

**SOUTH DAKOTA
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL**

**BOARD OF
VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION**

**ANNUAL REPORT
OF ACTIVITIES FOR
FISCAL YEAR
2011**

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

December 28, 2011

Governor Dennis Daugaard
State Capitol Building
500 East Capitol Avenue
Pierre, SD 57501

Dear Governor Daugaard:

On behalf of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council), I am pleased to provide you with a copy of our annual report. The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, specifies that a report be submitted to you and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration on an annual basis.

The following pages reflect the activity of the Board and Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) this past year. This activity has had a tremendous impact on the lives of South Dakotans with disabilities. One outcome is that 719 individuals with disabilities accomplished their employment goals in careers of their choice as a result of services received from the Division. Another outcome is 380 students with disabilities had a paid work experience during their high school transition process.

The Board and Division will continue working cooperatively to provide services to citizens with disabilities seeking employment, and we thank you for your support of our efforts.

Respectfully,



Elaine Roberts, Chairperson

Cc: Board Members
Lynnae Rutledge, RSA Commissioner
Julya Doyle, RSA Liaison

LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

December 28, 2011

RSA Commissioner Lynnae Ruttledge
Potomac Center Plaza
550 12th Street, SW,
Washington, DC 20202

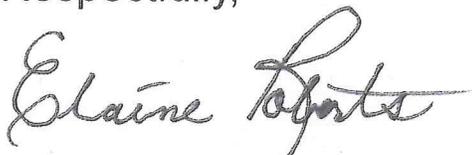
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Elaine Roberts, Chairperson

Cc: Board Members
Julya Doyle, RSA Liaison

South Dakota's State Rehabilitation Council

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The **State Rehabilitation Council** – is established in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (Act) and 34 CFR 361.16-361.17 of its implementing regulations.

The State Rehabilitation Council - known in South Dakota as the **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** (BVR or Board) – gives advice to and works in partnership with the general vocational rehabilitation agency in South Dakota - **Division of Rehabilitation Services**.

The **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** plays a significant role in ensuring that the vocational rehabilitation program operates effectively and remains responsive to the needs of those served.

The **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** works in partnership with the **Division of Rehabilitation Services** in developing policies, planning activities, evaluating program effectiveness and carrying out other functions related to the vocational rehabilitation program.

The working relationship between the **Board of Vocational Rehabilitation** and the **Division of Rehabilitation Services** is a partnership focused on ensuring that individuals with disabilities receive appropriate, timely, and effective vocational rehabilitation services.

BOARD OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION MEMBERSHIP

The State Rehabilitation Council - Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (Board) - is appointed by the Governor to assist the Division of Rehabilitation Services (Division) to develop and evaluate employment services for South Dakotans with disabilities.

The Board's fifteen members are a cross-section of South Dakotans who have a stake in vocational rehabilitation services. They are selected based on personal qualifications and the needs of the Board. Members serve three year terms.

The Board works jointly with the Division to develop and annually review vocational rehabilitation goals and priorities. In addition, the Board contributes to the study of consumer satisfaction and customer service needs.

Elaine Roberts Sioux Falls Chairperson	Carol Kirchgesler Aberdeen
Craig Eschenbaum Aberdeen Vice Chairperson	Robert Kean Pierre
Brett Glirbas Sioux Falls Member-At-Large	Leo Hallan Yankton
Melissa Flor Pierre	Grady Kickul Pierre
Kathy Hassebrook Aberdeen	Matt Cain Sioux Falls
Lyle Cook Eagle Butte	Darla McGuire Ethan
Barbara Storbeck Rapid City	Joe Rehurek Yankton
	Nicole Darland Sioux Falls

Staff:
Faith Ellis
Colette Wagoner

ABOUT THE BOARD

Meetings

All meetings are announced, open and accessible to the public. The Board also holds hearings and forums, as they deem necessary. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, in cooperation with Division and Board staff, as stipulated in the bylaws.

Committees

Three standing committees assist the Board in its work. Committees use conference calls, video conferencing and face-to-face meetings to conduct business. The work of the committees is reported at each quarterly Board meeting for consideration and action. The committees are noted below with their assigned activities.

Executive Committee: This committee may act on behalf of the Board to perform necessary business matters between regular meetings, provided their actions receive concurrence of the full Board. They bring recommendations to the full Board on the following: annual report, state plan, staff support agreement, new member orientation, legislative agenda and meeting agendas.

Consumer Services Committee: Their role includes involvement with the consumer satisfaction survey, review of the Division's goals and strategies, recommendation of systems change priorities, collaborating with the Division's Futures Initiative workgroup, policy review and recommendations, and public meeting topics and process.

Public Awareness Committee: This committee focuses on National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities and Governor's Awards ceremony.

Meetings

December 6-7
2010
Sioux Falls

March 14-15
2011
Ft. Pierre

June 14-15
2011
Sioux Falls

September 28-29
2011
Pierre

BOARD ACTIVITIES

State Plan/Public Meetings/Public Input

The Board and Division are committed to gather, review and analyze information through various means: meeting with consumers and family members, joint conversation with other boards, councils, associations, and joint activities with employers and human resource managers. Board meetings have been scheduled to coincide with other groups in an effort to learn from one another and identify ways to enhance collaboration.

All obtained information is considered when reviewing and updating the Division's State Plan. This document helps set the course of how to best serve South Dakotans with disabilities with employment goals. The State Plan is a "plan in progress" which is evaluated on an ongoing basis. Board members and Division staff utilize comments to best gauge progress being made towards meeting agency goals.

Several years ago, the chairpersons of the Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Statewide Independent Living Council determined it was a priority to meet on a regular basis. The chairpersons act as liaisons to their respective groups. They have discussed collaborative efforts and specific outcomes included disseminating a joint solicitation for nominations, a joint review committee of the Governor's Awards and National Disability Employment Awareness Month activities, and collaboration on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The Chairpersons will be discussing the possibility of hosting a joint meeting in the spring of 2012 with South Dakota being selected for an on-site review by the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

The chairpersons served as the CSNA Executive Committee, along with Division staff, to oversee the information gathering, make recommendations regarding goals and communicate with the larger boards and stakeholders. The information gathered by the CSNA is attempting to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities in the state in order to guide the development of the future state plans.

ACTIVITIES...

Joint Meetings of the Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Statewide Independent Living Council Chairpersons

The Chairpersons of the three entities met regularly to discuss and review the status of the comprehensive statewide needs assessment (background of the needs assessment, stages of information gathering, and process next steps). The consultants hired to conduct the study met with the Boards and Council at different stages throughout the study. They also received assistance with developing the goals, priorities and strategies for their respective State Plan documents.

The three entities also initiated a joint solicitation of nominations for Board and Council membership. Details were included on the essential duties, values and qualification desired of nominees, as well as time and travel commitments. Solicitations were mailed to over 500 people and organizations across the state. Nominees were submitted to the Governor for review and action and appointments were made.

Office of Special Education, Department of Labor & More

Members received an overview on the Office of Special Education Program State Plan Performance Plan, specifically “Indicator 14” (“percent of youth on an IEP, no longer in secondary school and who have been competitively employed, enrolled in postsecondary school, or both, within one year of leaving school). The data indicates that students with disabilities who participated in Catch the Wave, Youth Leadership Forum, Project Skills, or Project SEARCH, or self-advocacy, were:

- 26% more likely to be employed and postsecondary only, or
- 51% more likely to be employed only, or
- 100% more likely or twice as likely to be in postsecondary only.

Post-school success is dependent upon the collaborative efforts of multiple partners: Department of Education; school districts, educational cooperatives, special education teachers, Department of Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, parents and other providers.

ACTIVITIES...

Office of Special Education continued...

Predictors of post-school success include: inclusion in academic/general education; career awareness; community experiences; high school diploma status; interagency collaboration; occupational courses; paid work experience; parental involvement; school integration; self-advocacy skills; self-care or IL skills; social skills; student support; transition program; vocational education and work study.

Project SEARCH

Project SEARCH is a business led internship for students with disabilities in transition from school to work. The project involves the Departments of Labor and Education, Transition Services Liaison Project, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Freedom to Work Project, Vocational Rehabilitation Services, and two major hospitals (Sioux Falls Avera McKennan and Aberdeen Avera St. Lukes).

This program provides competitive employment and teaches skills in a safe and supported environment. Students receive accommodations, adaptations, and onsite job coaching services. Job placement is based upon the students experiences, strengths and skills. Students have attended board meetings and talked about their experiences with the program and they projected excitement and enthusiasm about working.

Division of Developmental Disabilities & Community Mental Health Centers

Members of the Board were involved with the re-write of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the two vocational rehabilitation agencies and the Division of Developmental Disabilities. A second MOU was written between the two vocational rehabilitation agencies and the community mental health centers focusing on employment and how to best coordinate services to meet the needs of individuals diagnosed with severe mental illness. A meeting was held in September involving the Board, Division and SD Council of Mental Health Center Directors which was a starting point for dialogue and building relationships.

ACTIVITIES...

Fall Conference 2011

The Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired are partnering with the Office of Special Education to host the 2011 Fall Conference (October 2011). Concurrent sessions will be offered for providers, educators, employers, human resource managers, independent living specialists, and board/council members.

Employment Initiatives

The Board and Division realize the importance of linkages with the business community. Division staff and Board members have been identified to work with different projects. Reports are provided at each meeting to keep members informed. Initiatives include: Employer Resource Network, Project SEARCH, Business Resource Network, Nu-Tech and the Freedom to Work Project.

Post High School Vocational Transition Summary

During the March Board meeting, a post high school vocational study was presented. The study was designed to determine the educational and training needs of young South Dakotans, with intellectual disabilities, considered to have severe or multiple disabilities, who have been on an IEP and do not have the cognitive ability to pass entrance requirements for post-secondary education. The study utilized a two pronged approach — parent interview and survey and student interview and survey. An overall need was identified for a post-secondary program or service beyond what is currently available to provide young adults with significant disabilities to successfully learn job skills that would provide meaningful work. Study results identified that for such a program to be successful, there must be residential accommodations and formal instruction in independent living skills, socialization and life skills for community living. Other findings included that programs such as Youth Leadership Forum, Catch the Wave, Project Skills, Project SEARCH and Partners in Policymaking are pivotal elements in helping students become successful.

ACTIVITIES...

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)

The Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired provided financial assistance to ten communities to host NDEAM activities. These one day awareness events provided information and education to the public regarding the strengths and talents that people with disabilities bring to the workforce.

NDEAM Highlights...

One benefit of organizing/attending NDEAM events includes partnering and relationship building. It also provides an avenue of gathering input and feedback. One example includes a Board member serving on a planning team.

Yankton Area Mental Wellness Inc., is a grass roots organization that hosts an annual conference. In 1999, a mental wellness conference was established as an annual event. It began as a suggestion of an individual who saw the need for training and networking in Yankton, a region that is extremely concerned about serving those in need and is rich in resources and professional expertise.

Thirteen years ago the theme of the conference was "*Caring for Self...Caring for Community*". This theme was carried out throughout the event and eventually became the organization's mission statement.

The theme implies guidance for those who are serving (whether that service is within the family unit or in a professional capacity) to find the information and skills necessary to effectively carry out this most important and demanding role.

Planning committee members are representatives from multiple organizations and disciplines including the community mental health center, Human Services Center, community support program, public schools, career learning center, Department of Social Services, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Mount Marty College, federal and state prisons, United Way & Volunteer Services and SD Advocacy Services.

ACTIVITIES...

Partners in Policymaking

The Board and Division identified representatives to attend the Partners in Policymaking listening and graduation sessions hosted by South Dakota Advocacy Services. Facilitated discussion took place on a variety of issues which impact persons living with a disability (e.g., vocational rehabilitation, independent living, transportation, education, housing and Social Security).

Employers, Employer Resource Network (ERN) and Aberdeen Area Human Resource Association

A Board member who was involved with the Aberdeen Area Resource Association (AARA) spearheaded the first Employer Resource Network, which is a diversity initiative that encourages a partnership between human resource professionals in the business community and vocational rehabilitation providers to address labor force issues and training needs.

The Board approved financial support for a workshop on the “Secrets to Making Diversity Work” at the Statewide Society for Human Resource Managers Conference which will be held in May 2012. The partnership between the AARA, Division of Rehabilitation Services and Freedom to Work Project has proven to be a successful project. The Board and Division are hearing from employees and employers about the rewards of working with a diverse workforce.

Legislative Summer Study

During the 2011 Session the Legislature agreed to examine the Department of Human Services (DHS). DHS also underwent re-organization as directed by a Governor’s Executive Order.

The summer study hosted several meetings and gathering of public comment. A number of members attended a meeting on September 30th and provided comment in their role as: recipient of vocational rehabilitation services, 121 Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Program Director and Chairperson.

Areas targeted by both the Board and Division

Increase the hourly earnings of consumers;

Increase average hours worked per week;

Increase the number of individuals with disabilities who are working; and

Increase contact with youth transitioning from high school

ACTIVITIES...

Governor's Awards Luncheon

The Board, Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired and Division hosted the Governor's Awards ceremony and luncheon along with the Board of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired. This event recognized the efforts of individuals, employers, and organizations for their contributions to the employment of persons with disabilities in South Dakota.

Futures' Initiative

Several years ago the Division started "Futures". A project designed for vocational rehabilitation staff who are interested in moving into a new, different, or expanded role within the vocational rehabilitation agency. Futures' members are given the opportunity to expand their knowledge, skills and abilities by taking leadership roles in project development and participating in quality training to become exemplary leaders. Staff have provided updates at each meeting, and the Board is fully supportive of the Division's initiative and its vision for succession planning.

New Member Orientation

Board, Division and Client Assistance Program staff provided a new member orientation in conjunction with the December meeting. Topics included: History of Rehabilitation, principles and policies, Rehabilitation Act, State Rehabilitation Council role, organizational overview of the Department of Human Services, State Plan document, public meetings, an overview of South Dakota Advocacy Services and the Client Assistance Program.

Youth Leadership Forum

A Board member is involved with organizing and planning the Youth Leadership Forum. He is in attendance the entire week and has the opportunity to witness students in action at this unique career and leadership training program. He relayed the experiences from students, team leaders, parents and other providers to the Board.

Board Staff Support

An agreement is in place between the Division of Rehabilitation Services and South Dakota Coalition of Citizens with Disabilities to provide staff support to the Board and the Statewide Independent Living Council. This contract is reviewed and re-negotiated on a regular basis.

Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance

Who We Serve

- The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program served 5,876 South Dakotans, compared to 5,637 last fiscal year.
- There were 2,609 new applicants, which is 100 more applicants than two years ago.
- The average age of the applicant was 35.9 years of age.
- 65% of eligible VR participants had two or more serious functional limitations.
- 32% of Vocational Rehabilitation's participants were transition age, up to 24 years of age.
- 29% of Vocational Rehabilitation's participants reported a serious mental illness as their primary disability.
- 30% of VR participants received either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

Vocational Rehabilitation's Outcomes

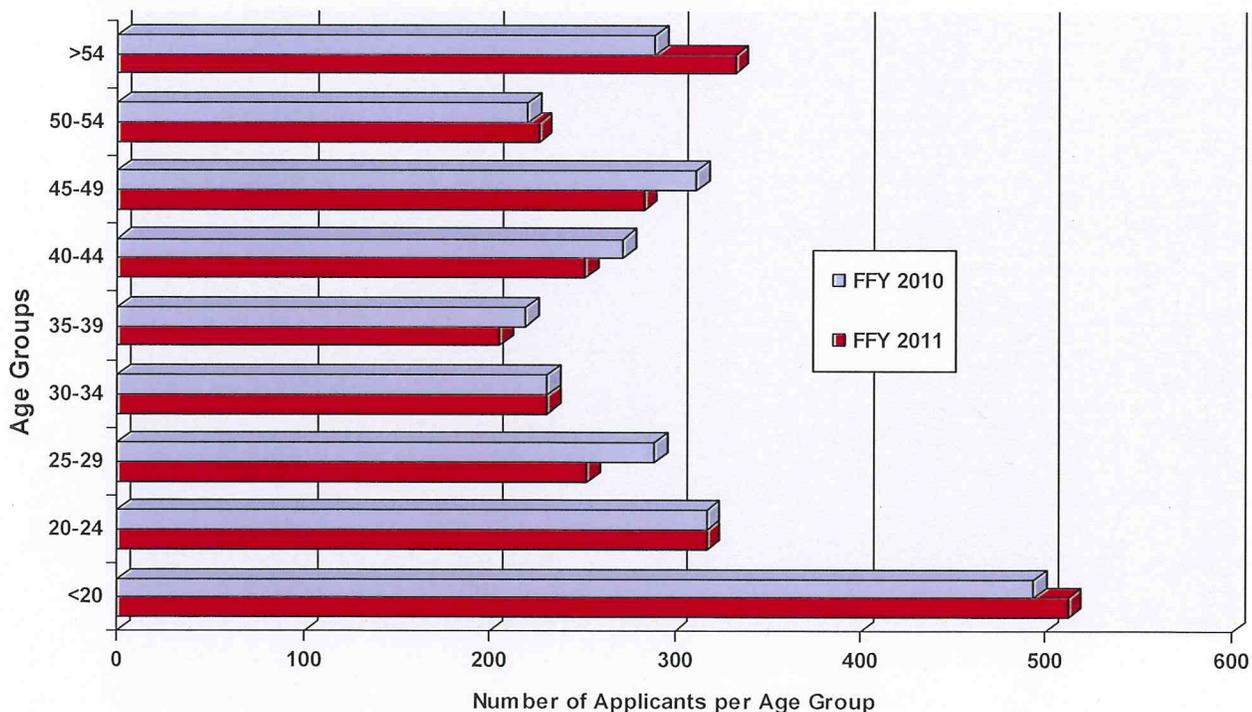
- 719 Vocational Rehabilitation participants obtained employment.
- 98% of the employment outcomes were at minimum wage or above.
- Of those obtaining employment, 126 (18%) utilized formal supports with an average wage of \$8.08/hr.
- Upon completion of the VR program, participants working above minimum wage worked an average of 28.85 hours.

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program is a comprehensive program designed to assist individuals with significant disabilities in making career decisions and reaching their employment goals.

Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance

The Division had a total of 2,609 individuals apply for vocational rehabilitation services in fiscal year 2011. The following chart depicts the number of applicants served per age group.

**Number of Applicants Per Age Group
(10/01/2010 to 9/30/2011)**



* There were 2,609 new applicants this fiscal year, which is 100 more applicants than two years ago.

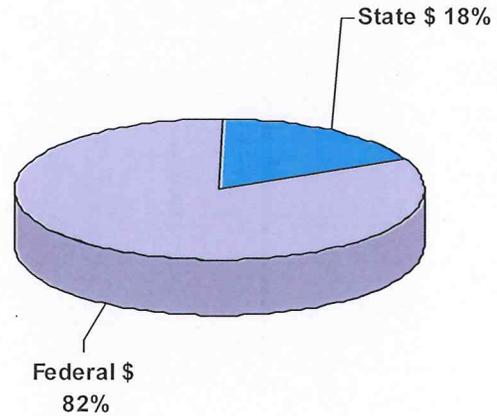
Vocational Rehabilitation Services

According to the 2008 Cornell University study, South Dakota ranks as the highest state in the nation with an employment rate of 61% of people with disabilities who are working. The national average was 39%.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services Serving a Diverse Population

Caucasian	83%
American Indian	14%
African American	2%
Asian	<1%
Pacific/Hawaiian	<1%

Vocational Rehabilitation Funding Sources in 2011



In fiscal year 2011, the average annual income of consumers rehabilitated was \$14,696.00.

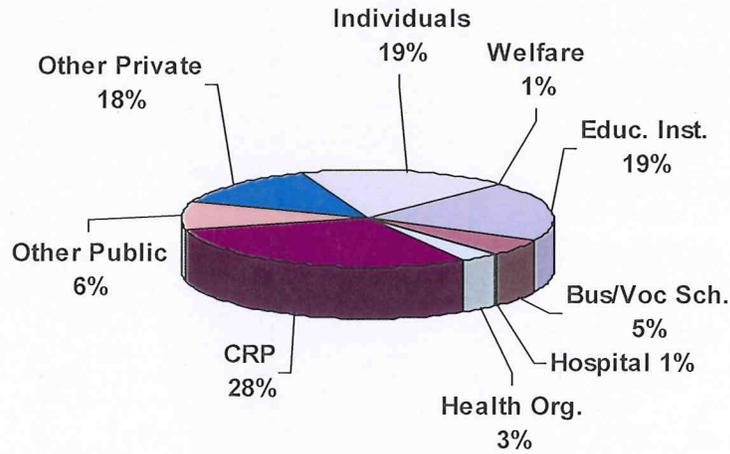
Prior to rehabilitation, the average income was \$2,943.72.

Vocational Rehabilitation Participants Receiving SSI/SSDI at Application

SSI	SSDI	SSI & SSDI	Total	Percent of Total VR Applicants
237	429	122	788	30%

The average hourly wage of individuals employed was \$9.80 after receiving vocational rehabilitation services.

Vocational Rehabilitation Expenditures

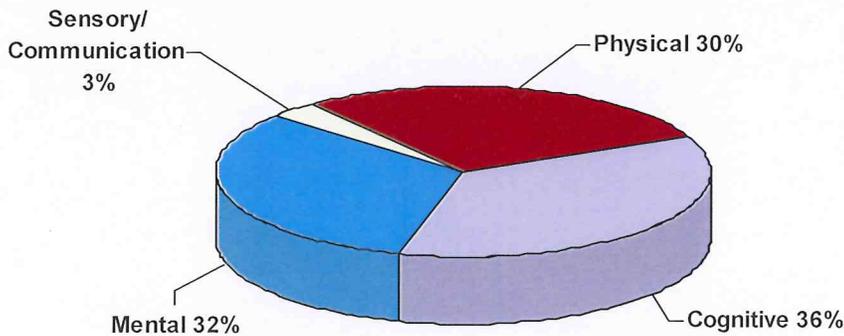


Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance.... After receiving services from VR and at time of closure, there was an increase in consumer's wages and hours worked per week in competitive employment.

Fiscal Year 2011 Performance Outcomes

Performance Description	At Application	At Closure	Percent of Improvement
Increase in individuals obtaining medical insurance through employment	27	109	404%
Increase in individuals where wages are primary source of support	134	568	424%
Increase of weekly wages	\$56.61	\$282.62	499%

The primary impairment of eligible individuals seeking vocational rehabilitation services included:



Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance...

The largest referral source for applicants is the individual themselves (self-referral); all categories include:

Referral Source	Percentage
Self	28%
Post & Secondary Education	16%
Department of Labor	11%
Community Rehabilitation Programs	8%
Other	9%
Friends/Family	8%
Medical Agencies	4%
Mental Health Center	11%
SSA	2%
Welfare	1%
Corrections/Lawyer	2%

Project Skills

Many students with significant disabilities do not have an opportunity to gain paid employment experience while in high school. This is an important learning, maturing and socializing experience. Although willing, most employers cannot afford the supports these students frequently require on their first job.

The state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agencies—Divisions of Rehabilitation Services and Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) fund a program entitled “Project Skills” to address this need.

Project Skills is a cooperative arrangement between VR Agencies and local school systems. The State VR Agencies fund the wages, worker’s compensation and FICA while the schools provide job development, job coaching and follow-along services for the student at the job site. A total of 380 students participated in the program this past year.

Other Services

In addition to vocational rehabilitation services, consumers receive other types of assistance. The following reflects a broad array of entities that the Division works with to fulfill the consumer's employment goals.

Programs	Number of Consumers
Department of Labor	280
Mental Health Center	226
Social Services	210
Supported Employment	126
Community Support Provider	65
Drug/Alcohol Treatment	69
Treatment Facility (Residential)	23
Probation/Parole	54
Career Learning	32
Other VR Agencies	18
Honorably Discharged Veteran	25
Independent Living Center	9
DOL Programs	10

Public Input...

Ways to let the Board and Division know your thoughts.

You can call:

- Voice/TTY: 605.945.2207
- Toll Free: 800.210.0143

You can fax:

- 605.945.2242

You can write:

- Chairperson, Board of Vocational Rehabilitation; 221 South Central Avenue, Pierre, South Dakota, 57501

You can attend a meeting:

All Board meetings are open to the public. Copies of the meeting agendas can be obtained by calling:

- 605.945.2207 (Voice or TTY)
- 800.210.0143

You can become a member:

If you are interested in becoming a member of the State Rehabilitation Council, an application can be obtained by calling:

- 605.945.2207 (Voice or TTY)
-