health literacy for VR counselors and employment specialists.

Section IV: Survey Findings - Summary

The section provides insights into both customer and community partner perspectives, highlighting key strengths and areas for system improvement. Over 56% of respondents indicated that behavioral health services support their employment goals to some degree. However, 35% reported that they could not access needed supports—such as counseling, medication management, or crisis services—while working with DVR. Qualitative feedback revealed that clients often encountered fragmented referral processes and limited awareness of behavioral health resources, which hindered their ability to maintain progress toward employment.

Seventy-seven percent (77%) of community partners said that DVR only partially meets the needs of customers with behavioral health conditions, with 5% stating those needs are not met at all. None indicated that the needs were fully met. Regional differences provide further insight of how behavioral health partners view barriers to accessing DVR services. Across all regions, respondents noted barriers related to accessibility, insufficient use of technology, and slow service delivery. Many participants also reported limited outreach by DVR staff in community settings. In addition, DVR customers with behavioral health needs reported challenges to obtaining employment, including limited education, skills, and work experience; stigma and employer bias; and insufficient accommodations. Transportation and Social Security benefit concerns were also prevalent.

Themes of Success

- DVR staff demonstrate understanding of behavioral health as a significant employment factor.
- Emerging partnerships with mental health and developmental disability service providers.
- The benefit of wraparound supports when DVR collaborates with behavioral health systems.

Themes of Improvement

- Insufficient provider training on behavioral health and trauma-informed approaches.
- Limited integration with state and local behavioral health systems for coordinated service delivery.
- Long wait times and inconsistent access to mental health services affect employment outcomes.

Section IV: Listening Session Results

What we heard...

Collaboration and Integration with Mental Health (MH) Services

The most prominent theme is the urgent need for DVR to create stronger, more formal partnerships and infrastructure with specialized mental health providers. Key factors cited in building these partnerships include:

- **Financial and Administrative Structure:** Several suggestions focus on creating a mechanism for DVR to contract directly with mental health providers to pay for services using DVR funds.
- **Provider Network Incentives:** The contracting mechanism must be worthwhile for practitioners, offering competitive rates, an easy referral process, simple payment terms, and a focus on practitioners who specialize in supporting individuals with disabilities.
- **Coordination of Care:** While some partnerships exist, respondents indicate a need for increased collaboration between VR and mental health providers. This coordination is necessary to ensure clients remain stable and ready for work throughout the job search process.
- **Infrastructure Investment:** There is a stated need for money, time, and structure to develop a robust system to support those with behavioral health needs. Without this, customers will continue to cycle back into the system due to unmet behavioral health needs.

Staff Competency, Training, and Empathy

A significant portion of the feedback focused on enhancing staff knowledge, providing professional training, and refining the overall approach to client interaction.

- **Specialized Knowledge:** Staff, including VRCs and vendors (CRPs), need better professional training to work effectively with this specific population. This includes understanding that diagnoses and how they manifest can look different on an individualized basis.
- **Trauma-Informed Approach:** Several references to ensuring the system of supports is trauma-informed, and given the focus on this, fully understanding the need for staff training on trauma and its impact on employment warrants further investigation.
- **Patience and Empathy:** Staff across the VR system (internal and external) need to exhibit patience and empathy to help identify resources and prevent clients from "slipping through the cracks".
- **Front-Line Training:** The training should extend to front-line staff, such as receptionists, focusing on how to handle individuals with issues like anxiety effectively.

Holistic and Foundational Client Support

Respondents suggest that DVR needs to expand its focus beyond job placement to address foundational stability and "employment readiness" before entering the workforce.

- **Prioritizing Stability:** Suggestions emphasize ensuring stability before referring customers for employment services, and "meeting the clients where they're at" to help them build healthy habits before ending services due to lack of readiness.
- **Unmet Basic Needs.** Many respondents discussed a need for support for customers seeking employment for haircuts, computers, and accessories (including printers). While clothing vouchers were cited as helpful, respondents were concerned about the options for using them. Finally, customers also require other services, such as housing and rental assistance.
- **Therapy and Accountability:** Feedback suggests a role in supporting clients with connecting to accessible counseling and monitoring accountability, such as checking in to ensure they are attending mental health counselor meetings and taking medications as prescribed.

Administrative and Employment Process Improvements

This theme covers procedural and systemic issues that affect customer access and preparation. Overall, respondents highlighted challenges with processes. These specifically included:

- **Process Speed and Communication:** The long timeframes from eligibility to plan to employment are difficult. The need for more regular communication with customers was highlighted as a solution to help mitigate the gaps that arise.
- **Employer Education:** Respondents indicated a particular need to support employers in accommodating and understanding behavioral health disabilities, and discussed the nuanced approach needed related to disclosure and stigma, which is associated with mental health.
- **Waitlist Concern:** One response notes that the Order of Selection severely limits the ability to improve services, as many individuals are placed on wait lists and become ineligible

Access to Clinical Support

Receiving an accurate behavioral health diagnosis is transformative for many clients, improving self-perception and access to appropriate supports. However, diagnostic services are challenging to obtain, particularly for women and minority populations who are often under- or misdiagnosed. Participants described confusion between personality traits and disability-related symptoms, leading to internalized stigma and delayed engagement.

Access to Specialized Care

Clients struggle to find mental-health professionals familiar with complex conditions such as bipolar disorder or PTSD. Access to specialized therapy and medication management is inconsistent, especially in rural areas. Many participants felt their counselors lacked understanding of cyclical or episodic behavioral conditions, resulting in misaligned service plans.

Workplace and Systemic Challenges

Stigma in the workplace remains a significant obstacle. Individuals with behavioral health conditions fear disclosure due to potential retaliation or job loss. Administrative and communication overload within DVR's systems can exacerbate anxiety, especially when clients receive multiple messages or unclear instructions. Several participants shared experiences of being labeled 'uncooperative' when overwhelmed by paperwork or communication delays, highlighting the need for more trauma-informed interactions.

In Their Own Words...

“There isn’t necessarily that for people with significant mental health issues who need ongoing support.”

“I needed behavioral health support, such as counseling or medication management, that wasn’t always available or easy to access while working with VR.”

“It’s hard for CRPs and DVR to coordinate supports for individuals who have both developmental and behavioral health needs.”

“There are not enough mental health resources to help people manage their conditions while they work or look for work.”

“People with behavioral health needs often lose DVR services when they go into crisis, and it’s hard to re-engage afterward.”

“DVR counselors need better training in understanding behavioral health conditions and trauma-informed communication.”

“We need integrated behavioral health and employment support—right now it feels like two completely separate systems.”

Section IV: Recommendations

1. Establish **formal Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs)** and data-sharing agreements between DVR and behavioral health agencies and strengthen DVR–BH communication and hold regular interagency meetings for collaboration.
2. Include **behavioral-health representation on local workforce boards** to strengthen system integration.
3. Provide **statewide training for DVR counselors on trauma-informed** and recovery-oriented practices.
4. Expand **telehealth-compatible and mobile DVR services** to improve access in rural and underserved areas.
5. Strengthen accommodations, including technology-based communication options (Zoom, Teams, text).
6. Develop **integrated service models** that combine employment, behavioral health, and peer support services.
7. Implement **joint case conferences and cross-system referral** processes to improve continuity of care.
8. Utilize **Individual Placement and Support (IPS)** principles to enhance supported employment outcomes for individuals with behavioral health needs.
9. Develop strategies to **enhance diagnostic access**, especially for women and minority clients.
10. Identify a dedicated **staff to coordinate** with **behavioral health** organizations.
11. Explore for **long-term funding to expand behavioral health** partnerships and service networks.

Section V: Needs of youth and students with disabilities in transition

Individual with a Disability Survey: Transition

Youth Transition Services Survey Results

Survey respondents were asked about their experiences with DVR services and the transition from high school to post-secondary services. One hundred and ten customers answered at least one transition question.

DVR Awareness and Outreach

Slightly more than half of respondents (52.73%) reported being aware of DVR and its services before high school graduation, and 42.73% were not aware. The primary source of information about DVR was learned through school counselors or teachers (53.21%), followed by family members or friends (32.11%). Only 4.59% learned about DVR through online searches, and 1.83% knew about it through WorkSource Centers.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Knowledge and Participation

Awareness of Pre-ETS services was low among respondents. Only 34.55% indicated they knew what Pre-ETS services were, 37.27% did not know, and 28.18% were unsure. Of those who were aware of Pre-ETS, 60.53% confirmed receiving or currently receiving these services, and 21.05% were uncertain.

Barriers to Accessing Services

The most frequently reported barriers to participating in Pre-ETS services were not knowing how to get help (19.05%), transportation challenges (18.25%), and Difficulty reading materials (14.29%). Notably, 26.98% of respondents reported they experienced no barriers. However, open-ended responses revealed that 25% of respondents were unaware of Pre-ETS services altogether. Common themes in narrative comments included: Lack of awareness about services and next steps; Transportation and accessibility challenges; Inconsistent support or staff transitions that resulted in cases “falling through the cracks”; Limited variety of skill-building opportunities (primarily janitorial or farm work); Geographic barriers, particularly for those in areas where offices were in different cities.

Geographic Considerations

Sixty percent of respondents indicated they did not live in rural areas, while 22.73% reported living in rural areas, and 17.27% were unsure. Of those asked about location-related access challenges, 52.17% indicated the question was not applicable.

Confidence and Collaboration

Confidence levels regarding what would happen after Pre-ETS services ended were lacking. Only 8.79% felt very confident, while 36.26% were somewhat confident. Nearly 55% expressed low confidence, with 29.67% not very confident and 25.27% not at all confident. Opinions were mixed regarding collaboration between schools and DVR. While 53.68% rated the collaboration as extremely or very well, 46.31% rated it as not so well or not at all well, leaving room for improvement.

Service Delivery Preferences

When asked where they would prefer to receive services outside of school, respondents reported the following preferences: Online/Virtual (25.71%); Community Center (18.86%); WorkSource Office (17.14%); College

Campus (16.57%); and Local library or town hall (15.43%). The preference for online/virtual services was the highest. Technology-based service delivery models may be most appealing to youth in transition.

Support Network Adequacy

Just over half (52.53%) of respondents felt that all the necessary agencies, support people, and family members were involved in their transition planning. However, 17.17% reported not having adequate support, and 30.30% were unsure. Table 66 lists transition survey questions and the results.

Table 66: *Individual with a Disability Survey: Transition*

Transition Related Question	Number of Responses	Results
Before high school graduation, were you aware of DVR and the services it offers?	110	Yes = 52.7% (n = 58) No = 42.73% (n = 47) Not Sure = 4.55% (n = 5)
How did you first learn about DVR?	109	School Counselor or Teacher: 53.21% (n = 58) Family Member or Friend: 32.11% (n = 35) Online Search: 4.59% (n = 5) WorkSource Center: 1.83% (n = 2) Other (please specify): 8.26% (n = 9)
Do you know what Pre-ETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services) are?	110	Yes = 34.55% (n = 38) No = 37.27% (n = 41) Not Sure = 28.18% (n = 31)
Did you receive or are you receiving Pre-ETS services?	38	Yes = 60.53% (n = 23) Maybe = 21.05% (n = 8) No = 18.42% (n = 7)
Have you ever experienced any of the following barriers while participating in Pre-ETS services? (Select all that apply)	126	Difficulty reading materials: 14.29% (n = 18) Lack of accessible technology: 4.76% (n = 6) Services not available in my area: 4.76% (n = 6) Transportation challenges: 18.25% (n = 23) Didn't know how to get help: 19.05% (n = 24) No barriers experienced: 26.98% (n = 34) Other (please specify): 11.90% (n = 15)
Do you live in a rural area?	110	Yes = 60.00% (n = 66) No = 22.73% (n = 25) Not Sure = 17.27% (n = 19)

Transition Related Question	Number of Responses	Results
Have you had trouble accessing Pre-ETS services because of where you live?	23	Yes = 13.04% (n = 3) No = 34.78% (n = 8) Not Applicable = 52.17% (n = 23)
What barriers to accessing Pre-ETS services do, or did you experience?	40	Most Common responses: Unaware of Pre-ETS services: 25% (n = 10) None: 12.50% (n = 5)
How confident were you in understanding what would happen after Pre-ETS services ended?	91	Very confident 8.79% (n = 8) Somewhat confident 36.36% (n = 33) Not very confident 29.67% (n = 27) Not at all confident 25.27% (n = 23)
How well did your school and DVR work together to support your goals after high school?	95	Extremely well 17.89% (n = 17) Very well 35.79% (n = 34) Not so well 28.42% (n = 27) Not well at all 17.89% (n = 17)
Where would you prefer to receive services outside of school?	175	Community Center 18.86% (n = 33) College Campus 16.57% (n = 29) Online / Virtual 25.71% (n = 45) WorkSource Office 17.14% (n = 30) Local library or town hall 15.43% (n = 27) Other (please specify) 6.29% (n = 11)
Did you feel you had all the agencies, support people, and family members you needed involved in your transition planning?	99	Yes = 52.53% (n = 52) No = 17.17% (n = 17) Not Sure = 30.30% (n = 30)

Partner Survey Results: Transition

Survey respondents from partner organizations were asked about their knowledge of transition services for youth with disabilities and recommendations for improvement. Fifty-two partners answered at least one transition-related question.

Partner Knowledge and Confidence

Partners demonstrated relatively strong knowledge of transition services in Washington, with 44.23% reporting a strong understanding and 36.54% reporting moderate understanding. Only 19.23% indicated having minimal or basic knowledge, suggesting most respondents were well-versed in the transition system. Despite partners' own knowledge, there were significant concerns about the youth and family's understanding of the transition process. When asked about confidence that youth and families understand the transition from Pre-ETS to VR services, 53.06% of partners indicated they were "not at all confident." In comparison, 36.73% were only "somewhat confident." Notably, no partners reported being "very confident" in their youth and family's understanding of transition.

Transition Process and Seamlessness

The handoff from Pre-ETS to VR services appears inconsistent. Only 4.17% of partners reported the transition is “always” seamless, while 16.67% indicated it occurs seamlessly “most of the time.” The majority (66.67%) reported the handoff is seamless “sometimes,” and 12.50% indicated it is “never” seamless. Partners rated DVR counselors’ and staff’s understanding of how to work with transition-age youth. While 40.43% rated this understanding as “very well” and 46.81% as “moderately well,” 10.64% indicated that DVR staff do not understand this population well at all. Only 2.13% rated the understanding as “extremely well.”

Collaboration Strategies and Coordination

Partners employed various strategies to support early transition planning. The most common approaches were joint meetings with DVR (25.00%), followed by coordination with the High School and Beyond Plan (19.83%) and volunteer or early work-based experiences (19.83%). Shared planning tools were used by 18.10% of partners, while 9.48% reported using no early transition planning strategies.

Underserved Populations and Regional Barriers

Partners identified multiple populations as underserved in their regions. Youth in rural communities were most frequently cited (16.98%), followed by out-of-school youth (16.51%), students with 504 plans (13.21%), and students with intellectual/developmental disabilities (12.74%). Other underserved groups included Native American or tribal youth (10.85%), youth in foster care (8.49%), English learners (7.55%), and justice-involved youth (7.08%).

For rural and small communities specifically, the most significant barriers to service provision were transportation challenges (28.68%), staffing limitations (23.26%), infrequent school referrals (19.38%), limited contractors or CRPs (16.28%), and technology or broadband access (6.98%). Open-ended responses revealed additional barriers, including a lack of parent involvement, insufficient Pre-ETS funding, inadequate reimbursement for travel time, and limited employment opportunities in small communities where businesses operate on thin profit margins.

Service Delivery and Accommodations

When asked about accommodations needed for delivering Pre-ETS in inclusive classrooms, partners most frequently cited scheduling flexibility (28.70%) and modified group curriculum (24.07%). Other necessary accommodations included collaboration with CTE instructors (17.59%), virtual service delivery (14.81%), and push-in classroom models (12.96%).

For improving access to Pre-ETS through community-based or alternative settings, partners suggested: Community centers (25.00%); College or technical campuses (22.41%); Online/virtual platforms (18.10%); WorkSource sites (16.38%); Tribal community spaces (15.52%). Additional suggestions included collaborating with businesses on DVR and ensuring students have access to appropriate assistive technology.

Table 67: *Partner Survey - Transition*

Transition Related Question	Number of Responses	Results
How would you rate your knowledge of transition services in Washington?	52	Minimal: 5.77% (n=3) Basic: 13.46% (n=7) Moderate: 36.54% (n=19)

Transition Related Question	Number of Responses	Results
		Strong: 44.23% (n=23)
How confident are you that youth and families understand the transition from Pre-ETS to VR services?	49	Very Confident: 0.00% (n=0) Confident: 10.20% (n=5) Somewhat Confident: 36.73% (n=18) Not at all Confident: 53.06% (n=26)
In your experience, how often is the handoff from Pre-ETS to VR services seamless?	48	Always: 4.17% (n=2) Most of the time: 16.67% (n=8) Sometimes: 66.67% (n=32) Never: 12.50% (n=6)
What strategies has your organization used to support early transition planning? (Select all that apply)	116	Shared planning tools: 18.10% (n=21) Joint meetings with DVR: 25.00% (n=29) High School and Beyond Plan coordination: 19.83% (n = 23) Volunteer or early work-based experiences: 19.83% (n = 23) None: 9.48% (n = 11) Other: 7.76% (n=9)
Which youth and/or student populations are underserved in your region? (Select all that apply)	212	Students with 504 plans: 13.21% (n = 28) Students with IDD: 12.74% (n = 27) Native American/tribal youth: 10.85% (n = 23) Youth in rural communities: 16.98% (n = 36) English learners: 7.55% (n =16) Justice-involved youth: 7.08% (n = 15) Youth in foster care: 8.49% (n = 18) Out-of-school youth: 16.51% (n = 35) Basic skills needs: 5.66% (n = 12) Other: 0.94% (n = 2)
What are the biggest barriers to providing services in rural or small communities? (Select all that apply)	129	Staffing limitations: 23.26% (n = 30) Infrequent school referrals: 19.38% (n = 25) Limited contractors or CRPs: 16.28% (n = 21) Transportation: 28.68% (n = 37) Technology or broadband access: 6.98% (n = 9) Other: 5.43% (n = 7)
How well do DVR counselors and staff understand how to work with transition-age youth?	47	Not well at all: 10.64% (n = 5) Moderately well: 46.81% (n = 22) Very well: 40.43% (n = 19) Extremely well: 2.13% (n = 1)
What accommodations or modifications are needed for	108	Virtual service delivery: 14.81% (n = 16) Modified group curriculum: 24.07% (n = 26) Push-in classroom models: 12.96% (n = 14)

Transition Related Question	Number of Responses	Results
delivering Pre-ETS in inclusive classrooms? (Select all that apply)		Scheduling flexibility: 28.70% (n = 31) Collaboration with CTE instructors: 17.59% (n = 19) Other: 1.85% (n = 2)
What community-based or alternative settings would improve access to Pre-ETS for students? (Select all that apply)	116	College or technical campuses: 22.41% (n=26) Community centers: 25.00% (n=29) WorkSource sites: 16.38% (n=19) Tribal community spaces: 15.52% (n=18) Online/virtual platforms: 18.10% (n=21) Other: 2.59% (n=3)

Section V: Survey Findings Summary

Overall, the survey findings emphasized several key themes from both family/youth respondents and partner organizations regarding transition services and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for youth with disabilities in Washington.

Awareness and Early Engagement

Slightly more than half of the youth were aware of DVR before graduation, usually learning through school staff rather than online or community channels. Partners noted that while they understand the system well, youth and families often lack awareness or confidence in navigating the transition from Pre-ETS to VR services.

Pre-ETS Access and Barriers

Only one-third of the youth knew what Pre-ETS was, and participation was inconsistent. Significant barriers included not knowing how to access help, transportation difficulties, and limited access to materials. Partners also identified transportation, limited staff, and lack of providers—especially in rural regions—as significant constraints.

Transition Coordination and Confidence

Youth expressed low confidence in what would happen after services ended, with over half reporting uncertainty. Collaboration between DVR and schools was mixed, and partners indicated that the handoff between Pre-ETS and VR is rarely seamless.

Underserved Populations and Equity Gaps

Partners identified underserved groups, including rural and out-of-school youth, students with 504 plans, those with intellectual and developmental disabilities, and tribal youth. These findings highlight ongoing inequities in access to coordinated transition supports.

Service Delivery Preferences and Opportunities

Both youth and partners favor flexible, community-based, and technology-driven services. Online or virtual options were most preferred by youth, while partners recommended community centers, college campuses, and tribal spaces for expanding access.

Themes of Success

- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are increasingly effective and well utilized.
- Stronger relationships between DVR and school districts, primarily through Regional Transition Consultants.
- Collaborative efforts with educators and families to build early work experiences.

Themes of Improvement

- Uneven access to transition services across school districts and rural areas.
- Need for greater family engagement and consistent follow-up after high school exit.
- Gaps in coordination with postsecondary institutions and workforce programs.
- Limited career exploration and paid work experiences for youth with more significant disabilities.

Section V: Listening Session Results

Customers consistently recognized DVR's genuine commitment to helping people achieve their employment goals and the impact individual staff members have on people's lives. Throughout the listening sessions, we heard heartfelt appreciation for counselors who go above and beyond, for critical supports that remove real barriers, and for partnerships that create pathways to success. When DVR has the capacity to deliver individualized services, the impact is transformative. Customers praised specific supports, such as assistive technology grants, home office equipment, and transit passes, that enabled them to work. They expressed gratitude for counselors who take the time to understand their goals and provide truly tailored guidance. Young people who connected with DVR before graduation spoke about how that early relationship set them up for success. Partnerships with specialized agencies, such as the Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) and quality community-based job coaches, received recognition for their expertise and responsiveness.

What we heard...

Early Awareness and Engagement

- Many students and families first learn about DVR services only after high-school graduation, missing crucial opportunities for earlier intervention.
- Families reported that outreach materials were inconsistently shared across schools, and teachers were often unaware of DVR's role.
- Students connected with DVR before graduation described smoother transitions and stronger employment outcomes, underscoring the importance of early engagement.

School Collaboration and Preparation

- The partnership between DVR and local education agencies is inconsistent across the state.
- Educators often lack familiarity with adult service systems, resulting in poor referrals and disjointed transition planning.
- Work-based learning experiences offered through schools are often limited to 'barista' or 'janitorial' tasks, failing to reflect real job expectations or diverse career pathways.

Family Involvement and Peer Support

- Families wish to be treated as collaborative partners rather than excluded observers. Several noted feeling 'uninvited' from planning meetings or goal development.
- Parents expressed a desire to connect with other families who have navigated the process, suggesting that peer-to-peer support could fill an information gap.

Gaps for Older Youth (18–21)

- A pronounced service gap exists for young adults aging out of school-based supports but not yet eligible for adult programs such as DDA.
- Youth in this group often feel they are 'starting over' when entering the adult service system, losing momentum and the supports they previously had.

Changing Youth Needs

- DVR and provider staff noted a need to update Pre-ETS tools and approaches for Generation Alpha youth, incorporating technology, digital communication, and emerging career interests.
- Soft skills, financial literacy, and independent living training were repeatedly identified as underdeveloped yet critical components of transition success.

In their own words...

<i>"We didn't know about DVR in high school; support started too late."</i>
<i>"Many didn't know DVR serves students; assumed it was only for injured workers."</i>
<i>"Being connected to the agency before finishing school helped a lot."</i>
<i>"Warm handoff to a case manager would have made the transition smoother."</i>
<i>"School 'barista' practice wasn't realistic—no payments or real rush periods."</i>
<i>"Most internships were kitchen or janitorial; we need broader options."</i>
<i>"Students lack guidance on credit, taxes, and budgeting."</i>
<i>"Schools don't teach life skills or offer enough vocational options."</i>
<i>"Young people need explicit teaching on social skills and adaptability."</i>
<i>"Mentoring or coaching would be an invaluable service to support the navigation of the system."</i>
<i>"Never heard of community rehabilitation programs."</i>
<i>"Job coach from CBO connects well and creates employment success."</i>

Section V: Recommendations

1. Begin **DVR engagement earlier**, with staff attending IEP meetings starting in middle school to introduce services and prepare families before high school transition points.
2. **Strengthen collaboration** between DVR, LEAs, and OSPI to align IEP and IPE planning and ensure consistent expectations for post-school outcomes.
3. Explore the use of **dedicated transition counselors** with smaller caseloads to focus on early outreach, networking, and collaboration with schools and families.

4. Ensure **15% Pre-ETS set-aside compliance** and document all allowable expenditures in alignment with RSA PD-19-03. Explore how Pre-ETS providers can cover travel, rural delivery, and staff time needed for individualized services.
5. **Distribute clear, family-friendly information** about services (e.g., the transition path). This can include **accessible marketing and outreach materials** for schools, parents, and students to increase awareness of available DVR supports.
6. Explore the use of a customer/provider portal that allows families, schools, and DVR staff to track real-time progress throughout the transition journey.
7. Develop structured, **statewide training modules for DVR staff, school personnel, and families**.
8. Offer **ongoing professional development** focused on working with diverse disabilities, trauma-informed practice, assistive technology, and youth engagement.
9. Strengthen **employer partnerships** to create inclusive, paid work-based learning, internships, and apprenticeships that lead to credential attainment.
10. **Coordinate with local workforce boards** and business networks to align WBL opportunities with regional labor-market demand and ensure WIOA Title I programs are leveraged.
11. **Use data-driven evaluation to monitor** regional and demographic disparities in access and outcomes for transition-age youth.

Section VI: Needs of individuals with disabilities served through other components of the Statewide Workforce Development System

Individual Survey Results

Individual Survey: WorkSource WA

Individuals with disabilities in Washington State were asked about their use and opinion of WorkSource WA American Job Centers.

WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Use and Accessibility

One-third of the respondents answered “yes” when asked if they had used the WorkSource WA American Job Centers beyond just an online account. Of those who created an online account at the WorkSource WA centers, about 11% (n=24) reported that the building was physically challenging to access, and slightly more than 1/5 (n=46) found accessing programs challenging. The narrative responses about physical concerns included issues such as entry buttons for the doors and a safe sidewalk not existing; doors that do not open properly; chairs pressing painfully against skin and moving inappropriately; lack of security making respondents feel unsafe; overcrowding inside; insufficient staff to assist; buildings that are not open; uncertainty about the office location; offices located too far away; WorkSource offices that are not open; and excessive fragrance in the building.

Table 68: *Individual Survey: WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Use and Accessibility*

Accessibility Questions	Yes	Percent of Total	No	Percent of Total	Total Number of Responses
Have you ever used WorkSource WA services beyond creating an online account? (this may include testing, preparing for or finding employment, job coaching, training, assistive technology or other services)	214	33.6%	422	66.4%	636
Did you experience any difficulties with the physical accessibility of the building?	24	11.3%	189	88.7%	213
Did you experience any difficulties accessing the programs at the WorkSource WA centers (e.g., lack of available assistive technology, no interpreters, etc.)?	46	21.5%	168	78.5%	214

WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Training and Employment

Most respondents reported that the services they sought at the Job Centers did not yield the desired outcomes. Of 214 survey customers, 76 (35.5%) visited the Center for training. Among them, 43 individuals (58.1%) reported receiving the training they wanted, and 16 (21.6%) found employment as a result. Additionally, 154 (72%) out of 214 individuals visited the Center to seek help with finding a job. Of the respondents, 152 answered the question about receiving assistance that led to employment, and 69.1% indicated they did not receive help in finding a job. Table 69 provides details on the results of using the WorkSource WA American Job Centers to seek training and employment.

Table 69: *Individual Survey: WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Training and Employment*

Training and Employment Questions	Yes	Percent of Total	No	Percent of Total	Total Number of Responses
Did you visit the WorkSource WA to receive training?	76	35.5%	138	64.5%	214
Did you get the training that you were seeking?	43	58.1%	31	41.9%	74
Did the WorkSource WA training result in employment?	16	21.6%	58	78.4%	74
Did you go to the WorkSource WA to find a job?	154	72.0%	60	28.0%	214
Did the WorkSource WA staff help you find employment?	47	33.1%	105	69.1%	152

Individual Survey: WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Helpfulness and Effectiveness

The concepts of helpfulness and effectiveness are evaluated in this study with respect to the WorkSource WA American Job Centers’ services. Overall, ratings of Job Centers, as reported by individual survey respondents, indicate mixed views on the helpfulness and effectiveness of the Centers’ services.

WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Helpfulness

Two hundred ten respondents answered the question regarding staff helpfulness in the individual survey. Almost 39% of respondents (n=81) found the Centers’ staff somewhat helpful, while nearly one-fifth (19%, n=40) indicated that the Centers’ staff were not valuable. Note the margin of difference between “very helpful” and “not helpful” is five respondents. Table 70 summarizes the results.

Table 70: *Individual Survey: Helpfulness of WorkSource WA American Job Centers' Staff*

Helpfulness WorkSource WA Center Staff	Number	Percent
Somewhat Helpful – It helped a little, but not enough.	81	38.6%
Helpful – It helped in a useful and expected way.	54	25.7%
Not Helpful – It didn’t help at all.	40	19.0%
Very Helpful – It was a big help and went above what was expected.	35	16.7%
Total	210	100.0%

WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Effectiveness

Regarding the effectiveness of the WorkSource WA American Job Centers, 36.7% of respondents found the Centers' services to be "somewhat effective" in serving individuals with disabilities. A narrow margin exists between the rates for “not effective” and "effective." Overall effectiveness ratings remain inconclusive. About one-quarter of respondents selected either effective, somewhat effective, or not effective in response to the question, with roughly the same number choosing each option. Additionally, an equal number of respondents cited either highly effective or “I don’t know.” Table 71 details the effectiveness of the Job Centers’ services as reported by individuals.

Table 71: *Individual Survey: Effectiveness of WorkSource WA American Job Centers Services*

Effectiveness WorkSource WA Services	Number	Percent
Somewhat Effective – It worked a little, but not very well.	76	36.7%
Not Effective – It didn’t work at all or made no difference.	57	27.5%
Effective – It worked well and did what it was supposed to do.	54	26.1%
Highly Effective – It worked very well and even better than expected.	20	9.7%
Total	207	100.0%
WorkSource WA Effectiveness Rating Serving PWD	Number	Percent
Effective – It worked well and did what it was supposed to do.	53	25.4%
Not Effective – It didn’t work at all or made no difference.	51	24.4%
Somewhat Effective – It worked a little, but not very well.	51	24.4%
Highly Effective – It worked very well and even better than expected.	27	12.9%
I don’t know	27	12.9%
Total	209	100.0%

Individual Survey: Recommendations for WorkSource WA American Job Centers

Individual survey respondents were asked: "What recommendations do you have for the WorkSource WA to improve their services to individuals with disabilities in Washington?" Respondents were asked to provide a narrative response. Five narrative comments were positive and expressed gratitude for WorkSource Center services, while five were negative toward the services and staff. Six recommendations were directed at DVR and not the WorkSource Centers. Thirty-three comments cited "don't know/none/unknown." Seventy-three narrative comments offered suggestions to improve staff attitude, hire quality staff, increase knowledge about people with disabilities, enhance communication, responsiveness, and helpfulness, provide more job opportunities and training, offer specialized services for people with disabilities, and improve community outreach to employers.

Individual Survey: Anything Else Regarding the WorkSource American Job Centers

Individual survey respondents were presented with another open-ended question asking if there was anything else they would like to share regarding WorkSource Centers and its services. A total of two hundred fifty-five responses were received. Eleven comments were directed to DVR. One hundred twenty-seven comments (49.8% of 255) cited "no/NA/not at this time." Twenty-four respondents cited "never hearing about/unaware of" the WorkSource American Job Centers. Twenty comments cited gratitude and positive comments regarding the WorkSource Center staff and services. Twenty-one comments detailed specific frustrations with WorkSource Center services and/or statements about not returning to use services. Five comments were difficult to classify. The remaining 47 narrative comments contained a variety of suggestions and feedback for the WorkSource Centers. Quotes are:

Table 71: Narrative Comments

<i>"They are a good resource whose services aren't always widely known."</i>
<i>"Advertise about WorkSource's existence"</i>
<i>"We need WA WorkSource staff who understand the nuances of getting MA and a Bachelor's level job and pay."</i>
<i>"Consider providing someone who specializes in helping folks with limitations at least find resources. I hear about people from other States that find connections working with their version of WorkSource or Vocational Rehab because they know of companies that might hire them."</i>
<i>"Everything needs to be transformed regarding staff attitude, services, and effectiveness for employment. Compassion and empathy need to increase by 100% among WorkSource WA staff!"</i>
<i>"Hire people that really care and that say what they mean and mean what they say."</i>
<i>"Hire more staff. This is urgent."</i>
<i>"Better staffing help for people with disabilities. Meaning, teach how to do things on the computer if the client is computer illiterate, not letting the individual sit there and look at the computer."</i>
<i>"When you sign up to their website, I end up with hundreds of spam e-mails every single time. Monster is notorious for selling off information. I don't want spam to find a job. I have deactivated my account several times to be told I have to activate it for job fairs, only to again receive hundreds of spam daily for months."</i>
<i>"They need to find jobs best tailored for people with challenges."</i>
<i>"They do not assist people who have college degrees, or so I was told."</i>

<i>“My communication was online. Both people I spoke with seemed motivated to help me with my resume and job search skills, but neither followed through. It seemed like they were uninterested in doing anything beyond the minimum.”</i>
<i>“Provide education on how to meet employers and seek job opportunities”</i>
<i>“I need hands-on training, something like an apprenticeship or an internship or even volunteer work training.”</i>
<i>“More in-office training in rural communities”</i>
<i>“More Technical/engineering software training”</i>
<i>“Job hunting is a pain as both the employer and the employee do not seem to know how to go about this task. Some employers are asking for too much in return for too little. WorkSource should try to work with employers on that and be more up front about folks with disabilities, even if temporary (a broken leg, say).”</i>

Community Partner Results

Partner Survey: WorkSource WA

Partner survey respondents were asked about their opinions and use of the WorkSource WA American Job Centers. It is essential to note that the sample size for this section of the report ranges from 34 to 71 respondents.

WorkSource WA American Job Centers - Use and Accessibility

The project team asked partner respondents to identify their frequency of interaction with the WorkSource WA American Job Centers. The results suggest that the partners are not sufficiently familiar with the WorkSource WA American Job Centers to determine whether the services are accessible to customers. The sample size ranges from 34 to 71 respondents for this section of the report. Over 91% of the partner respondents either occasionally or never interact with the WorkSource Centers. Less than 9% (n = 6) of the partner respondents interact frequently with the Job Centers.

The survey asked about the physical and programmatic accessibility of the WorkSource WA Job Centers. Twenty-three partner respondents (62.2%) reported that the Centers were somewhat physically accessible. Note that five partners were unsure if the Centers were physically accessible. Most partners (44.4%) said that the programs at the WorkSource Centers were somewhat easy to access. One-third of partner respondents (n = 12) found it challenging to access the programs through the WorkSource Centers. Most individual respondents (88.7%, 189 out of 213) reported no difficulty accessing the building, and 78.5% (n = 168 out of 214) reported no difficulty accessing the programs at the Job Centers. Tables 72-74 summarize responses from DVR's community partners regarding interactions and accessibility at the WorkSource WA American Job Centers.

Table 72: *Partner Survey: Frequency of Interaction with WorkSource WA American Job Centers*

Frequency of Interaction with WorkSource Washington	Number	Percent
Occasionally – I work with WorkSource a few times a year	33	46.5%
Never – I do not work with WorkSource at all	32	45.1%
Regularly – I work with WorkSource at least once a month	5	7.0%
Frequently – I work with WorkSource on a weekly or ongoing basis	1	1.4%
Total	71	100.0%

Table 73: Partner Survey: Physical Accessibility of the WorkSource WA Centers

Physical Accessibility of the WorkSource Washington	Number	Percent
Somewhat accessible	23	62.2%
Fully accessible	8	21.6%
I do not know	5	13.5%
Somewhat inaccessible	1	2.7%
Not accessible	0	0.0%
Total	37	100.0%

Table 74: Partner Survey: Programmatic Accessibility of the WorkSource WA Centers

Programmatic Accessibility of the WorkSource Washington	Number	Percent
Somewhat Easy – There is access most offices without too much trouble	16	44.4%
Somewhat Difficult – There is access to some offices, but it’s not easy	10	27.8%
Very Easy –There is access to offices without any problems	4	11.1%
I do not know	4	11.1%
Very Difficult –It is hard to access their locations	2	5.6%
Total	36	100.0%

Partner Survey: WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Effectiveness Rating

Partners and individual survey respondents held different views on the overall effectiveness (see Table 75) of the WorkSource WA American Job Centers in serving people with disabilities. Approximately 63% of the partners stated that the Centers somewhat effectively serve people with disabilities, while individual survey responses were mixed.

Table 75: Partner Survey: WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Effectiveness Rating

Effectiveness of WorkSource Washington	Number	Percent
Somewhat Effective – Helps individuals with disabilities a little	22	62.9%
Mostly Effective – Helps individuals with disabilities a lot	8	22.9%
Not Effective – Does not help individuals with disabilities at all	5	14.3%
Very Effective – Fully meets individuals with disabilities needs	0	0.0%
Total	35	100.0%

Partner Survey: WorkSource Washington American Job Centers – Improving Services

In the final survey question about the WorkSource Washington American Job Centers, respondents were asked how the Centers could improve services for individuals with disabilities. Partners were given six options and asked to select all that apply.

More than 79% of respondents indicated that the Job Centers should partner more effectively with VR, and slightly less than 62% of partners indicated that the Centers should train their staff to work effectively with individuals with disabilities. About 44% of partners (n=15) would like the Job Centers to improve their programmatic accessibility, even though about 55.5% of partners indicated that the Centers' programs are easy

or somewhat easy to access, and roughly 91% do not or rarely interact with the Centers. Five narrative comments were received in response to the item “other; please describe” and are quoted.

- “Communication with partner agencies”
- “Make sure assistive technology is available for individuals to use in the centers.”
- “No WorkSource in Jefferson. Kitsap staff do not know VR or how to work with people with disabilities.”
- “Provide services to rural and underserved areas”
- “Train staff to work with cultural differences”

Table 76: Partner Survey: Improving Services of the WorkSource WA to Serve PWD Effectively

Improving Service of the WorkSource Washington to Effectively Serve PWD	Number	Percent of number of respondents
Partner more effectively with VR	27	79.4%
Train their staff on how to work with individuals with disabilities	21	61.8%
Improve programmatic accessibility	15	44.1%
Include individuals with disabilities when purchasing training for their customers	15	44.1%
Improve physical accessibility	7	20.6%
Other (please describe)	5	14.7%
Total	90	

Staff Survey Results

Staff Survey: WorkSource WA

Staff survey respondents were asked about their opinions and usage of the WorkSource WA American Job Centers. For this section of the report, the sample size ranges from 33 to 34 respondents.

WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Use and Accessibility

Like partners, most staff (73.5%, n = 25 out of 34) sometimes or never interact with the WorkSource WA Job Centers and may not be a reliable source of information about the physical and programmatic accessibility of the WorkSource Centers. Nine staff members frequently interact with the Job Centers.

Most staff (n = 15, 44.1%) indicated that the Centers are generally accessible. Twelve staff members said that the WorkSource Centers are either somewhat physically accessible or they are unsure if they are physically accessible. About 41% of staff (n = 14) reported that the programs at the WorkSource Centers are mostly accessible. In contrast, 16 staff members reported they did not know whether the programs are accessible or only somewhat accessible. Note that approximately 11% (n = 24) of the 213 survey respondents found the physical accessibility of the building difficult, and more than one-fifth (n = 46) of the 214 respondents reported that access to programs was challenging. Tables 77-79 summarize DVR staff responses on interactions and accessibility at the WorkSource WA American Job Centers.

Table 77: Staff Survey: Frequency of Interaction with WorkSource WA American Job Centers

Frequency of Interaction with WorkSource Washington	Number	Percent
Sometimes – I work with WorkSource Washington once in a while	17	50.0%
Never – I do not work with WorkSource Washington	8	23.5%
Always – I work with WorkSource Washington all the time	5	14.7%
Often – I work with WorkSource Washington regularly	4	11.8%
Total	34	100.0%

Table 78: Staff Survey: Physical Accessibility of the WorkSource WA Centers

Physical Accessibility of the WorkSource Washington	Number	Percent
Mostly Accessible – Customers can access it with a few challenges	15	44.1%
Fully Accessible – Customers can access it easily without any problems	7	20.6%
I do not know	7	20.6%
Somewhat Accessible – Customers have difficulty accessing it	5	14.7%
Not Accessible – Customers cannot access WorkSource Washington at all	0	0.0%
Total	34	100.0%

Table 79: Staff Survey: Programmatic Accessibility of the WorkSource WA Centers

Programmatic Accessibility of the WorkSource Washington	Number	Percent
Mostly Accessible – Customers can access it with a few challenges	14	41.2%
I do not know	9	26.5%
Somewhat Accessible – Customers have difficulty accessing it	7	20.6%
Fully Accessible – Customers can access it easily without any problems	4	11.8%
Not Accessible – Customers cannot access WorkSource Washington at all	0	0.0%
Total	34	100.0%

Staff Survey: WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Effectiveness Rating

Staff and partners had different options when asked to rate the effectiveness of the WorkSource Centers. Like partners, most staff described the Centers as “somewhat effective” in response to the question. However, while over 38% of staff said the Centers are slightly effective in serving people with disabilities, nearly 30% said they do not know whether the Centers are effective.

Table 80: Staff Survey: WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Effectiveness Rating

Effectiveness of WorkSource Washington	Number	Percent
Somewhat Effective – Services help a little	13	38.2%
I do not know	10	29.4%
Mostly Effective – Services help a lot	6	17.7%
Not Effective – Services do not help at all	4	11.8%
Very Effective – Services fully meet the needs	1	2.9%
Total	34	100.0%

Staff Survey: WorkSource WA American Job Centers – Improving Services

Staff respondents were presented with six items and asked what the WorkSource could do to improve services for individuals with disabilities. There was no limit to the number of suggestions a respondent could choose. A total of 33 respondents answered the question.

Although the top two items selected by staff in response to the question are in reverse rank order compared to the reactions of partners, staff and partners’ responses match in rank order for the remaining four items. Over 60% of staff indicated that the Job Centers should train their staff on how to work with individuals with disabilities and partner more effectively with DVR. Also similar to partner results, staff would like the Job Centers to improve their programmatic accessibility even though: 1) 26.9% of staff do not know if the Center is programmatically accessible; 2) about 73.5% of staff sometimes or never interact with the Centers; and 3) the majority of individual respondents 78.5% (n=168 out of 214) indicated that they did not have difficulty accessing the programs at the Job Centers. Four comments were received in the category “other, please describe.” One comment contained the phrase “I do not know.” Three comments included suggestions for improving services, and the quotes are:

- “DVR needs to be present in all WorkSource offices; this way, referrals are more streamlined, and partnerships are facilitated.”
- “Fully service customers before DVR intake, which can be months out.”
- “Have more locations in rural areas.”

Table 81 summarizes the staff responses to the survey question regarding improving WorkSource Centers’ services for individuals with disabilities.

Table 81: Staff Survey: Improving Service of WorkSource WA for Individuals with Disabilities

Improving Service of the WorkSource to Effectively Serve PWD	Number	Percent of number of respondents
Train their staff on how to work with individuals with disabilities	23	69.7%
Partner more effectively with DVR	22	66.7%
Improve programmatic accessibility	12	36.4%
Include individuals with disabilities when purchasing training for their customers	8	24.2%
Improve physical accessibility	5	15.2%
Other (please describe)	5	15.2%
Total	75	

Section VI: Survey Findings Summary

Use and Accessibility (Individuals)

Overall, we discovered that only 33.6% of individuals with disabilities used WorkSource WA AJCs beyond their online accounts. Of those who used the centers, 11.3% reported physical accessibility difficulties, 21.5%

reported programmatic accessibility barriers, and 91% of partners rarely or never interact with WorkSource WA. Common barriers included inaccessible doors, unsafe sidewalks, insufficient staff, unclear office locations, and a lack of open hours. Additionally, 62.2% rated centers somewhat physically accessible; 44.4% said programs were somewhat easy to access. Finally, 63% rated WorkSource as somewhat effective for individuals with disabilities; none rated very effective. In general, clients' use of WorkSource sites appears limited, and when they are accessed, concerns about access are noted as a barrier.

Training and Employment Outcomes (Individuals)

One key element of Worksource programs across the country is to support people with training that leads to employment. Of those surveyed, 35.4% attended training; 58.1% received the training they sought, but only 21.6% said it led to employment. Overall, most individuals did not achieve desired employment outcomes through WorkSource WA services.

Helpfulness and Effectiveness (Individuals)

The perception of WorkSource's helpfulness was mixed: 38.6% somewhat helpful, 25.7% helpful, 19% not helpful, and 16.7% very helpful. This was like how effectiveness was viewed. Effectiveness ratings: 36.7% somewhat effective, 27.5% not effective, 26.1% effective, 9.7% highly effective.

Themes of Success

- Increased DVR collaboration with WorkSource and other WIOA core partners.
- Shared commitment to inclusive workforce practices and alignment with state employment goals.

Themes of Improvement

- Fragmentation in service coordination between DVR and other workforce partners.
- Need for clearer referral pathways and data sharing agreements.
- Limited joint training and cross-agency understanding of disability employment strategies.

Section VI: Listening Session Findings

The intersection of programs under Title I and III of WIOA, with that of Title IV, VR, is critical to understand, as a state's population of job seekers with disabilities is often much larger than the VR agency has the capacity to serve. As a result, understanding and effectively implementing the intent of WIOA is essential for a state looking to meet the diverse needs of its residents with disabilities. The listening sessions offered a forum for dialogue on this partnership.

What we heard...

Coordination and System Integration

The once-strong partnership between DVR and WorkSource has weakened over time, resulting in fragmented service delivery.

- WorkSource staff frequently lack the training or confidence to serve clients with disabilities, leading to inconsistent referrals and missed opportunities for collaboration.

- CRPs attempting to partner with local WorkSource offices reported difficulty establishing consistent relationships or shared procedures.

Access and Awareness

- Clients often remain unaware of the employment and training services offered through WorkSource, perceiving it as geared toward 'high functioning' job seekers or rapid placements.
- When collaboration occurs, it is typically due to individual initiative rather than a structured partnership.
- Title I and III services can be helpful during DVR wait periods, but awareness among counselors and clients is limited.

In their own words...

<i>“WorkSource is great if you already know what you want and can advocate for yourself, but it’s overwhelming for people with disabilities.”</i>
<i>“The buildings aren’t accessible; even the doors are heavy, and the signage isn’t always clear.”</i>
<i>“When I went to WorkSource, I didn’t see anyone who understood disability or could help me navigate the process.”</i>
<i>“There’s a lot of overlap between DVR and WorkSource, but they don’t talk to each other — you end up repeating everything.”</i>
<i>“WorkSource has job listings, but they’re not geared toward people who need accommodations or part-time options.”</i>
<i>“The workshops are not inclusive — they assume everyone learns the same way.”</i>
<i>“I was told to go to WorkSource, but no one there knew how to connect me to employers who hire people with disabilities.”</i>

Section VI: Recommendations

1. Rebuild **the partnership between DVR and WorkSource** across the state. Expand data-sharing agreements among core partners to track common customers and outcomes.
2. Institute **cross-training for WorkSource staff on disability** awareness and DVR services.
3. Encourage **strategic referrals to Title I and III** programs during DVR wait periods.
4. **Develop and distribute promotional materials** that clearly describe WorkSource services and the intersection with DVR services.
5. **Fully integrate DVR services into WorkSource AJCs.** Explore how to co-locate more staff, creating joint intake and referral systems, and using local partnerships to set the foundation of Integrated Resource Teams.
6. Develop **cross-training between DVR and WorkSource** staff to ensure shared understanding of CIE, ADA, and reasonable accommodation.
7. Enhance **accessibility of AJCs** by auditing physical and digital access in accordance with §361.29(c)(4).

Section VII: Need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs.

Individual Survey Results

Individual Survey: Service Providers

Individual survey respondents were asked a series of questions identifying their use of DVR referrals, their service provider's quality, effectiveness, and responsiveness, and whether they would recommend their service provider to others.

Use of a DVR Referral

The first question asked individual survey respondents to indicate whether they received services from a community service provider that DVR referred them to. A total of 667 respondents answered the question. Approximately one-third of individual respondents reported not receiving services from a DVR referral. Table 82 summarizes the results.

Table 82: *Individual Survey: Use of a DVR Referral*

Use of Services from DVR Referral	Number	Percent
Yes	349	52.3%
No	221	33.1%
I am not sure	97	14.5%
Total	667	100.0%

Meeting Location

Individual survey respondents were asked to identify where they typically meet with their community service provider. A total of 337 individuals responded to the question. Almost one-half of respondents indicated that they meet with their service provider at the organization's office building, and slightly less than one-quarter meet via video conference.

Table 83: *Individual Survey: Meeting Location with Service Provider*

Meeting Location with Service Provider	Number	Percent
I go to the organizations office	166	49.3%
We meet remotely by video conference (e.g., Zoom, Teams, FaceTime)	78	23.1%
In my community/school	59	17.5%
We meet remotely by phone	34	10.1%
Total	337	100.0%

Quality of Service from Service Provider

Individuals were asked to rate the quality of service from the service provider. A total of 598 responses were received. Although one-third of respondents indicated that the quality of service from the provider was good, almost an equal percentage of respondents indicated that the service provider's service quality was either "excellent," "fair," or "poor." Table 84 details the results.

Table 84: *Individual Survey: Quality of Service from Service Provider*

Quality of Services: Service Provider	Number	Percent
Good Quality – Met expectations and worked well overall.	203	33.9%
Fair Quality – Met some expectations but had noticeable issues.	142	23.7%
Excellent Quality – Exceeded expectations; very well-made or done.	132	22.1%
Poor Quality – Did not meet expectations; had major problems or flaws.	121	20.2%
Total	598	100.0%

Effectiveness of Service Provider Services

Individual survey respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of the service provider's services. Slightly less than one-half (47.7%, n=281) of the respondents indicated that the services were somewhat effective or not effective, and slightly more than one-half (52.2%, n=308) of individuals cited the services as very effective or effective. The results are detailed in Table 85.

Table 85: *Individual Survey: Effectiveness of Service from Service Provider*

Effectiveness of Services: Service Provider	Number	Percent
Effective – It worked well and did what it was supposed to do.	182	30.9%
Somewhat Effective – It worked a little, but not very well.	164	27.8%
Not Effective – It didn't work at all or made no difference.	144	24.4%
Highly Effective – It worked very well and even better than expected.	99	16.8%
Total	589	100.0%

Effectiveness of Service Provider Remote Services

Individual survey respondents were also asked to rate the effectiveness of the service provider's remote services. The total number of respondents who answered the question is 111, which matches the number of individual survey respondents who reported meeting with their provider remotely by phone or video conference. One-third (33.3%, n = 37) of the respondents indicated that the remote services were effective. Conversely, 20.7% (n = 23) of survey respondents reported that the services were not effective. The results are detailed in Table 86.

Table 86: *Individual Survey: Effectiveness of Remote Services from Service Provider*

Effectiveness of Remote Services: Service Provider	Number	Percent
Effective – It worked well and did what it was supposed to do.	37	33.3%
Somewhat Effective – It worked a little, but not very well.	27	24.3%
Highly Effective – It worked very well and even better than expected.	24	21.6%
Not Effective – It didn't work at all or made no difference.	23	20.7%
Total	111	100.0%

Responsiveness of the Service Provider

Individual survey respondents were asked to rate the service provider's responsiveness. The margin of difference between “somewhat responsive” and “very responsive” is less than 1% (n=5). Most respondents rated the service provider's responsiveness as “responsive.” Table 87 details the results.

Table 87: *Individual Survey: Responsiveness of Service Provider*

Responsiveness of Service Provider	Number	Percent
Responsive – Responded in a reasonable time and met the need.	207	34.3%
Somewhat Responsive – Responded, but it was slow or only partly met the need.	160	26.5%
Very Responsive – Responded quickly and fully met or exceeded the need.	155	25.7%
Not Responsive – No response or extremely slow; needs were ignored.	81	13.4%
Total	603	100.0%

Recommend Service Provider

The final question asked of individuals regarding service providers was, “Would you recommend your service provider to others served by DVR?” Although about one-fourth of respondents cited “not sure,” roughly 53% indicated that they would recommend their service provider to others. The response ratings are contained in Table 88.

Table 88: *Individual Survey: Recommend Service Provider*

Recommend Service Provider	Number	Percent
Yes	325	53.2%
Not sure	158	25.9%
No	128	20.9%
Total	611	100.0%

Partner Survey Results

Partner Survey: Service Providers

Partner survey respondents were asked questions about rehabilitation service providers to assess their availability to customers and whether the services meet their needs.

Services Readily Available to VR Customers

Partners were given a list of 19 items and asked to respond in a “yes or no” format to identify whether the service is readily available to DVR customers. Ten items were cited as readily available by 70% or more of the respondents who cited “yes, the service is readily available.” Supported employment services were identified as the most frequently available service for DVR customers. Employment services and pre-employment transition services were identified as the two most readily available services. Registered apprenticeship training and reader services were cited the fewest times as readily available. The narrative comments cited mental and behavioral health services and supportive housing in response to the item “other; please describe.” One narrative comment suggested that DVR is not readily available due to a 3-month wait from the date that a customer schedules a meeting to the date the intake meeting takes place. Table 89 details the partner responses to the question.

Table 89: Partner Survey: Services Readily Available

Service	Yes, the service is readily available		No, the service is not readily available		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Supported employment services	81	89.0%	10	11.0%	91
Employment services (job search, job development and placement)	79	88.8%	10	11.2%	89
Pre-employment transition services	75	85.2%	13	14.8%	88
Customized employment services	73	83.0%	15	17.1%	88
Occupational or vocational training	69	79.3%	18	20.7%	87
On-the-job training	62	74.7%	21	25.3%	83
Assistive technology services	60	72.3%	23	27.7%	83
Transportation	59	71.1%	24	28.9%	83
Community college or four-year college or university training	57	70.4%	24	29.6%	81
Benefits counseling	57	70.4%	24	29.6%	81
Interpreter and translator services	53	66.3%	27	33.8%	80
Paid internships and work-based learning	49	61.3%	31	38.8%	80
Disability-related skills training (orientation and mobility, Braille, etc.)	48	60.0%	32	40.0%	80
Maintenance or other income assistance	40	54.1%	34	46.0%	74
Literacy training	38	52.8%	34	47.2%	72
Personal assistance services	38	52.8%	34	47.2%	72
Reader services	28	44.4%	35	55.6%	63
Registered apprenticeship training	27	36.5%	47	63.5%	74
Other (please describe)	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	5

Service Providers Meeting Customer Needs

Partner survey respondents were asked to identify how frequently service providers in Washington State could meet the rehabilitation service needs of DVR customers. More than 61% of partners indicated that service providers frequently meet the needs of DVR customers. Table 90 summarizes the results of this question.

Table 90: Partner Survey: Frequency of Service Providers Meeting Needs

Frequency Service Providers Meet Needs	Number	Percent
Frequently – Service needs are met in most cases	54	61.4%
Sometimes – Service needs are met about half the time	21	23.9%
Rarely – Service needs are met only in a few cases	8	9.1%
Always – Service needs are consistently met across customers	5	5.7%
Total	88	100.0%

Services Most Effectively Delivered by Service Providers

Partners were provided a list of 15 items and asked to identify the services that service providers most effectively provided to DVR customers. The number of services a partner could choose was unlimited.

Partners indicated that the most effective services CRPs provide are job development and training services. These two services were chosen more than 80% of the time, while the third choice, benefits planning assistance, was selected by less than 37% of partners. Four comments were received in the category “other.” One comment noted the phrase, “We do not see referrals for the services listed.” The three remaining comments cited benefit planning by DVR and providers, school-to-work services, self-advocacy and work readiness. Table 91 lists the services and the number of times each item was selected.

Table 91: *Partner Survey: Services Most Effectively Delivered by Service Providers*

Services that Service Providers are Most Effective in Providing to VR Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Job development services	66	85.7%
Job training services (trial work experiences, Job Coaching, OJT, etc.)	62	80.5%
Benefit planning assistance	28	36.4%
Assistive technology services	23	29.9%
Other transportation assistance	23	29.9%
Other education services	20	26.0%
Mental health treatment	12	15.6%
Substance use treatment	10	13.0%
Vehicle modification assistance	7	9.1%
Income assistance	5	6.5%
Medical treatment	5	6.5%
Health insurance	5	6.5%
Housing	5	6.5%
Other (please describe)	4	5.2%
Personal care attendants	3	3.9%
Total	278	

Rehabilitation Needs Service Providers are Unable to Meet

Partners were asked an open-ended question to identify the rehabilitation needs that service providers in their area could not meet. A total of 57 narrative responses were received in response to the question. Comments included: DVR not meeting personal care needs and not using subscription based training options; lack of rural employment opportunities; transportation; programs for youth; training and apprenticeships; lack of employers to provide customized employment; lack of jobs available; interpreter services; inability to pass background checks within tribal government; non-order of selection disabilities of Native Americans; DVR as a barrier that hinders needs being met; waitlists of DVR and providers block needs from being met; and lack of provider funding and staff.

Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Customers' Needs

Partners were given a list of six reasons and asked to identify why community service providers could not meet customers' service needs. A total of 77 respondents answered the question. The most common response was "low rates paid for services." Almost an equal number of respondents cited "not enough service providers available in the area," and “consumer barriers prevent successful interactions with service providers.” Quotes

from the item "other" cited DVR not funding contractors and services, the responsiveness of DVR staff, low rates for service providers, insufficient job opportunities, large caseloads, and inadequate staffing.

Table 92: *Partner Survey: Primary Reasons Providers are Unable to Meet Customers’ Needs*

Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Customers' Needs	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Low rates paid for services	39	50.6%
Not enough service providers available in area	29	37.7%
Customers barriers prevent successful interactions with service providers	28	36.4%
Other (please describe)	24	31.2%
Low levels of accountability for poor performance by service providers	12	15.6%
Low quality of service provider services	11	14.3%
Total	143	

Partner Survey: Top Three Changes to Help Better Serve DVR Customers

Partner survey respondents were presented with a list of 13 potential changes and asked to identify the top 3 that would help them better serve DVR customers. Seventy-three partners answered the question. Over 56 percent of the partners cited higher rates paid by VR for services as the top change that would help them better serve DVR customers, indicating that their salaries prevent them from serving DVR customers well. Items that ranked in the second and third positions related to DVR processes and communication with the referring DVR counselor. Collaborating with WorkSource was cited the fewest times by partners in response to the question. Table 93 lists the changes and the number of times each was identified as one of the top three changes that would help better serve DVR customers.

Table 93: *Partner Survey: Top Three Changes to Help Better Serve DVR Customers*

Top Three Changes Better Serve Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Higher rates paid by VR for services	41	56.2%
More streamlined processes	35	47.9%
Improved communication with the referring VR counselor	25	34.2%
Reduced documentation requirements	21	28.8%
Improved business partnerships	18	24.7%
Smaller caseload	16	21.9%
Referral of appropriate individuals	15	20.5%
Other (please describe)	11	15.1%
Incentives for high performance paid by VR	8	11.0%
Additional training	6	8.2%
Increased options for technology use to communicate with customers	6	8.2%
Increased collaboration with WorkSource WA	4	5.5%

Top Three Changes Better Serve Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Total	206	

Partner Survey: Most Essential Change Service Providers Could Make to Support Customer Efforts to Achieve Employment Goals

Partners were asked to identify the most critical change that service providers in Washington State could implement to help customers reach their employment goals. Sixty-one narrative responses were collected. Topics mentioned in the comments include improvements at DVR, hiring additional staff and offering professional training; networking with other CRPs and local agencies; developing and maintaining community business partnerships to create jobs and expedite placements; enhancing communication and understanding of customer needs; increasing advocacy for customers; reducing waitlists; and securing more funding from DVR for resources.

Staff Survey Results

Staff Survey: Service Providers

Staff survey respondents were asked six questions about rehabilitation service provider services. The questions aim to identify the services DVR refers to or recommends and to determine whether these services meet customers’ needs.

Services Immediately Available to DVR Customers

Staff received a list of 19 items and were asked to identify services that are immediately accessible to DVR customers. Responses from staff and partners vary because partners had a slightly different list of options. At least 82% of staff identified four services—benefit planning, other transportation assistance, assistive technology, and remote service delivery—as immediately available to DVR customers. Table 94 summarizes the staff’s choices of services that are immediately available.

Table 94: Staff Survey: Services Immediately Available

Service Immediately Available	Number	Percent of number of respondents
Benefit planning assistance	37	92.5%
Other transportation assistance	36	90.0%
Assistive technology	35	87.5%
Remote service delivery (tele counseling, remote job supports, etc.)	33	82.5%
Job development services	31	77.5%
Job training services (TWE, Job Coaching, OJT, etc.)	30	75.0%
Other education services	29	72.5%
Vehicle modification assistance	25	62.5%
Career Ladder/Pathways counseling	21	52.5%
Mental health treatment	16	40.0%
Financial literacy training	14	35.0%
Medical treatment	11	27.5%

Service Immediately Available	Number	Percent of number of respondents
STEM skills training	9	22.5%
Personal care attendants	9	22.5%
Substance use treatment	6	15.0%
Health insurance	6	15.0%
Housing	5	12.5%
Income assistance	4	10.0%
Other (please describe)	2	5.0%
Total	359	

Services Not Immediately Available or Do Not Exist

Staff were asked to indicate what services were not immediately available or did not exist around the State of Washington where they work. The number of services that could be chosen was unlimited. A total of 33 staff members responded to the question. Staff showed some consistency in their choices of available and unavailable services. The items listed as services that are not immediately available or do not exist are at the top of Table 95. Not surprisingly, the services staff indicated as immediately available are at the bottom of Table 94, while those same items are at the top of Table 95. One comment in the "other" category was received and is quoted:

“Any service requiring planned needs; consistent opportunity to practice soft skills...”

Table 95: *Staff Survey: Services Not Readily Available or Do Not Exist*

Service Not Immediately Available or Do Not Exist	Number	Percent of number of respondents
Housing	27	81.8%
Income assistance	25	75.8%
Health insurance	24	72.7%
Personal care attendants	22	66.7%
Medical treatment	21	63.6%
Substance use treatment	20	60.6%
STEM skills training	19	57.6%
Mental health treatment	18	54.5%
Financial literacy training	15	45.5%
Vehicle modification assistance	13	39.4%
Job training services (TWE, Job Coaching, OJT, etc.)	8	24.2%
Other education services	8	24.2%
Job development services	8	24.2%
Career Ladder/Pathways counseling	8	24.2%
Assistive technology	5	15.2%
Remote service delivery (tele-counseling, remote job supports, etc.)	5	15.2%
Other transportation assistance	3	9.1%
Benefit planning assistance	2	6.1%

Service Not Immediately Available or Do Not Exist	Number	Percent of number of respondents
Other (please describe)	1	3.0%
Total	252	

Service Providers Meeting Customers’ Needs

Staff survey respondents were asked to identify how frequently service providers in the State of Washington could meet DVR customers’ rehabilitation service needs. Most respondents (63.9%) indicated that service providers often meet the needs of DVR customers. A significantly lower percentage of respondents indicated that service providers always meet customers' needs. Note that roughly 53% of individual survey respondents would recommend their service provider.

Table 96: *Staff Survey: Frequency of Service Providers Meeting Customers’ Needs*

Frequency Providers Meet Needs	Number	Percent
Often – Providers meet people’s needs most of the time	23	63.9%
Sometimes – Providers meet people’s needs once in a while	7	19.4%
Always – Providers consistently meet people’s needs	6	16.7%
Never – Providers do not meet people’s needs	0	0.0%
Total	36	100.0%

Rehabilitation Needs Service Providers are Unable to Meet

Staff survey respondents were asked to identify the rehabilitation needs that service providers could not meet in their area through an open-ended question. Twenty-four respondents provided narrative responses highlighting various service gaps.

One comment did not identify rehabilitation needs and stated, “nothing I can think of.” Six narrative comments explained the lack of service providers for employment, medical, and mental health services. Four comments mentioned a shortage of jobs, including high-quality jobs, careers, high-wage careers, and employers actively hiring. Other comments addressed transportation and vehicle modification services, bilingual services, housing, student services, waitlists, and CRPs limiting customer hours.

Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Customers’ Needs

Staff survey respondents received a list of seven reasons and were asked to identify the main reasons why vocational rehabilitation service providers might not meet customers’ needs. Staff could choose more than one reason if they wished. A total of 34 staff members answered the question.

Staff and partners had slightly different options when answering this question. Staff identified service provider staff turnover as the most common response, an item not shown to partners. Items related to insufficient service providers and consumer barriers were the second and third-most-common reasons cited by both staff and partners for why customers’ rehabilitation service needs were not being met. Notably, over 61% of respondents cited staff turnover and a lack of available service providers as key reasons why service providers cannot meet customers’ needs. Table 97 presents the staff respondents’ choices to the question. The four narrative comments received are quoted.

- | |
|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Communication encryption is very cumbersome through email.” • “Frontier location not as resourced for job opportunities” |
|--|

- “Funding, not tied to job goal”
- “So many live out of the service area.”

Table 97: Staff Survey: Primary Reasons Providers are Unable to Meet Customers’ Needs

Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Individuals' Needs	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Service provider staff turnover	23	67.6%
Not enough service providers available in area	21	61.8%
Consumer barriers prevent successful interactions with service providers	12	35.3%
Low levels of accountability for poor performance by service providers	11	32.4%
Low quality of service provider services	10	29.4%
Low rates paid for services	8	23.5%
Other (please describe)	4	11.8%
Total	89	

Staff Survey: Most Essential Change Service Providers Could Make to Support Customer Efforts to Achieve Employment Goals

Staff respondents were asked an open-ended question to identify the most essential change that service providers could implement to support customers in achieving their employment goals. A total of 23 narrative responses were received. Content analysis showed that the most common suggestions included improving wages for frontline service provider staff (x9), hiring more staff (x5), providing staff training (x4), enhancing services through active listening, understanding, and meeting specific customer needs, and improving communication with DVR (x8). Other suggestions were learning to advocate for customers instead of viewing DVR as a means of financial gain (x1), and having direct service staff, rather than organization leaders, meet with customers (x1).

Individual Survey Results

Individual Survey: Service Providers

Individual survey respondents were asked a series of questions identifying their use of DVR referrals, their service provider's quality, effectiveness, and responsiveness, and whether they would recommend their service provider to others.

Use of a DVR Referral

The first question asked individual survey respondents whether they received services from a community service provider referred by DVR. A total of 667 respondents answered this question. About one-third of the respondents reported not receiving services from a DVR referral. Table 98 summarizes the results.

Table 98: Individual Survey: Use of a DVR Referral

Use of Services from DVR Referral	Number	Percent
Yes	349	52.3%

Use of Services from DVR Referral	Number	Percent
No	221	33.1%
I am not sure	97	14.5%
Total	667	100.0%

Meeting Location

Individual survey respondents were asked to identify where they typically meet with their community service provider. A total of 337 individuals responded to the question. Nearly half of the respondents said they meet their service provider at the organization’s office, and just under a quarter meet via video conference.

Table 99: *Individual Survey: Meeting Location with Service Provider*

Meeting Location with Service Provider	Number	Percent
I go to the organizations office	166	49.3%
We meet remotely by video conference (e.g., Zoom, Teams, FaceTime)	78	23.1%
In my community/school	59	17.5%
We meet remotely by phone	34	10.1%
Total	337	100.0%

Quality of Service from Service Provider

Participants were asked to rate the service quality provided by the service provider. A total of 598 responses were collected. While one-third of respondents said the service quality was good, nearly the same percentage indicated that the provider's service was either “excellent,” “fair,” or “poor.” Table 100 presents the results.

Table 100: *Individual Survey: Quality of Service from Service Provider*

Quality of Services: Service Provider	Number	Percent
Good Quality – Met expectations and worked well overall.	203	33.9%
Fair Quality – Met some expectations but had noticeable issues.	142	23.7%
Excellent Quality – Exceeded expectations; very well-made or done.	132	22.1%
Poor Quality – Did not meet expectations; had major problems or flaws.	121	20.2%
Total	598	100.0%

Effectiveness of Service Provider Services

Individual survey respondents were asked to rate the effectiveness of the service provider's services. Slightly less than one-half (47.7%, n=281) of the respondents indicated that the services were somewhat effective or not effective, and slightly more than one-half (52.2%, n=308) of individuals cited the services as very effective or effective. The results are detailed in Table 101.

Table 101: *Individual Survey: Effectiveness of Service from Service Provider*

Effectiveness of Services: Service Provider	Number	Percent
Effective – It worked well and did what it was supposed to do.	182	30.9%
Somewhat Effective – It worked a little, but not very well.	164	27.8%
Not Effective – It didn’t work at all or made no difference.	144	24.4%
Highly Effective – It worked very well and even better than expected.	99	16.8%
Total	589	100.0%

Effectiveness of Service Provider Remote Services

Individual survey respondents were also asked to rate the effectiveness of the service provider's remote services. The total number of respondents who answered the question is 111, which matches the number of individual survey respondents who reported meeting with their provider remotely by phone or video conference. One-third (33.3%, n = 37) of the respondents indicated that the remote services were effective. Conversely, 20.7% (n = 23) of individual survey respondents cited the services as ineffective. The results are detailed in Table 102.

Table 102: *Individual Survey: Effectiveness of Remote Services from Service Provider*

Effectiveness of Remote Services: Service Provider	Number	Percent
Effective – It worked well and did what it was supposed to do.	37	33.3%
Somewhat Effective – It worked a little, but not very well.	27	24.3%
Highly Effective – It worked very well and even better than expected.	24	21.6%
Not Effective – It didn't work at all or made no difference.	23	20.7%
Total	111	100.0%

Responsiveness of the Service Provider

Individual survey respondents were asked to rate the service provider's responsiveness. The margin of difference between “somewhat responsive” and “very responsive” is less than 1% (n=5). Most respondents rated the service provider's responsiveness as “responsive.” Table 103 details the results.

Table 103: *Individual Survey: Responsiveness of Service Provider*

Responsiveness of Service Provider	Number	Percent
Responsive – Responded in a reasonable time and met the need.	207	34.3%
Somewhat Responsive – Responded, but it was slow or only partly met the need.	160	26.5%
Very Responsive – Responded quickly and fully met or exceeded the need.	155	25.7%
Not Responsive – No response or extremely slow; needs were ignored.	81	13.4%
Total	603	100.0%

Recommend Service Provider

The final question asked of individuals regarding service providers was, “Would you recommend your service provider to others served by DVR?” Although about one-fourth of respondents cited “not sure,” roughly 53% indicated that they would recommend their service provider to others. The response ratings are contained in Table 104.

Table 104: *Individual Survey: Recommend Service Provider*

Recommend Service Provider	Number	Percent
Yes	325	53.2%
Not sure	158	25.9%
No	128	20.9%
Total	611	100.0%

Partner Survey Respondents

Partner Survey: Service Providers

Partner survey respondents were asked questions about rehabilitation service providers to assess their availability to customers and whether the services meet their needs.

Services Readily Available to VR Customers

Partners received a list of 19 items and were asked to respond with “yes or no” to indicate whether the service is readily available to DVR customers. Ten items were reported as readily available by 70% or more of respondents who answered “yes, the service is readily available.” Supported employment services were identified as the most frequently available service for DVR customers. Employment services and pre-employment transition services were noted as the two most accessible services. Registered apprenticeship training and reader services were cited the fewest times as being readily available. Narrative comments mentioned mental and behavioral health services and supportive housing in response to the “other; please describe” item. One comment suggested that DVR is not easily accessible due to a three-month wait from the date a customer schedules a meeting to the actual intake meeting. Table 105 provides details of the partner responses to the question.

Table 105: *Partner Survey: Services Readily Available*

Service	Yes, the service is readily available		No, the service is not readily available		Total
Supported employment services	81	89.0%	10	11.0%	91
Employment services (job search, job development and placement)	79	88.8%	10	11.2%	89
Pre-employment transition services	75	85.2%	13	14.8%	88
Customized employment services	73	83.0%	15	17.1%	88
Occupational or vocational training	69	79.3%	18	20.7%	87
On-the-job training	62	74.7%	21	25.3%	83
Assistive technology services	60	72.3%	23	27.7%	83
Transportation	59	71.1%	24	28.9%	83
Community college or four-year college or university training	57	70.4%	24	29.6%	81
Benefits counseling	57	70.4%	24	29.6%	81
Interpreter and translator services	53	66.3%	27	33.8%	80
Paid internships and work-based learning	49	61.3%	31	38.8%	80
Disability-related skills training (orientation and mobility, Braille, etc.)	48	60.0%	32	40.0%	80
Maintenance or other income assistance	40	54.1%	34	46.0%	74
Literacy training	38	52.8%	34	47.2%	72
Personal assistance services	38	52.8%	34	47.2%	72
Reader services	28	44.4%	35	55.6%	63

Service	Yes, the service is readily available		No, the service is not readily available		Total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	
Registered apprenticeship training	27	36.5%	47	63.5%	74
Other (please describe)	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	5

Service Providers Meeting Customer Needs

Partner survey respondents were asked to identify how frequently service providers in Washington State could meet the rehabilitation service needs of DVR customers. More than 61% of partners indicated that service providers frequently meet the needs of DVR customers. Table 106 summarizes the results of this question.

Table 106: *Partner Survey: Frequency of Service Providers Meeting Needs*

Frequency Service Providers Meet Needs	Number	Percent
Frequently – Service needs are met in most cases	54	61.4%
Sometimes – Service needs are met about half the time	21	23.9%
Rarely – Service needs are met only in a few cases	8	9.1%
Always – Service needs are consistently met across customers	5	5.7%
Total	88	100.0%

Services Most Effectively Delivered by Service Providers

Partners were provided a list of 15 items and asked to identify the services that service providers most effectively provided to DVR customers. The number of services a partner could choose was unlimited. Partners indicated that the most effective services CRPs provide are job development and training services. These two services were chosen more than 80% of the time, while the third choice, benefits planning assistance, was selected by less than 37% of partners. Four comments were received in the category “other.” One comment noted the phrase, “We do not see referrals for the services listed.” The three remaining comments cited benefit planning by DVR and providers, school-to-work services, self-advocacy and work readiness. Table 107 lists the services and the number of times each item was selected.

Table 107: *Partner Survey: Services Most Effectively Delivered by Service Providers*

Services that Service Providers are Most Effective in Providing to VR Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Job development services	66	85.7%
Job training services (trial work experiences, Job Coaching, OJT, etc.)	62	80.5%
Benefit planning assistance	28	36.4%
Assistive technology services	23	29.9%
Other transportation assistance	23	29.9%
Other education services	20	26.0%
Mental health treatment	12	15.6%
Substance use treatment	10	13.0%
Vehicle modification assistance	7	9.1%
Income assistance	5	6.5%
Medical treatment	5	6.5%

Services that Service Providers are Most Effective in Providing to VR Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Health insurance	5	6.5%
Housing	5	6.5%
Other (please describe)	4	5.2%
Personal care attendants	3	3.9%
Total	278	

Rehabilitation Needs Service Providers are Unable to Meet

Partners were asked an open-ended question to identify rehabilitation needs that service providers in their area could not meet. A total of 57 narrative responses were received. Comments included: DVR not meeting personal care needs and not using subscription-based training options; lack of rural employment opportunities; transportation issues; programs for youth; training and apprenticeships; lack of employers offering customized employment; limited job availability; interpreter services; difficulty passing background checks within tribal government; non-order of selection disabilities among Native Americans; DVR acting as a barrier preventing needs from being met; waitlists for DVR and providers blocking access to services; and lack of funding and staff among providers.

Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Customers' Needs

Partners received a list of six reasons and were asked to identify why community service providers could not meet customers' needs. A total of 77 respondents answered the question. The most common response was "low rates paid for services." Nearly as many respondents cited "not enough service providers available in the area" and "consumer barriers prevent successful interactions with service providers." Quotes from the "other" category mentioned DVR not funding contractors and services, the responsiveness of DVR staff, low rates for service providers, insufficient job opportunities, large caseloads, and inadequate staffing.

Table 108: *Partner Survey: Primary Reasons Providers are Unable to Meet Customers' Needs*

Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Customers' Needs	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Low rates paid for services	39	50.6%
Not enough service providers available in area	29	37.7%
Customers barriers prevent successful interactions with service providers	28	36.4%
Other (please describe)	24	31.2%
Low levels of accountability for poor performance by service providers	12	15.6%
Low quality of service provider services	11	14.3%
Total	143	

Partner Survey: Top Three Changes to Help Better Serve DVR Customers

Partner survey respondents were presented with a list of 13 potential changes and asked to identify the top 3 that would help them better serve DVR customers. Seventy-three partners answered the question. Over 56% of the partners cited higher rates paid by VR for services as the top change that would help them better serve DVR customers, indicating that their salaries prevent them from serving DVR customers well. Items that ranked in the second and third positions related to DVR processes and communication with the referring DVR

counselor. Collaborating with WorkSource was cited the fewest times by partners in response to the question. Table 109 lists the changes and the number of times each was identified as one of the top three changes that would help better serve DVR customers.

Table 109: *Partner Survey: Top Three Changes to Help Better Serve DVR Customers*

Top Three Changes Better Serve Customers	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Higher rates paid by VR for services	41	56.2%
More streamlined processes	35	47.9%
Improved communication with the referring VR counselor	25	34.2%
Reduced documentation requirements	21	28.8%
Improved business partnerships	18	24.7%
Smaller caseload	16	21.9%
Referral of appropriate individuals	15	20.5%
Other (please describe)	11	15.1%
Incentives for high performance paid by VR	8	11.0%
Additional training	6	8.2%
Increased options for technology use to communicate with customers	6	8.2%
Increased collaboration with WorkSource WA	4	5.5%
Total	206	

Partner Survey: Most Essential Change Service Providers Could Make to Support Customer Efforts to Achieve Employment Goals

Partners were asked to identify the most essential change that service providers in Washington State could implement to support customers' efforts to reach their employment goals. Sixty-one narrative responses were received. Topics mentioned in the comments include changes at DVR; hiring more staff and offering professional training; connecting with other CRPs and local agencies; building and maintaining community business partnerships to generate jobs and faster placements; improving communication and understanding of customer needs; increasing advocacy on behalf of customers; reducing waitlists; and obtaining more funding from DVR for resources.

Staff Survey Results

Staff Survey: Service Providers

Staff survey respondents were asked six questions regarding rehabilitation service provider services. The questions aim to identify the services DVR refers to or recommends and to determine whether these services meet customers' needs.

Services Immediately Available to DVR Customers

Staff were given a list of 19 items and asked to identify the services immediately available to DVR customers. The responses from staff and partners differ, as partners had a slightly different list of options. At least 82% of staff cited four items (benefit planning, other transportation assistance, assistive technology, and remote service

delivery) as services immediately available to DVR customers. Table 110 lists the staff's immediate availability of services.

Table 110: Staff Survey: Services Immediately Available

Service Immediately Available	Number	Percent of number of respondents
Benefit planning assistance	37	92.5%
Other transportation assistance	36	90.0%
Assistive technology	35	87.5%
Remote service delivery (tele-counseling, remote job supports, etc.)	33	82.5%
Job development services	31	77.5%
Job training services (TWE, Job Coaching, OJT, etc.)	30	75.0%
Other education services	29	72.5%
Vehicle modification assistance	25	62.5%
Career Ladder/Pathways counseling	21	52.5%
Mental health treatment	16	40.0%
Financial literacy training	14	35.0%
Medical treatment	11	27.5%
STEM skills training	9	22.5%
Personal care attendants	9	22.5%
Substance use treatment	6	15.0%
Health insurance	6	15.0%
Housing	5	12.5%
Income assistance	4	10.0%
Other (please describe)	2	5.0%
Total	359	

Services Not Immediately Available or Do Not Exist

Staff were asked to indicate what services were not immediately available or did not exist around the State of Washington where they work. The number of services that could be chosen was unlimited. A total of 33 staff members responded to the question.

Staff displayed some consistency in their choices for available and unavailable services. The items selected as services that are not immediately available or do not exist are listed at the top of Table 111 below, and the services staff indicated as immediately available are listed at the bottom. One comment was received in the category “other” and is quoted: “*Any service requiring planned needs; consistent opportunity to practice soft skills...*” Table 111 lists the staff-selected services that are not immediately available or that DVR customers cannot access in Washington State.

Table 111: Staff Survey: Services Not Readily Available or Do Not Exist

Service Not Immediately Available or Do Not Exist	Number	Percent of number of respondents
Housing	27	81.8%
Income assistance	25	75.8%

Service Not Immediately Available or Do Not Exist	Number	Percent of number of respondents
Health insurance	24	72.7%
Personal care attendants	22	66.7%
Medical treatment	21	63.6%
Substance use treatment	20	60.6%
STEM skills training	19	57.6%
Mental health treatment	18	54.5%
Financial literacy training	15	45.5%
Vehicle modification assistance	13	39.4%
Job training services (TWE, Job Coaching, OJT, etc.)	8	24.2%
Other education services	8	24.2%
Job development services	8	24.2%
Career Ladder/Pathways counseling	8	24.2%
Assistive technology	5	15.2%
Remote service delivery (tele-counseling, remote job supports, etc.)	5	15.2%
Other transportation assistance	3	9.1%
Benefit planning assistance	2	6.1%
Other (please describe)	1	3.0%
Total	252	

Service Providers Meeting Customers' Needs

Staff survey respondents were asked to identify how frequently service providers in the State of Washington could meet DVR customers' rehabilitation service needs. Most respondents (63.9%) indicated that service providers often meet the needs of DVR customers. A significantly lower rate of respondents indicated that service providers always meet customers' needs. Note that roughly 53 % of individual survey respondents would recommend their service provider.

Table 112: *Staff Survey: Frequency of Service Providers Meeting Customers' Needs*

Frequency Providers Meet Needs	Number	Percent
Often – Providers meet people's needs most of the time	23	63.9%
Sometimes – Providers meet people's needs once in a while	7	19.4%
Always – Providers consistently meet people's needs	6	16.7%
Never – Providers do not meet people's needs	0	0.0%
Total	36	100.0%

Rehabilitation Needs Service Providers are Unable to Meet

Staff survey respondents were asked to identify the rehabilitation needs that service providers could not meet in their area through an open-ended question. Twenty-four respondents provided a narrative response indicating various service gaps.

One comment did not identify rehabilitation needs and stated, “nothing I can think of.” Six narrative comments described the lack of service providers for employment, medical, and mental health services. Four comments mentioned a scarcity of jobs, including high-quality jobs, careers, high-wage careers, and employers that are

actively hiring. Other comments addressed transportation and vehicle modification services, bilingual services, housing, student services, waitlists, and CRPs limiting customer hours.

Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Customers’ Needs

Staff survey respondents were given a list of seven reasons and asked to identify the primary reasons vocational rehabilitation service providers could not meet customers’ service needs. Staff could select more than one item if desired. A total of 34 staff members responded to the question.

Staff and partners had slightly different opinions when answering this question. Staff cited staff turnover among service providers as the most common response, an item not shown to partners. Items related to a lack of service providers and consumer barriers ranked second and third, respectively, for both groups, as the main reasons customers’ rehabilitation service needs were not being met. Notably, over 61% of respondents cited staff turnover and a shortage of available service providers as the primary reasons why service providers cannot meet customers’ needs. The four narrative comments received are quoted.

- “Communication encryption is very cumbersome through email.”
- “Frontier location not as resourced for job opportunities”
- “Funding, not tied to job goal”
- “So many live out of the service area.”

Table 113 presents the staff respondents’ choices to the question.

Table 113: Staff Survey: Primary Reasons Providers are Unable to Meet Customers’ Needs

Primary Reasons Service Providers are Unable to Meet Individuals' Needs	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Service provider staff turnover	23	67.6%
Not enough service providers available in area	21	61.8%
Consumer barriers prevent successful interactions with service providers	12	35.3%
Low levels of accountability for poor performance by service providers	11	32.4%
Low quality of service provider services	10	29.4%
Low rates paid for services	8	23.5%
Other (please describe)	4	11.8%
Total	89	

Staff Survey: Most Essential Change Service Providers Could Make to Support Customer Efforts to Achieve Employment Goals

Staff respondents were asked an open-ended question to identify the most essential change that service providers could make to support customer efforts to achieve their employment goals. A total of 23 narrative responses were received. Content analysis indicated improved wages of frontline service provider staff (x9); hiring of more staff (x5); provide staff training (x4); improve services by active listening, understanding and meeting specific needs of customers and enhancing communication with DVR (x8); learn to advocate for the customer and not look at DVR as a means of financial gain (x1); and have direct service staff not organization leaders at meetings with customers (x1).

Section VI: Survey Results Summary

DVR to CRP Referral & Consumer Engagement is Inconsistent

A key part of the relationship between DVR and CRPs is the referral process. Overall, the survey results suggest this process could be improved, thereby boosting consumer engagement. For example, only about half of customers report using a DVR-referred CRP: 52.3% Yes (349/667); 33.1% No (221); 14.5% Not sure (97).

Service Delivery Less Community-Based

Based on the survey results, there is a shift toward remote and less community-based services. While the primary meeting location remains the provider's office (49.3%; 166/337), remote contact is common—23.1% via video (78) and 10.1% by phone (34)—for a total of 33.2% of meetings held remotely. Unfortunately, community and school meetings are less frequent, despite being a proven method for serving individuals effectively, and they warrant consideration.

Quality & Effectiveness are Mixed

The quality of CRP services was mixed. Among 598 respondents, 33.9% rated the quality as “Good” and 22.1% as “Excellent,” and respondents also viewed the effectiveness favorably (n=589), with 47.7% finding services to be highly effective. For remote services (n=111), perceptions were more positive, with 54.9% describing them as effective or highly effective and about 45% indicating limited effectiveness.

Responsiveness is Generally Strong

As with the quality data, perhaps not surprisingly, the responsiveness of CRPs was identified as responsive (34.3%; 207) and very responsive (25.7%; 155). In short, the likely association between quality and a CRP's responsiveness is evident and is a positive attribute of the system in Washington.

CRP Strengths Concentrate in Employment Services

An additional strength in the state is the presence of competencies in job-focused services, specifically job development (85.7%, 66/77) and job training/coaching/TWE/OJT (80.5%, 62/77). Further, there is a report of high availability of services, including Many services reported readily available by $\geq 70\%$ of partners: Supported Employment 89.0%; Pre-ETS 85.2%; Customized Employment 83.0%; Voc/Occ Training 79.3%; OJT 74.7%; Assistive Technology 72.3%; Transportation 71.1%; College Training 70.4%; Benefits Counseling 70.4%.

Persistent Gaps in Clinical/Basic-Needs & Specialized Services

Specialized services represent a significant need identified throughout Washington. Findings reveal major gaps in housing, income assistance, health care, mental health, and substance use treatment, while also highlighting the availability of apprenticeships, work-based learning, and disability-specific skills training. Although many of these services are not directly provided by DVR, this underscores the importance of forming partnerships with organizations that can offer these supports, ensuring that customers receive the assistance they need to achieve employment success.

Capacity Constraints: Provider Supply, Turnover, and Rates

As is the national trend, there are significant challenges with staff turnover and provider availability. This, in turn, impacts the quality of services. While rate structures may contribute to these issues, it is essential to work

with CRPs to understand the root causes and not assume they are related to rates. Other factors to consider are process barriers, documentation, caseload sizes, organizational culture, and referral flow.

Themes of Success

- CRPs play a vital role in supporting and delivering customized employment statewide.
- Some CRPs demonstrate strong employer partnerships and individualized job matching.

Themes of Improvement

- Variability in CRP quality and service consistency across regions.
- Need for outcome-based accountability and performance monitoring.
- Shortage of CRPs in rural areas and in specialized service domains (e.g., high-skill careers, behavioral health).
- Calls for increased funding and technical assistance to strengthen CRP capacity and staff development.

Section VII: Listening Session Findings

What we heard...

Capacity and Quality

- There is a severe and ongoing shortage of qualified job coaches and CRP personnel statewide, exacerbated since the COVID-19 pandemic.
- The quality of CRP services varies widely; some providers are seen as mission-driven and effective, while others are perceived as 'profit-focused' with little emphasis on meaningful outcomes.
- Many CRPs struggle to maintain staffing stability because referral flows from DVR are inconsistent and unpredictable, especially in rural areas where job opportunities and funding are limited.
- Providers and vendors require more training in high-quality job development, employer engagement, and support for higher-functioning or neurodivergent clients.
- Expansion of vendor networks is needed to include specialized service providers (e.g., autism coaches, behavioral health supports).
- Customized Employment (CE) Challenges: CE is less common and more challenging to arrange because it places additional workload on providers. There is a need to ensure fidelity in its implementation. The consistent quality of Supported Employment (SE) was also raised as an area of need.

Alignment and Communication

- DVR counselors frequently reported limited awareness of which CRPs operate in their region or of the services they provide, which complicates the referral process.
- Families described being handed a list of CRPs with no guidance on how to select a provider or what to expect, resulting in a 'confusing and unsmooth handoff.'
- Both CRP and DVR staff expressed a desire for joint training to align understanding of contract requirements, service quality standards, and documentation processes.
- There is a strong call for improved collaboration, communication, and shared planning between DVR and CRP networks.

Family and Client Experience

- When CRPs perform well, clients describe them as a 'lifeline' and a critical source of social connection.
- Families want formal mechanisms to share feedback about CRP performance and to understand what constitutes quality service delivery.

In their own words...

"I also am concerned about rural communities and not having the resources. And I think that CRPs have a tough struggle when they're in this — there isn't the opportunity, and that needs to be very creative and maybe there's more entrepreneurial trying to develop that."

"Folks... need effective communication to do the vocational assessment, and to look for jobs — there are often barriers to working with their counselor or working with the community rehab provider or just thinking about what types of accommodations would be helpful."

"Staff turnover is often even more impactful for DVR services if people don't have long-term services... and the second one is just the coordination of services between DVR and DDCS... As people move back and forth between them, it gets confusing, and people don't know why they're getting moved back and forth."

"We had the CRP there as well, and what we're going to do now is because he just got one of those jobs that VOA helped him with, we're going to have the CRP come in and turn that into a Community-Based Assessment."

"Because of how complex and higher caseloads are, there is quite a bit of reliance on our CRP partners, too. So I think it's just essential to have those connections and that collaboration so we're not all doing separate things."

"We used to have meetings with DVR and the community partners, and CRPs, and it would be something we would have at different offices. We don't do those anymore... That working together has really fallen apart."

"I am not sure whether the CRP is helping me or not, but communication about the process has to be better."

"For people who are DVR-only... It's not so much a self-advocacy issue as it is the availability of skilled vendors. As well as training vendors how to do that, and VR staff."

"When it comes to job development, most people don't — that's not their strong point. So we're hiring people who can work with people with disabilities, but we're not hiring people who can do both."

"One of my recently diagnosed autistic ADHD clients found an ADHD and autism coach in the community... I told her if you can get them to become a DVR vendor, I will pay for it. And they did. And it's been so great."

"Our employer base does not have either the time or the value for the education that they need to understand how they can support people with disabilities at their place of employment... We can communicate with each other, we can do all we can to be partners, but if we do not have our employers' understanding... that's one of the largest barriers."

Section VII: Recommendations

1. Develop **CRP recruitment and funding strategies** to address shortages of quality providers. Explore **value-based payment structures** that reward CRPs for achieving high-wage, long-term placements and emphasize the value of the placement.

2. Implement **quality assurance systems** that link CRP contract renewals to performance metrics. Develop standardized CRP quality metrics (e.g., retention rates, median wages, job quality).
3. Emphasize **person-centered job matching** and prioritize job quality in CRP contracts.
4. Broaden **training opportunities to the CRP network** to ensure they are using best practices.

Section VIII: Needs of businesses and effectiveness in serving employers

Business Survey Results

Disability in the Workplace: Employer Needs

In the "Disability in the Workplace: Employer Needs" section, business survey respondents were asked eight yes-or-no questions about whether their business needed assistance with various disability-related employment concerns. The sample size is eight in response to employer needs regarding disability in the workplace. Caution is advised when interpreting the results due to the small sample size.

Business survey respondents indicated they need assistance with workplace issues related to disability. Fifty percent of respondents answered “yes” to four of the eight survey questions about employer needs. Table 114 presents the results of the responses to the questions.

Table 114: *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
Helping workers with disabilities to retain employment?	4	50.0%	4	50.0%	8
Obtaining training on sensitivity to workers with disabilities?	4	50.0%	4	50.0%	8
Obtaining incentives for employing workers with disabilities?	4	50.0%	4	50.0%	8
Obtaining information on training programs available for workers with disabilities?	4	50.0%	4	50.0%	8
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?	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	8
Identifying job accommodations for workers with disabilities?	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	8

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 who are individuals with disabilities?	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	8
Obtaining training on the different types of disabilities?	3	37.5%	5	62.5%	8

In a supplemental open-ended question, business respondents were asked whether they would like to provide further comments on their workplace and specific disability-related needs. Three responses were received and are quoted:

- *“Interested in the information or access to training if you have them! Would go if we are available.”*
- *“On average, 80% of adult autistic individuals are unemployed. This specific population is often unintentionally overlooked.”*
- *“Opportunities for diverse business owners who have disabilities to find ways to start, build and maintain their business thriving. Resources not just for employees”*

Applicants with Disabilities: Recruitment Process

Business respondents were asked six questions about the need for recruitment assistance for applicants with disabilities. They answered in a yes-no format. Five business respondents provided answers to these six questions. Caution is advised when analyzing the results due to the small sample size. Two respondents indicated that they need help recruiting applicants with good work habits. Table 115 summarizes the responses to the six questions, showing the percentage of respondents who expressed a need for help with each specific item.

Table 115: *Applicants with Disabilities: Recruitment Process*

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 applicants with good work habits?	2	40.0%	3	60.0%	5
Recruiting applicants who meet the job qualifications?	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	5
Recruiting applicants with good social/interpersonal skills?	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	5
Assessing applicants' skills?	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	5
Discussing reasonable job accommodations with applicants?	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	5
Identifying reasonable job accommodations for applicants?	1	20.0%	4	80.0%	5

Business respondents were asked whether they would like to further comment on their answers to the previous question or share additional comments or needs regarding recruiting applicants with disabilities. One response was received. The comment requested information on opportunities for business owners with disabilities who are starting, developing, and growing their companies, as well as resources for business owners, not just employees.

Employees with Disabilities: Positive Employee Traits Related to Job Retention

Business survey respondents were presented with a list of 11 positive employee traits and asked, "With respect to employees with disabilities you have now or have had in the past, what are the positive employee traits you have experienced with them regarding job retention?" Seven responses were received regarding this question. Caution is recommended when analyzing the results due to the small sample size. Over 70% of the respondents (n = 5) identified initiative and ambition, as well as working well with their team. Flexibility was cited by two of the business respondents. Table 116 summarizes the percentage of business survey respondents who identified each trait as a part of job retention.

Table 116: *Employees with Disabilities: Positive Employee Traits Related to Job Retention*

Positive Employee Traits	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Initiative/Ambition	5	71.4%
Works well with their team	5	71.4%
Honesty/Integrity	4	57.1%
Positive attitude	4	57.1%
Determined/dedicated	4	57.1%
Independent	4	57.1%
Reliability	3	42.9%
Punctual	3	42.9%
Organized	3	42.9%
Attention to detail	3	42.9%
Flexibility	2	28.6%
Total	40	

Employees with Disabilities: Challenges to Job Retention

Business survey respondents were presented with a list of 14 job-related challenges and asked to identify the challenges they currently face or have experienced in the past related to individuals with disabilities. A total of 6 respondents answered the question. Caution is recommended when analyzing the results due to the small sample size. Table 117 presents the number of times and the percentage of business survey respondents who identified each item as challenging to job retention.

Table 117: *Challenge Related to Job Retention: Employees with Disabilities*

Challenges to Job Retention	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Poor attendance	4	66.7%
Mental health concerns	4	66.7%
Lack of transportation	4	66.7%

Challenges to Job Retention	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Lack of ongoing support due to case closure	4	66.7%
Difficulty learning job skills	3	50.0%
Slow work speed	3	50.0%
Physical health problems	3	50.0%
Poor work stamina	2	33.3%
Poor social skills	2	33.3%
Language barriers	1	16.7%
Identifying effective accommodations	1	16.7%
Substance use	1	16.7%
Other (please describe)	0	0.0%
I do not know any challenges we have had in retaining employees with disabilities	0	0.0%
Total	32	

Business survey respondents were asked an open-ended question: Would they like to further comment on their answers to the previous question, or did they have additional comments or needs regarding the challenges employees with disabilities face? Respondents were allowed to provide a narrative response. One narrative response was received and expressed the same remarks as the employer needs and the applicant recruitment process sections of this report.

Services Provided to Employers by DVR: Knowledge and Use

Business survey respondents were asked three questions about their knowledge of the agency's DVR business services efforts and their use of the agency's services. Caution is advised when interpreting the results due to the small sample size. Most business respondents (57.1%) indicated being somewhat knowledgeable about DVR services for businesses. Two business respondents reported using DVR services for their companies, specifically to obtain information on training programs available to workers with disabilities. Tables 118-120 display the survey results for the three questions.

Table 118: Knowledge of DVR Services to Businesses

Knowledge of DVR Services	Number	Percent
Somewhat knowledgeable	4	57.1%
Little knowledge	2	28.6%
Very knowledgeable	1	14.3%
No knowledge	0	0.0%
Total	7	100.0%

Table 119: Employer Usage of DVR Services

Use of DVR Services	Number	Percent
No	3	42.9%
Yes	2	28.6%
I don't know	2	28.6%

Use of DVR Services	Number	Percent
Total	7	100.0%

Table 120: *Identify DVR Services Used by Employers*

Services Provided to Employers by DVR	Number of times chosen	Percent of number of respondents
Obtaining information on training programs available for workers with disabilities?	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?	0	0.0%
Assistance identifying job accommodations for workers with disabilities?	0	0.0%
Other (please describe)	0	0.0%
Helping workers with disabilities to retain employment?	0	0.0%
Obtaining training on the different types of disabilities?	0	0.0%
Recruiting job applicants who are individuals with disabilities?	0	0.0%
Obtaining training on sensitivity to workers with disabilities?	0	0.0%
Obtaining incentives for employing workers with disabilities?	0	0.0%
Recruiting applicants who meet the job qualifications?	0	0.0%
Recruiting applicants with good work habits?	0	0.0%
Recruiting applicants with good social/interpersonal skills?	0	0.0%
Assessing applicants' skills?	0	0.0%
Discussing reasonable job accommodations with applicants?	0	0.0%
Identifying reasonable job accommodations for applicants?	0	0.0%
Total	2	

Employer Satisfaction with Services Provided by DVR

Business survey respondents who used DVR Business services were asked three questions: satisfaction, whether they would seek DVR Business services again, and whether any needs were unmet. The sample size is two for this section of the report. Caution is advised when analyzing the results due to the small sample size.

Business survey respondents who used DVR services were presented with a 4-point response scale (ranging from “very satisfied” to “not satisfied”) and asked to rate their satisfaction with the agency's services. Two representatives answered the question. Table 121 contains the results.

Table 121: *Satisfaction Rating*

Satisfaction Rating	Number	Percent
Not Satisfied – I am not happy with the services	1	50.0%
Somewhat Satisfied – I am okay with the services, but they could be better	1	50.0%
Mostly Satisfied – I am happy with most of the services	0	0.0%
Very Satisfied – I am completely happy with the services	0	0.0%

Satisfaction Rating	Number	Percent
Total	2	100.0%

Seek Again or Recommend DVR Business Services

Business respondents who utilized DVR services for their business were presented with a four-point response scale (ranging from "very likely" to "not likely") and asked if they would seek out DVR services again or recommend them to other employers. Two respondents answered the question and cited “somewhat likely.”

Table 122: *Use Again or Recommend DVR Business Services to Others*

Seek or Recommend DVR	Number	Percent
Somewhat Likely – I might recommend it, but with concerns	2	100.0%
Not Likely – I would not recommend it to anyone	0	0.0%
Likely – I would recommend it to most people	0	0.0%
Very Likely – I would definitely recommend it to others	0	0.0%
Total	2	100.0%

Employer Needs: Applicants or Employees with Disabilities

Business survey respondents were asked an open-ended question asking if their business has any needs related to applicants or workers with disabilities that are not currently being met, and to describe them in a narrative format. Two responses were received and are quoted:

- *“Opportunities for business owners with disabilities who are starting, developing and evolving their companies. Resources not just for employees.”*
- *“Would like information and support on how to link autistic individuals with specific resources through DVR.”*

Business Demographics

Business survey respondents described their respective business types and the number of employees their businesses currently employ. A total of 11 business respondents answered both questions. In response to the question about business types, the businesses reported in the "Other, please describe" category are hospitality, janitorial, nuclear cleanup, and workforce development. Regarding organization size, the most frequently cited size was 1-15 employees. Tables 123-124 outline the various business types and the size of the organization, categorized by the number of employees.

Table 123: *Business Type*

Business Type	Number	Percent
Other (please describe)	4	36.4%
Service	2	18.2%
Government	2	18.2%
Manufacturing	1	9.1%
Education	1	9.1%
Health care	1	9.1%
Retail	0	0.0%

Business Type	Number	Percent
Agriculture/Forestry/Fishing	0	0.0%
Construction	0	0.0%
Banking/Finance	0	0.0%
Gambling/Casino	0	0.0%
Total	11	100.0%

Table 124: *Number of Employees*

Number of Employees	Number	Percent
One - 15	4	36.4%
251 - 999	3	27.3%
1,000 or more	2	18.2%
16 - 50	1	9.1%
51 - 250	1	9.1%
Total	11	100.0%

Section VIII: Survey Findings Summary

As noted above, 8–11 businesses participated in the survey across multiple sections, providing insights into employer needs, recruitment, job retention, and familiarity with DVR (Division of Vocational Rehabilitation) services. Due to the small sample size, results should be interpreted with caution.

Employer Needs Related to Disability in the Workplace

There was an overall need for assistance with key disability-related workplace issues, including employee retention, training, hiring incentives, and overall compliance with disability law.

Employees with Disabilities: Positive Traits

Employers described positive employee traits observed among workers with disabilities, including initiative, ambition, teamwork, honesty, positive attitude, dedication, and independence. Others mentioned reliability, punctuality, organization, attention to detail, and flexibility – all of which suggest a strong work ethic and perceived value among employees with disabilities.

Employees with Disabilities: Job Retention Challenges

In contrast, some of the challenges that arise are poor attendance, mental health concerns, transportation barriers, and a lack of ongoing support after DVR case closure. Others identified work pace, difficulty learning job skills, physical health issues, and social skills as other challenges.

Employer Awareness and Use of DVR Services

Of those who responded, 57% of businesses reported being somewhat knowledgeable about DVR business services; 14% said very knowledgeable. Only two of seven businesses had used DVR services—primarily to obtain information on training programs. No employers reported receiving help with accommodations, recruitment, or legislative training.

Themes of Success

- Growing employer interest in hiring individuals with disabilities, particularly among larger firms.
- DVR's business specialists and job developers are considered key facilitators in connecting employers with talent.
- Employer outreach and education efforts show early success in shifting perceptions of disability inclusion.

Themes of Improvement

- Limited employer engagement and awareness of DVR's business services.
- Need for stronger employer follow-up, retention supports, and post-placement assistance.
- Small sample size (n=12) limits generalizability but underscores the need for broader business engagement statewide.

Section VIII: Listening Session Findings

This section summarizes findings from multiple listening sessions with all stakeholders, focusing specifically on the needs of businesses and effective ways to engage employers. The analysis highlights statements and themes related to employers, business engagement, job interviews, ADA compliance, workplace accommodations, and disclosure practices.

What We Heard...

Employer Engagement and Business Education

Participants consistently reported that employers often lack awareness or training on how to support employees with disabilities. One staff member stated that 'our employer base does not either have the time, or they do not value the education that they need to understand how they can support people with disabilities at their place of employment'.

Others noted that fear and uncertainty persist among employers, who 'don't need to be fearful and they can ask questions,' but rarely do so. There was an overall need for DVR and WorkSource to act as partners and educators for employers, helping them understand that disability inclusion benefits their workforce.

Several participants highlighted the need for better coordination between DVR business specialists and WorkSource employer liaisons, citing inconsistent collaboration and turnover as obstacles to effective employer engagement and accommodation planning.

ADA Compliance and Accommodation Gaps

Overall, there was concern about noncompliance with ADA standards among businesses and public entities, including inaccessible public facilities such as post offices and hotels. These examples reflect a systemic lack of understanding and enforcement of accessibility standards.

Multiple listening sessions highlighted the difficulty of obtaining reasonable accommodations at job sites. Some highlighted the risks of requesting accommodations and pointed to discriminatory practices and limited legal protections for employees in small businesses not covered by the ADA. Respondents expressed that accommodation requests can lead to termination or retaliation, showing the need for stronger advocacy and

education for both employers and employees on ADA rights and responsibilities. Participants noted that small business exemptions under the ADA leave many disabled workers unprotected. Workers reported being fired from small establishments that had no labor protections for requesting accommodations.

Disclosure and Workplace Culture

Different individuals have varying comfort levels with disclosing a disability. Customers often avoid sharing this information during interviews or early employment due to fears of bias or job loss. Counselors and CRP providers mentioned that many clients find it challenging to advocate for themselves and communicate their accommodation needs effectively, particularly those with neurodivergent or mental health conditions. Providing better coaching on disclosure strategies was suggested. Several participants described negative past experiences after disclosure, leading to diminished trust in employers or DVR systems to protect them from discrimination.

Participants described traditional interviews as Interviews, Hiring Processes, and Employer Perceptions

barriers, particularly for neurodivergent individuals who may not perform well in conventional settings. One participant emphasized that employers need to think outside the box and adapt to different types of thinking, advocating for alternative assessments of skills beyond standard interviews.

Another theme was the importance of job matching and strengths-based hiring, suggesting that DVR should help employers align positions with individuals' skills and preferences rather than pushing for quick job placements. Staff also pointed out limited employer follow-through on accommodations post-hire, with participants experiencing a lack of ongoing support once job placements were completed.

In Their Own Words...

“Our employer base does not have either the time or the value for the education that they need to understand how they can support people with disabilities at their place of employment.”

“We can communicate with each other, we can do all we can to be partners, but if we do not have our employers' understanding, that's one of the largest barriers.”

“When employers don't know what the ADA requires, they get nervous and default to 'no'—that's where we lose good opportunities for our clients.”

“I've been fired before just for asking for reasonable accommodations; small businesses don't even have to follow the ADA, so they can just let you go.”

“Employers need to think outside the box and adapt to different types of thinking, not just expect everyone to interview or communicate the same way.”

“Some businesses see hiring people with disabilities as charity work, not as a real investment in their workforce.”

“I told my boss about my disability after getting hired, and everything changed—they started cutting my hours and watching me constantly.”

“There's a lack of accountability once a person is placed; employers get support up front but not ongoing coaching on accommodations or problem-solving.”

“Businesses want to do the right thing but don't know how to start—training from DVR or WorkSource could really help bridge that gap.”

"We used to have joint meetings between DVR, CRPs, and local employers; those stopped after COVID, and collaboration has suffered since then."

"Disclosing PTSD or health needs risks losing offers."

"I was laid off after requesting accommodations; I'm afraid to disclose."

"Employers insisted on phone use; avoided hiring when I disclosed being deaf."

"Managers need training on disability inclusion; incentives would help."

"More employer education is the most important improvement needed."

Section VIII: Recommendations

1. Launch a **statewide employer education** initiative emphasizing inclusion and ADA compliance.
2. Create an **ADA toolkit and recognition incentives** for accessible employers.
3. **Normalize disability disclosure** through participant coaching and employer training.
4. Provide clear **anti-retaliation guidance** and accessible alternatives to interviews.
5. Train HR and recruiters on **inclusive hiring practices** and accommodation procedures.
6. Collect **employer-satisfaction data** per §361.82(d)(3) to include in RSA performance reports.
7. Develop **sector-based partnerships** (technology, healthcare, manufacturing) to improve CIE placements and wage levels.
8. Publicize success stories through an '**Employer of Excellence**' **recognition program** to incentivize inclusive hiring.