

IX. Employment Services

Employees with disabilities represent a rich talent pool that is often overlooked. When employers hire qualified individuals with disabilities, they discover untapped skills, talents, and abilities. Employers gain workers who are qualified, have a strong work ethic, are dependable, are likely to stay on a long-term basis, contribute to the economy, are self-sufficient, and are committed to their jobs. Furthermore, they are subject to the same performance standards as all other employees.

The Virginians with Disabilities Act (*Code of Virginia*, § 51.5-1) states that: “it is the policy of this Commonwealth to encourage and enable persons with disabilities to participate fully and equally in the social and economic life of the Commonwealth and to engage in remunerative employment.” Under this Act, the General Assembly directs state agencies to provide those services necessary to assure equal employment opportunity to Virginians with disabilities.

Virginia’s current administration believes that qualified individuals with disabilities are, and can be, valuable contributors not only to state government, but also to Virginia employers as a whole. To underscore this commitment, a full-time Special Advisor on Disability Issues in the Workforce was appointed by the Governor in 2007. The Special Advisor works with appropriate state committees, such as the Olmstead Commission, and has teamed up with the State Workforce Office and the Virginia Workforce Council to ensure that employees with disabilities are part of the workforce planning process. To further demonstrate the commitment of this Administration to hiring qualified individuals with disabilities, the governor signed **Executive Directive No. 8** on October 23, 2007. This Directive instructs all executive branch state agencies and state-funded institutions of higher education to examine their hiring practices and remove any barriers that may be preventing qualified applicants with disabilities from becoming employed in state government. All state agencies are required to report to the Secretary of Administration annually on progress towards implementing this directive.

The publicly funded employment services discussed in this chapter assist individuals with disabilities in acquiring the knowledge and skills required to obtain, maintain, and advance in employment. This chapter also includes the services that educate employers about the valuable pool of workers represented by people with disabilities and that assist them in making reasonable accommodations for those employees who need them.

A. What Are Employment Services?

Employment services, most of which are time-limited, encompass a wide range of activities, such as vocational counseling and guidance, education, vocational training, work skills development, assistive technology, and job development and placement. These employment services are designed to focus on abilities and skills, rather than disabilities, and to promote choice and self-determination with respect to job training and employment options.

The employment programs and services described in this chapter are organized according to three primary programs that assist individuals with disabilities: Virginia's vocational rehabilitation programs, the Virginia Employment Commission and Workforce Network, and the Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Planning Assistance Programs. The following serve as brief introductions to those services.

Vocational Rehabilitation: Two agencies located within the Health and Human Resources Secretariat have the lead responsibility for vocational rehabilitation services in Virginia under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (P.L. 93-112). This Act authorizes grants to states for employment-related services to individuals with disabilities, giving priority to those who are considered to be "significantly disabled." The **Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS)** is responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities unless the individual has a primary disability of blindness or vision impairment. In that case, the **Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)** provides vocational rehabilitation services.

The *Code of Virginia*, §§ 51.5-3-12, prescribes the responsibilities and duties of both departments. In accordance with these statutes, the **DRS** mission is to work in partnership with people with disabilities and their families as well as to collaborate with the public and private sectors to provide and advocate for the highest-quality services that empower individuals with disabilities to maximize their employment, independence, and full inclusion into society. The DRS mission statement identifies its numerous agency partners, both public and private, which include, but are not limited to: Employment Service Organizations (also referred to as Community Rehabilitation Programs), Community Services Boards, the Virginia Department of Education, Centers for Independent Living, local school divisions, community colleges, and universities and other institutions of higher education. DRS is also assisted by a variety of boards, councils, and advisory groups that provide guidance and oversight for services, including: the State Rehabilitation Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Disability Services Council, the Brain Injury Council, the Employment Service Organization Advisory Committee, and the Long-Term Employment Support Services Steering Committee.

As stated previously, the **Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)** is the state agency designated to provide services to Virginians who are blind or vision impaired, including deafblind individuals. The mission of DBVI's vocational rehabilitation services is to empower these individuals to achieve their maximum level of education, employment, and personal independence. DBVI's partners in these efforts include individuals who are blind and vision impaired, their families and other caregivers, the DRS, local school systems, Community Services Boards, and the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services.

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and the Virginia Workforce Network: The mission of the VEC is to promote economic growth and stability by delivering and coordinating workforce services. These include policy development, job placement services, temporary income support, workforce information, and transition and training services for displaced or disadvantaged workers. VEC's responsibilities, as specified in *Code of Virginia*, § 60.2-113,

include, among others, **Job Seeker and Employer Services** for all Virginians, including those with disabilities.

In 2006 the General Assembly enacted legislation that designated the Governor as the Chief Workforce Development Officer and created the position of Senior Advisor to the Governor for Workforce as a cabinet-level position. (See: *Code of Virginia*, Chapter 4.2 of Title 2.2, §§ 2.2-2669, 2.2-2-435.6, and 2.2-435.7.) The **Governor's Office for Workforce Development (GOWD)** was created to help carry out the provisions of this legislation. As a result, the support that had been provided by the Virginia Employment Commission to the Virginia Workforce Council and to the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) program in Virginia has transitioned to GOWD.

The GOWD's mission is to advance a unified and integrated workforce development system that connects employment, training, and education to produce a demand-driven, flexible, and skilled workforce. The WIA authorizes federal funds to provide employment and training services through a system of "**One Stop**" resources called **Workforce Centers** in Virginia. Programs administered by the federal Departments of Labor, Agriculture, Education, Health and Human Services, and Housing and Urban Development are required by the WIA to participate in the One Stops, and participation by additional partners is encouraged.

Under the Workforce Investment Act, the **Disability Program Navigator (DPN)** initiative was created to address the complex rules surrounding entitlement programs. Along with the fear of losing cash assistance and health benefits, these rules can often discourage people with disabilities from seeking employment. The DPN initiative was established by the U.S. Department of Labor and the Social Security Administration (SSA) to promote comprehensive services and work incentive information for SSA beneficiaries and other people with disabilities through the One Stop system. Virginia was awarded the federal grant for this two-year demonstration project and began its implementation in 2006.

Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Planning Assistance Programs: Established by the Ticket to Work and Work Incentives Improvement Act of 1999 (P.L. 106-170), **Ticket to Work** is a federal employment program administered by the **Social Security Administration (SSA)** for individuals who receive Social Security benefits in the form of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and/or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI). The Ticket to Work program was developed to help transition individuals with significant disabilities back into the workforce after receiving SSI and/or SSDI benefits. The program is also designed to help these individuals overcome barriers—such as their concern about the loss of cash payments or health-care benefits—that may negatively influence their decisions about seeking employment. In addition, the program was created to increase opportunities and choices for SSDI beneficiaries to obtain employment, vocational rehabilitation, and other support services from public and private providers, employers, and other organizations. An advantage of this program is that the SSA does not conduct a medical review of a person receiving disability benefits if that person is using a Ticket to pursue employment.

In October 2006, the Social Security Administration renamed and restructured the Benefits Planning, Assistance, and Outreach Program, which became the **Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)** Program to increase emphasis on work incentives, return-to-work supports, and jobs for SSI and SSDI beneficiaries. Community organizations known as **Work Incentive Planning and Assistance (WIPA) Projects** help individuals who receive SSA disability benefits to learn how employment can affect benefits. A WIPA is a local organization that has arranged with the SSA to provide SSI and SSDI beneficiaries with information and planning services about work and work incentives.

B. Who Is Eligible for Employment Services?

DRS Vocational Rehabilitation Program: To be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services from the **Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS)**, an individual must meet these criteria: be legally eligible to work in the United States; be living or working in Virginia or moving to the state; have a physical, mental, or emotional disability that interferes with finding or maintaining employment; and need vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, or regain employment. In addition to these basic requirements, specific DRS cooperative programs have other qualifications, as detailed below.

Individuals must have a serious mental illness to receive vocational rehabilitation services from the **DRS Serious Mental Illness Program** staff. Individuals with developmental disabilities and substance abuse disorders are excluded from these services unless they have been diagnosed with a co-occurring serious mental illness. The **DRS Substance Abuse Service Program** is operated jointly with the Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS) and a local community services board (CSB); and it provides vocational rehabilitation services for individuals who are actively involved in alcohol or substance abuse treatment or who have completed treatment.

DRS also operates the **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program**, the public-assistance benefit administered by the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS). Recipients of TANF who have disabilities have always been among those served by the DRS. As part of Virginia's welfare reform initiative, however, the 1998 General Assembly provided funds for specialized employment services for individuals with disabilities who receive TANF. DRS is designated to implement these services.

The **DRS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program** works in partnership with the Virginia Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DDHH), Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, and the Department of Mental Health and the Department of Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services' Program for Individuals Who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, Late Deafened, and Deafblind to provide vocational rehabilitation services for persons who are deaf, hard of hearing, late deafened, or deafblind. These four agencies have established both a Statewide Interagency Team and regional teams to address gaps in services and to strengthen agency programs. Information on related services provided by DDHH (including assistive technology, outreach, and sign-language interpreters) may be found in both the Community Supports and Health chapters of this report.

The **DRS Supported Employment for Individuals with Physical Disabilities Program** serves individuals who have a significant physical or mental disability that seriously limits three or more functional capacities that have an impact on employment outcome, and whose vocational rehabilitation can be expected to require multiple “core” vocational services for six months or more. To be eligible for the DRS Supported Employment program, an individual must have significant physical disabilities, be engaged in supported employment, and require ongoing support services to obtain and maintain competitive employment.

To be eligible for vocational rehabilitation and employment services from the **Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)**, operated by the DRS in Fishersville, an individual must meet specific criteria, and primary consideration is given to DRS Service recipients under an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). Specific eligibility requirements are as follows:

- ✓ Applicants must be medically, physically, and psychologically stable and have a favorable prognosis for completing and benefiting from the services requested. Current documentation may be requested from a physician, mental health professional, or other professional providing treatment or diagnostic services.
- ✓ Applicants with a psychiatric diagnosis must show a minimum of six consecutive months of stability in the community. Exceptions to this requirement may be considered if the applicant is willing to participate in an outpatient evaluation at WWRC to determine feasibility for services and admission contingencies.
- ✓ Applicants with a history of substance abuse must have at least six consecutive months of documented abstinence or demonstrated completion of intense substance abuse treatment and active participation in a substance abuse aftercare program. Participation in only Twelve Step support groups does not meet this requirement. As above, exceptions may be considered if the applicant is willing to participate in an outpatient evaluation at WWRC to determine feasibility for services and admission contingencies.
- ✓ Applicant’s current behavior will not jeopardize the health and safety of themselves or others at WWRC and must not disrupt the rehabilitation programs.
- ✓ Applicants must be 18 years of age or older to be admitted for residential services. WWRC programs specifically targeted to youth, such as the transition programs discussed in the Education chapter, are exceptions to this rule.
- ✓ Applicants must be willing and able to comply with WWRC community living standards (*Rules & Regulations*).
- ✓ Applicants must have a viable discharge plan, developed in collaboration with their referral source, for community reintegration services that address residential options as well support service needs.
- ✓ Applicants must have an identified funding source. All funding sources (Medicare, Medicaid, Anthem, and any other third-party insurers) must be identified, even if the applicant is being sponsored by DRS.

- ✓ Applicants who have any outstanding court charges must have them settled prior to seeking admission. Those with cases pending adjudication by the judicial system will not be considered. WWRC is not an alternative placement option.

DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Services: Eligibility requirements for DBVI vocational rehabilitation services include being blind or having a vision impairment that interferes with finding or maintaining employment and requiring vocational rehabilitation services to prepare for, secure, or regain employment. DBVI defines blindness and visual impairment as:

- **Blind:** “An individual having not better than 20/200 central visual acuity in the better eye measured at twenty feet with correcting lenses or having visual acuity greater than 20/200 but with the widest diameter of the visual field in the better eye subtending an angle of no greater than twenty degrees, measured at a distance of thirty-three centimeters using a three-millimeter white test object, or a Goldman III-4e target, or other equivalent equipment. Such blindness shall be certified by a duly licensed physician or optometrist.” (*Code of Virginia*, § 51.5-60).
- **Visual Impairment:** “An individual with (1) 20/100 to 20/200 distance vision in the better eye with correcting glasses or a field limitation to 30 degrees or less in the better eye, if the person has been unable to adjust satisfactorily to the loss of vision and needs the specialized services available through DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Program, or (2) night blindness or a rapidly progressive eye condition that, in the opinion of a qualified ophthalmologist, will reduce the distance vision to 20/200 or less.”
- **Deafblind:** “An individual with a combination of blindness and a chronic hearing impairment so severe that most speech cannot be understood with optimum amplification or progressive hearing loss having a prognosis leading to this condition and for whom the combination of impairments cause extreme difficulty in attaining independence in daily life activities, achieving psychological adjustment, or obtaining a vocation.”

Vocational rehabilitation services, including those provided by the Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (located in Richmond), are available to eligible individuals age 14 or older. Services provided by other DBVI programs are available to individuals of all ages. Additional coverage of specific DBVI programs and their services may be found in the Community Supports and Health chapters of this report.

Individuals receiving SSDI and/or SSI benefits are presumed to be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services if they intend to work. This is true for applicants for both DRS and DBVI vocational rehabilitation services. Individuals must be legally eligible to work in the United States, and they must be living or working in Virginia or moving to the state.

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and Virginia Workforce Network: All Job Seeker and Employer Services are available universally to anyone eligible to work in the

United States and are the same for persons with and without disabilities. There are no income, geographic, or other restrictions to receiving these services.

To be eligible for **Workforce Investment Act Title I** adult programs, an individual must be at least 18 years of age, have the right to work in the United States, and, if male, be registered with military Selective Service. Participants in youth programs must have low incomes and at least one identified barrier to employment. Dislocated workers must have received a layoff notice.

Eligibility for services offered through the statewide network of Virginia **Workforce Network One Stop Workforce Centers** varies. For example, a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) beneficiary with a Ticket to Work may be able to use the ticket for services only if his or her Workforce Center is a participant in a Ticket to Work Employment Network (described below). For additional information, local Workforce Centers should be contacted directly.

Ticket to Work Program: The Social Security Administration (SSA) manages the **Ticket to Work Program** and determines which recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Disability Income (SSDI) benefits are eligible for the program. To be eligible, an individual must generally be age 18 or older and not have reached age 65 and must be receiving SSI Title II or Title XVI benefits. Exceptions and other qualifications may apply.

Providers of Ticket to Work services are referred to as **Employment Networks (ENs)**. The SSA awards unlimited, noncompetitive Employment Network contracts to qualified organizations through an ongoing, open-ended Request for Proposal process. Agencies eligible to apply to be an EN include any agency or political subdivision of a state or a private entity that takes responsibility for the referral, coordination, or delivery of services. They may be a single entity, a partnership, an alliance of public or private entities, or a consortium of organizations that combine resources and collaborate to serve individuals within the Ticket to Work Program. In Virginia, there are 53 ENs, including DRS and DBVI.

Work Incentives Planning and Assistance: WIPA programs are available to SSI and SSDI beneficiaries ages 14 to 64 years. The individual does not have to be working, or even have decided to work, to receive WIPA services.

C. How Are Employment Services Accessed and Delivered?

DRS Vocational Rehabilitation Program: DRS operates 36 local field offices across Virginia. Vocational rehabilitation counselors in these local field offices determine an applicant's eligibility for services. Eligible individuals are provided those services agreed on in their **Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)** necessary to achieve or maintain employment. Services may be provided directly or through contracts with other public and private providers.

The IPE is reviewed at least annually and is amended as needed. Service recipients may be required to contribute to the cost of certain services based on the person's ability to pay. Diagnostic, evaluation, counseling, and similar services are free of charge to applicants and

eligible individuals. Consideration of comparable benefits and alternate sources of funding may be required for certain services. Other services, such as assistive technology, are exempt from the comparable benefit requirement.

When DRS is unable to serve all eligible customers because of inadequate funds, an **“Order of Selection,”** based on relative need for services, may be implemented. When an Order of Selection is in effect, DRS must first provide services to the category of individuals prioritized by that Order, typically those with the most significant disabilities. An order of selection determination is completed after an individual is found eligible for vocational rehabilitation services. Individuals in closed categories are provided referral services to the One-Stop Centers or other appropriate resources, and are placed on a waiting list for 12 months unless funding allows the category to be opened for services prior to the end of that period. Since July 1, 2004, the Virginia DRS has had an Order of Selection in effect. As of April 2007, DRS has had to limit service eligibility to only those individuals with the most significant disabilities, i.e., those with serious functional limitations in three or more functional capacities (Category I).

How services are accessed and delivered varies between specific programs. Limited information about the many specialized DRS vocational rehabilitation programs follows. Additional information is available on the DRS Web site or may be obtained from the DRS central office or any of its local field offices.

DRS counselors with special training in mental illness are assigned to twelve local community services boards (CSBs) and provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals from those localities who are experiencing serious mental illness. Similarly, DRS counselors with special training in substance abuse provide vocational rehabilitation services as a part of treatment programs operated by nineteen CSBs. In other areas of the state, service to persons with serious mental illness and substance abuse problems are served by vocational rehabilitation counselors from DRS field offices on general caseloads. Participants in these specialized services may be referred to DRS directly by family members, physicians, and others, or by CSBs. The DRS specialty counselors do not provide different services to their respective populations. Rather, they have specialized technical expertise based on their experience, knowledge, and training in their specialty area.

Services are provided to participants in the **DRS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program** by vocational rehabilitation counselors who are fluent in American Sign Language. Ten counselors are located throughout the state to provide services in their designated geographic regions. There are also staff members who are fluent in American Sign Language in the Special Population Services Unit at Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center. These staff members ensure communication access for persons who are deaf and hard of hearing. In all other respects, access to and delivery of services through this program are the same as for other DRS vocational rehabilitation services.

The DRS **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program** operates in collaboration with local departments of social services, Employment Service Organizations (ESOs), Centers for Independent Living (CILs), and One Stop Workforce Centers. Individuals

with disabilities who are also receiving TANF benefits may learn about DRS TANF services through their social services case worker, by self-referral as a prior recipient of DRS services, or through an ESO, CIL, or One Stop. DRS works with the state Department of Social Services (DSS) to assist TANF recipients with disabilities in securing appropriate employment.

TANF recipients who are referred to DRS receive the same vocational rehabilitation services as other DRS service recipients. The principal difference in providing services to TANF recipients is that, according to the DSS Virginia Initiative for Employment-Not Welfare program requirement, TANF recipients must sign an agreement with DSS that they will accept employment, and that they may be sanctioned or lose benefits if they lose their jobs or quit. As a result, unlike the typical recipient of DRS vocational rehabilitation services, service plans for TANF recipients may be driven by considerations other than their individual choices and abilities.

DRS Supported Employment Services are provided to individuals with the most significant disabilities who previously might not have been considered employable without the availability of ongoing, long-term workplace supports. Ongoing support services are generally provided by employment specialists who are associated with DRS-approved vendors. Employment specialists typically provide individuals with initial job skills' training on an intensive, one-to-one basis and gradually decrease supports as individuals become more proficient. Supported-employment services are usually limited in duration to eighteen months or less.

The **DRS Supported Employment for Individuals with Physical Disabilities (SEPD)** program was developed to address a gap in funding and to support "follow-along" services for individuals who were not able to gain access to those services from a community services board or other follow-along provider because they do not have a diagnosis of mental health, mental retardation, or substance abuse. Four SEPD counselors across the State directly provide follow-along that assist persons with significant physical disabilities to maintain employment. In addition, a small amount of funds provided through this program may be used to purchase long-term support services for individuals with physical disabilities who have obtained employment. These services, which are not time-limited, may include "job coaches" at the job site, follow-up with employers and families, and interventions needed to ensure job retention for the person with a disability.

Usually referred to as long-term "follow-along" services, **DRS Extended Employment Services (EES)** and **Long-Term Employment Support Services (LTESS)** are provided after time-limited supported-employment service sponsored by the DRS are completed. These programs consist of specific services needed to maintain employment. Long-term follow-along funding is distributed among Employment Service Organizations (ESOs) that are approved for Supported Employment Services and EES based on utility and formula. Both EES and LTESS, which are not time-limited, are allocated to each ESO to enable more individuals with disabilities to maintain employment. Through EES, the ESOs provide the structure, the supervision, and the supports necessary for these individuals to maintain employment in a sheltered workshop.

Through LTESS, ESOs provide a full array of services including the individual supported employment model, facility employment, and enclave and mobile crew.

As previously indicated, the **Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)** provides vocational rehabilitation and employment services to individuals with disabilities in both residential and outpatient settings. Once enrolled in a WWRC program, an individual is assigned a WWRC **Rehabilitation Counselor** who provides case management and guidance for that individual and his or her sponsor and family, and who provides services while the individual remains in the WWRC program. The WWRC Counselor coordinates implementation of the service plan that was agreed upon by the local DRS Counselor and the individual with a disability prior to his or her program enrollment. The WWRC Rehabilitation Counselor also approves the expenditure of DRS funds to provide services during that person's training period. The WWRC Counselor and the local DRS counselor stay in close contact throughout the service recipient's stay, and discuss any needed changes to the program of services. Throughout the program, the WWRC Counselor also works closely with the service recipient and his or her rehabilitation team to develop plans for transition back into the community at the conclusion of training.

DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Services: DBVI delivers vocational rehabilitation services and determines applicant eligibility through six regional offices across the state. Additional prevocational services are provided in a residential setting at the **Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)** in Richmond. In some cases, when a blindness center program in another state best meets an individual's needs, DBVI arranges and pays for this service. DBVI also operates a Library and Resource Center located adjacent to the VRCBVI, and has affiliated libraries at other locations statewide. **Virginia Industries for the Blind** operates facilities in Richmond and Charlottesville, and has fourteen satellite operations (Office Supply Stores) in federal buildings and on military bases across the state. DBVI uses federal funds to purchase supported employment services on a fee basis from a network of 67 contract vendors statewide.

Procedures for to access to and delivery of vocational rehabilitation services by DBVI are similar to those for DRS. Vocational rehabilitation counselors partner with individuals who are blind and visually impaired, their family members, and service providers to develop and implement an **Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)** based on their individual abilities, needs, and choices. IPEs are reviewed at least once a year and are updated as appropriate. Diagnostic evaluation, guidance and counseling, and similar services are free of charge for eligible applicants. Other services may be provided based on financial need; and financial contribution may vary depending on the recipient's financial resources. Consideration of comparable benefits and alternate funding sources are required for most services. Among the services that do not require comparable benefits consideration are guidance and counseling, evaluation, and assistive technology services. An Order of Selection, which restricts services to certain categories of individuals (based on severity of disability), may be implemented when DBVI resources are insufficient to serve all eligible individuals. DBVI's Order of Selection has three categories. As of January 2008, all categories were open, and the DBVI was serving all individuals who meet the eligibility criteria.

Details on access to and delivery of services vary by program. Specific information may be obtained from the DBVI Web site or by contacting the central office in Richmond or any of the six regional offices. Additional information on DBVI programs related to Community Supports and Health services can be found in those chapters of this report.

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and Workforce Network: Individuals, including those with disabilities, may access **Job Seeker Services** by visiting VEC offices or One Stop Workforce Centers or online through the VEC Web site. No registration is required. Numerous local, state, and nationwide databases of available jobs may be searched. The Web site also allows users to download and print the application for State of Virginia positions, and to post a résumé online for potential employers to review. For the 12-month period ending September 30, 2007, the VEC reported that 9,359 persons with self-declared disabilities received job services; and of these, 4,054 received job referrals. During that same period, staff-assisted services were provided to 9,343 individuals with disabilities; and of these, 2,066 received career guidance, 477 participated in job-search activities, and 591 were referred to Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services. In all, 4,068 individuals with disabilities who received services from the VEC entered employment during the year.

Multiple **One Stop Workforce Centers** operate in 16 local Workforce Investment Areas across the state. Most local VEC offices have been designated as One Stops, and services are also operated by other partner organizations and contractors. The One Stops are designed to simplify access to services from multiple providers by bringing these employment services together under one roof. Each One Stop provides a single point of access for a wide array of job training, education, and employment services, including those required by the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA) and services designed to meet the unique needs of the local community. One Stops also provide employers with a single point of contact where they can list job opportunities and provide information about current and future skills needed by their workers. The WIA requires that One Stop customers with disabilities have equal access to services and that One Stops be physically and programmatically accessible. In calendar year 2007, VEC data indicated that 13,484 job-seekers were served by WIA Title I programs; and they included 1,242 individuals with disabilities, or slightly less than 9.2 percent of the total.

Since implementation of **Disability Program Navigator (DPN)** in 2006, Virginia has expanded services statewide. There are currently 13 staff Navigators providing services to all sixteen Workforce Incentive Board areas. The Navigators focus on developing new and ongoing partnerships to achieve seamless, comprehensive, and integrated access to services, creating systemic change, and expanding the workforce development system's capacity to serve customers with disabilities as well as employers who hire persons with disabilities. For example, some Navigators trained in ADA and workplace assistive technology can provide technical assistance to Workforce Centers and employers; and 2 Navigators participate on a statewide Universal Design housing committee. On occasion, the Navigators engage directly with Workforce Center customers. As this position evolves, and the U.S. Department of Labor's vision for it evolves, the Navigators may provide even more direct service to customers.

Ticket to Work Program: The Social Security Administration (SSA) provides eligible recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Disability Income (SSDI) benefits with a “Ticket to Work” that they can use to obtain services from **Employment Networks (ENs)**, which are contracted for by the SSA. Participation in the Ticket to Work program is flexible and voluntary. SSI and SSDI beneficiaries are not mandated to participate. In most cases, Employment Networks can choose the services they want to provide, where they will be provided, and to whom. “Ticket Holders” can contact more than one Employment Network to discuss services and—once an agreement to provide services has been reached between a Ticket Holder and an Employment Network—the two work together to develop and implement a plan that will help the individual reach his or her employment goal. If a Ticket Holder becomes dissatisfied with the chosen Network, he or she can select another Network from which to obtain services.

As of November 1, 2007, there were 244,157 Ticket Holders in Virginia. Although 53 ENs provide services to Ticket Holders in Virginia, only 29 ENs are based in Virginia. The remaining EN providers are located out-of-state. During state Fiscal Year 2007, there were 176 Tickets assigned to 14 ENs providing services in Virginia, another 6,600 Tickets assigned to DRS, and 126 assigned to DBVI.

Work Incentive Planning Assistance (WIPA): The goal of the WIPA Program is to enable better SSI and SSDI beneficiaries with disabilities to make informed choices about work and to take advantage of the many work incentives available to them. WIPA services are available in every state and U.S. Territory. In Virginia, the Virginia Association of Community Rehab Programs (vaACCSES) and the Endependence Center, Inc., are WIPA Projects. WIPA Projects have Community Work Incentive Coordinators who provide all SSI and SSDI beneficiaries with disabilities (including transition-to-work youth) access to benefits planning, and work-incentive assistance.

In calendar year 2006, there were 120,819 Virginians with disabilities receiving Social Security Income (SSI) benefits. Of those, only 7,198, or 6 percent, were working. Of the 7,198 workers, 4.6 percent participated in the Section 1619(a) program; 28 percent participated in the Section 1619(b) (Medicaid While Working) program, or 0.1 percent (i.e., one tenth of one percent) participated in the Plan for Achieving Self-Support (PASS) program, and 6.46 percent participated in the Impairment-Related Work Expenses (IRWE) program.

D. What Employment Services Are Available?

DRS Vocational Rehabilitation Program: Vocational rehabilitation counselors work with service recipients and providers to assess which services will meet a recipient’s needs and to develop and implement the **Individual Plan for Employment (IPE)**. Services identified in the IPEs may include:

- Vocational and career guidance and counseling;
- Evaluations to determine vocational rehabilitation needs;
- Job and behavioral skills training and postsecondary education;

- Job search and placement assistance;
- Communication accommodations (when they are not available from another legally obligated source);
- Assistive telecommunications, sensory, and other technological aids and devices;
- Rehabilitation technology services, including assistive technology devices, as well as home, vehicle, and workstation modifications;
- Tools, equipment, and occupational licenses not typically provided by an employer;
- Transportation and personal assistance services needed to participate in DRS services;
- Medical services not otherwise covered by insurance that are needed to be employed;
- Unpaid work experience; and
- Postemployment services.

This list is not comprehensive. Additional services may be provided as required by the person's IPE, and services vary between programs, as follows:

DRS Counselors in the **Serious Mental Illness** and **Substance Abuse Service** programs provide services in ways that respond to the special needs of their respective target populations. Drawing on their specialized training and expertise, these vocational rehabilitation counselors partner with local community services boards to focus services on vocational development, work habits, job readiness, and employment follow-along.

In addition to providing direct services to eligible individuals, vocational rehabilitation counselors in the **DRS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program** are involved with community outreach and education and provide technical assistance to organizations involved with job training, job placement, and employment of persons with hearing impairments.

In addition to receiving services coordinated by DRS vocational rehabilitation counselors, participants in the **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program** work with local social-services case workers who assist them with other benefits and supports (such as transportation, child care, and food stamps, among others) that will help them to sustain employment once their DRS cases are closed.

Supported Employment services include job-site training, transportation, family supports, and other services necessary to provide and maintain employment for persons with severe disabilities in integrated and competitive work settings. Ongoing supported employment services are provided by specialists who work for DRS-approved vendors. Initial supports must include at least twice-monthly contacts between the specialist and the supported employee. Initial support services may also be provided by skilled job trainers, co-workers, or other qualified individuals. This helps to create a system of natural supports within the workplace and the community.

To ensure job retention, DRS may purchase ongoing (long-term) support services using funds from the **Extended Employment Services, Long-Term Employment Support Services, and Supported Employment for Individuals with Physical Disabilities (SEPD)** programs. Job Coaches and SEPD counselors provide direct “face-to-face” supports with supported employees and their employers, and make contact by telephone or other communications to ensure job retention. All three programs require at least monthly contacts to comply with Supported Employment programming.

In 2007, DRS developed and implemented the **Work Incentive Specialist Advocates (WISA)** Program to augment the **Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA)** program and to increase the use of existing SSA work incentives among vocational rehabilitation customers in Virginia. There are 50 certified WISAs that provide assistance to Ticket to Work Ticket Holders who are eligible to use work incentives programs such as the Medicaid While Working (1619b), Student Earned Income Exclusion, Impairment Related Work Expenses, and the Plan for Achieving Self-Support. As of December 31, 2007, WISA services were authorized for 23 vocational rehabilitation customers, with some receiving assistance with more than one work incentive.

DRS also spearheads a collaborative project funded by state agencies and grants to continue to update and customize **WorkWORLD™ Decision Software**. This has been accomplished with support from the Department of Medical Assistance Services Medicaid Infrastructure (MIG) Grant and the following agencies: Department of the Blind and Vision Impaired; Virginia Board For People with Disabilities; Department of Social Services; Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services; and Department of Education.

WorkWORLD™ is decision-support software for personal computers, designed to help people with disabilities, advocates, benefit counselors, and others explore and understand how best to use the work incentives associated with the various federal and state disability and poverty benefit programs. This software automates the computation of benefits and takes into account the complex interaction of income, benefit programs, and work incentives. WorkWORLD™ uses a computer-help system and query-format to help professionals and consumers understand the positive results and potential challenges of choosing to go to work. This software is available to all residents of Virginia, free of charge, by visiting the WorkWORLD™ Web site, www.workworld.org, and by requesting a copy of the software. Registrants are notified when updates have been made to the software.

The ultimate goal for each student at **Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)** is the successful application of independent living skills and work skills in his or her home community. Beginning with initial student and sponsor consultations, assessments, and subsequent service plan development, WWRC services are designed to support a viable vocational goal. In order to maximize the potential for lasting positive vocational outcomes, services at WWRC incorporate a holistic approach to assist students in reaching their employment and independent living goals.

WWRC Vocational Evaluation Services offer a comprehensive and systematic process in which individuals enrolled in WWRC programs work with staff to identify and assess vocational interests, abilities, strengths, weaknesses, aptitudes, and functional limitations related to the individual's preferred rehabilitation or employment goals. The evaluation report is used to plan further services that will lead to successful, sustained employment.

The **WWRC Life Skills Transition Program** has been created to provide a comprehensive approach to teaching individuals the job of daily life and living with others within WWRC's living and learning residential environment. While not strictly an employment program, preemployment activities are an important focus of the program as successful independent living skills are needed to maintain successful employment. The program takes advantage of the social aspects of campus life and activities provided on and off campus to assess and provide instruction across five domains:

1. Preemployment skills (basic work behaviors, attitudes, and habits; job seeking skills; basic customer service and effective communication with others; vocational exploration)
2. Basic workplace literacy (reading; math; GED assessment and skill development)
3. Interpersonal skills (disability awareness; self-advocacy; interpersonal communication; initiative and dependability; anger management; conflict resolution; self-esteem and self-confidence)
4. Independent living skills (money management; clothing care; time management; route-finding and information-seeking; personal health care; healthy relationships)
5. Leisure skills (exploration of interests and community resources).

WWRC Vocational Skills Training Programs prepare individuals with disabilities for competitive entry-level employment in selected occupational career fields. Skills training programs in more than 100 occupational areas are offered on-site at WWRC, through the community-based External Training Option Program in surrounding geographic locations, and through distance education courses for select career fields in Information Technology. A student internship program provides opportunities to determine if trainees are job-ready. Academic support services, such as GED preparation and trade-related academic instruction, are also available.

DRS staff members at WWRC also conduct **Corporate Disability Awareness Training** programs for employers to promote positive work environments and to change negative attitudes in the workplace toward people with disabilities. These no-cost programs dispel misconceptions and teach best practices for working with people with disabilities. Disability-related topics include: individual attitudes and perceptions toward people with disabilities; historical and societal perspectives; research and statistics; the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA); resources for more information; and practical tips on interviewing, accommodating, and communicating with employees with disabilities.

DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Services: The basic list of vocational rehabilitation services and supports described above for DRS are also provided by Department for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) vocational rehabilitation services. DBVI provides other services as well, including independent living skills training and specialized equipment to enhance personal independence and responsibility. DBVI helps people with partial sight learn to utilize fully their remaining vision, creates employment for individuals with vision impairment, and provides special library materials in recorded and other accessible formats.

Services provided at the **Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired (VRCBVI)** in Richmond include: prevocational training in personal adjustment and independent living skills, use of adaptive computer equipment, and preparation for competitive employment. VRCBVI also provides vocational training that focuses on employment opportunities as customer service representatives, and it evaluates trainees' potential for employment as vending stand operators. Participants in residential programs typically remain at the Center for three to four months, but the training period is flexible and based on need.

The **Virginia Industries for the Blind (VIB)** operates numerous small businesses across the state and hires individuals with disabilities whom it has trained. During state Fiscal Year 2007, 31 individuals were employed at the VIB facility in Charlottesville, and another 22 were employed at its facility in Richmond. Satellite operations employed an additional 46 employees at thirteen locations across the Commonwealth, of which the largest work site is the **Naval Station Norfolk's Super SERVIMART**, where eleven individuals work. VIB also operates ten Office Supply Stores at federal buildings and military bases, including two inside the Pentagon. The **Randolph-Sheppard Program** trains food service managers for job placement in vending facilities located throughout the state. At the end of state fiscal year 2007, 58 licensed blind vending stand managers were employed in 70 facilities, including seven satellite facilities and four facilities operated by **Business Opportunities for the Blind**. Collectively, these opportunities generate jobs for blind workers in areas where they rarely existed in the past. It is anticipated that such opportunities will continue to increase in the future.

Transition Services: In addition to the vocational rehabilitation services described above, both the DRS and DBVI provide services to students transitioning from school to postsecondary activities, including higher education and employment. DBVI provides these services to students with disabilities who are age 14 and older. Transition consultation is provided through cooperative agreements between DRS and DBVI and public school divisions, which are also known as **local education agencies (LEAs)**. LEAs have primary responsibility for transition services under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act (IDEIA). A student who is found eligible to receive vocational rehabilitation services must be provided those services in accordance with an **Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)**, just as any other vocational rehabilitation client.

Additional information on the roles of DRS and DBVI in planning for and providing transition services may be found in the Education chapter of this report. Since DBVI's role in coordinating education services for students with visual impairments begins well before the start

of transition services, information on related DBVI services may also be found in the Early Intervention chapter of this report.

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and Virginia Workforce Network: The VEC provides a range of services to improve job search skills and to bring workers and employers together. **Job Seeker** services available to workers include: registration for activities such as job fairs that build job search skills; referrals to job training; employment workshops; resource rooms and support materials; job referral and placement; labor market information; and tools that help job-seekers assess their job skills. **The Virginia Workforce Connection** provides a new Web-based, virtual One Stop system containing a wealth of employment and labor market information, including access to thousands of available jobs.

Through **Employer Services**, VEC staff members help employers find qualified workers by screening and referring applicants for job vacancies. VEC also provides follow-up referrals of workers to potential employers, and can coordinate or provide interview facilities. Employers can also receive information and guidance related to starting or expanding businesses as well as improving employee retention. In addition, these services can include referrals to customized training programs and information on labor markets, salaries, and other workforce information. VEC also provides information on workplace accommodations and tax credits for new hires of people with disabilities. Other employment service programs administered by the VEC include the Work Opportunities Tax Credit, the Trade Act Assistance, Alien Labor Certification, the Migrant and Seasonal Farmworkers Program, and Veterans' Services.

Core services available through **One Stop Workforce Centers**, which are authorized by Title I of the Workforce Investment Act, include public outreach; initial assessments of workers' skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs; job search and placement assistance; career counseling; various group workshops; and labor market information. More intensive services can include comprehensive and specialized assessments, development of individualized employment plans, individual and group counseling and career planning, case management for participants seeking training services, and short-term prevocational services. For those still unable to find employment, direct occupational training services are available.

As stated previously, the **Disability Program Navigator (DPN)** supports the One Stops to help people with disabilities navigate through the challenges of seeking work. Services provided by the Navigators include:

- Guiding One Stop staff in helping people with disabilities to gain access to and navigate the complex provisions of various programs that have an impact on their ability to secure or retain employment.
- Developing and enhancing partnerships between the One Stops, the partner agencies, and various community organizations to achieve integrated services and systemic change, and to expand One Stops' capacity to serve customers with disabilities.
- Providing training, education, and technical assistance to One Stop staff members, partner agencies, and employers. Topics include, but are not limited to, disability

- etiquette, information on additional services from community organizations, and types of assistive technology available for customer with disabilities.
- Providing accessibility problem-solving for the One Stop centers, partners and employers. This would also include arranging for special assistance from appropriate agencies such as the Department for Blind and Vision Impaired and the Department for Deaf and Hard of Hearing.
 - Facilitating the transition of in- or out-of-school youth with disabilities to obtain employment and economic self-sufficiency.
 - Conducting outreach to agencies or organizations that serve people with disabilities.
 - Conducting outreach to employers to dispel myths regarding employees with disabilities and to educate both employers and employees about incentives for hiring individuals with disabilities and making reasonable workplace accommodations.

Ticket to Work Program: A Ticket to Work may be used to obtain vocational rehabilitation, employment services, or a job from service providers participating in an **Employment Network**. “Ticket Holders” are also eligible for extended Medicaid insurance coverage and benefits’ planning assistance, including how to utilize work incentive benefits most effectively. Service providers participating in Employment Networks vary, but may include: state vocational rehabilitation agencies and other providers of rehabilitation services for persons with disabilities, One Stop Workforce Centers, employment agencies, state and local government human services providers, and other public or private entities. Specific services available vary widely between Employment Networks.

Work Incentive Planning Assistance: WIPA Projects engage in ongoing outreach efforts to identify prospective Ticket to Work beneficiaries. **Community Work Incentive Coordinators (CWICs)** assist these individuals in obtaining benefits and in making the best use of them. Each CWIC will:

- Provide information about how part-time, full-time, or seasonal work would affect individual disability benefits and other benefits received from federal, state, and local programs.
- Provide information about how work affects health-care benefits, such as being the primary contact for the VA Medicaid Buy-In Program (Medicaid Works).
- Provide information about work incentives of SSA and other programs.
- Discuss individual employment goals, help an individual find resources and services and discuss possible barriers and the resources or services needed to overcome them.
- Help individuals plan how to use work incentives or other benefits for a successful return to work, and provide follow-along assistance once someone is working, to monitor the work incentives and ensure compliance.
- Work with local Social Security offices to put in place the work incentives needed.
- Help the individual use a Ticket to Work and find the appropriate Employment Network.

E. Cost and Payment for Employment Services

Vocational Rehabilitation Services: The Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) and the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI) receive state and federal funds to support vocational rehabilitation activities. Federal funds are provided by the **Rehabilitation Service Administration (RSA)** within the U.S. Department of Education. The RSA provides grant funds both on a formula and on a discretionary basis. Federal Rehabilitation Act Title I and Title VI grant programs, which provide funds for employment-related services for individuals with disabilities, require a state match. State General Funds supply this match, underwrite administrative costs, and pay for various DRS state-funded programs such as Personal Assistance Services, Long-Term Rehabilitation Case Management Services, Long-Term Employment Services, and others.

The DRS **Work Incentive Specialist Advocates Program** is funded by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services through a Medicaid Infrastructure Grant to the Virginia Department of Medical Assistance Services. Since this program was just implemented in 2007, costs are not available.

The following chart provides some details about costs and payments of each vocational rehabilitation program provided through the DRS and DBVI during state Fiscal Year (FY) 2007: the number of participants, the sources of program funds, and the average per capita cost.

FY 2007 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Program or Service	Number Who Received Service	Number on Waiting List	State Funds	Federal Funds	Other Funds	Total Funds	Average Per Capita Cost
Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS)							
Vocational Rehabilitation Program ^A	24,504	512 (As of 9/28/07)	\$8,362,944	\$56,838,592	\$0	\$62,201,536	\$2,486 ^B
Services to Individuals with Serious Mental Illness	1,043	1 (As of 6/30/07)	\$684,771	\$931,286	\$0	\$1,616,055	\$1,548 ^B
Substance Abuse Service	1,911	20 (As of 6/30/07)	\$971,062	\$828,356	\$319,406	\$2,118,824	\$1,097 ^B
Deaf & Hard of Hearing Program	1,515	37	\$0	\$2,174,818	\$0	\$2,174,818	\$1,401 ^B
Temp. Assist. to Needy Families Program (TANF)	817	13	\$0	\$945,884	\$0	\$945,884	\$1,140 ^B
Supported Employment	3,607	0	\$0	Basic VR \$6,557,774	Title VIc \$678,949	\$7,236,723	\$2,006 ^B

FY 2007 EMPLOYMENT SERVICES

Program or Service	Number Who Received Service	Number on Waiting List	State Funds	Federal Funds	Other Funds	Total Funds	Average Per Capita Cost
Supported Empl. for Individuals with Physical Disabilities	116	0	\$327,834	\$0	\$0	\$327,834	\$2,826 ^B
Extended Employment Services (EES)	613	0 ^C	\$3,306,225	\$0	\$0	\$3,306,225	\$5,394 ^B
Long-Term Employment Support Services	2,478	0 ^C	\$5,345,845	\$0	\$0	\$5,345,845	\$2,157 ^B
Woodrow Wilson Rehab. Center (WWRC) Vocational Evaluation	1,048	161	\$79,918	\$718,325	N/A	\$798,243	D
WWRC Vocational Training ^A	419	89	\$755,635	\$1,127,237	\$108,729	\$1,991,601	D
WWRC Life Skills Transition Program	251	75	\$42,117	\$154,917	\$14,946	\$211,980	D
Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI)							
Vocational Rehabilitation Services (includes VRCBVI)	1,358	0	\$2,197,487	\$8,119,356	\$0	\$10,316,844	\$7,597

- A. Figures for the DRS Vocational Rehabilitation Program and all other DRS programs overlap because persons who apply for vocational rehabilitation services also receive diagnostic testing when they apply.
- B. Per Capita Cost equals Total Cost divided by both the number receiving services **and** the number of the waiting list, because the latter may have received services for eligibility and assessment purposes.
- C. EES/LTESS does not maintain a wait list for these funds at the DRS Central Office, although individual ESOs may incorporate a local wait list for these services.
- D. The WWRC per capita cost can not be determined by program area because of the way operating budgets are implemented in a comprehensive rehabilitation center. The per capita cost across all WWRC services and programs is \$8,949.

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and Virginia Workforce Network: Under the Wagner-Peyser Act, the VEC receives federal funds from the U.S. Department of Labor to support its Unemployment Insurance program and the Job Seeker and Employer Services. The VEC also serves as the fiscal agent for implementation of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA)

and the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) Initiative. Information on cost of services to persons with disabilities is not tracked separately. The DPN Initiative is funded through the U.S. Department of Labor and the Social Security Administration.

For state Fiscal Year (FY) 2007, \$22,603,112 in federal funds were expended to provide WIA services to more than 13,484 participants, with and without disabilities.

Ticket to Work and Self-Sufficiency Program: The national Social Security Administration (SSA) funds the Ticket to Work program, and specific information on Virginia expenditures is not available. While SSA grant awards for community **WIPA Projects** cover a five-year period, organizations must submit annual requests for continuation of funding. During FY 2006, the WIPA program served 1,448 individuals and did not have a wait list. Program expenditures totaled \$448,634 in federal funds, which was its only funding source. The average per capita cost for WIPA was \$310 that year.

F. Monitoring and Evaluation of Employment Services

DRS Vocational Rehabilitation Program: The Commissioner of DRS is responsible for oversight of the agency's vocational rehabilitation program and for ensuring compliance with both the Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR 361.1, et.seq.) and the Virginia Administrative Code (22 VAC 30-20-10 to 200). Specific federal performance Standards and Indicators (34 CFR 361.80-89) have been established by the federal **Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)**.

RSA mandates a number of reports from DRS regarding the persons served and related data. Quarterly RSA "113 Reports" include the number of applicants for services, the number determined eligible for services, the number on waiting lists under the Order of Selection, the number and types of case closures, and other data. The annual RSA "911 Report" contains raw, detailed demographic data on the number and type of vocational rehabilitation case closures. The RSA "A2 Report" describes budget expenditures for different services.

Section 107 Monitoring and Technical Assistance Reviews are conducted by the RSA to ascertain whether the DRS vocational rehabilitation program meets its federal goals and objectives. If DRS is found to be noncompliant with RSA Standards and Indicators, its vocational rehabilitation program must develop and implement a Performance Improvement Plan consistent with RSA recommendations for improvement. RSA's last Section 107 review occurred in 2004. Based on this review, in 2005, DRS submitted a Performance Improvement Plan to address the few performance findings and recommendations made by RSA. Subsequently, DRS met the RSA Standard and Indicators performance requirements for both 2006 and 2007. The next Section 107 review by RSA will occur in 2009.

The DRS Strategic Plan includes agency goals, objectives, and performance measures. Annual evaluations of vocational rehabilitation counselors are based, in part, on individual objectives tied to these performance measures. If individual objectives are not met, appropriate corrective action occurs. In addition, the **DRS Field Rehabilitation Services (FRS)** division

conducts audit reviews of sample cases to ensure that appropriate policies and procedures are being followed and that high-quality services are being provided.

DRS also conducts an annual survey of service recipients to determine their level of satisfaction with the services received. In federal fiscal year 2006 (October 1 2005, to September 30, 2006), the overall satisfaction rate for rehabilitated and nonrehabilitated consumers was 82 percent. Vocationally rehabilitated consumers continued to report positive job satisfaction and 85 percent of the consumers stated that they would tell a friend to go to DRS. Consumers who provided open-ended comments noted that they valued the relationships they had with the VR staff, assistance, and counselor follow-up. Rehabilitated and nonrehabilitated consumers' write-in comments about lack of satisfaction were mainly related to the length of time it took to get things accomplished, a perceived lack of follow-up and staff availability, and dissatisfaction with their case being closed. Program policies are updated as needed based on the survey results.

The **DRS Office of Employment Services and Special Programs** is responsible for specialty programs within the department and works within the Field Rehabilitation Services Division to ensure the overall quality and effectiveness of service delivery. Further oversight information on individual DRS vocational rehabilitation services follows.

The twelve specialty vocational rehabilitation counselors who provide **DRS Services to Individuals with Serious Mental Illness** are directly supervised by the manager of their respective field offices. They also receive indirect and programmatic supervision from the Program Specialist for Serious Mental Illness, however. To monitor service quality and effectiveness, the Program Specialist makes regular site visits to the four local community services boards that participate in this program, and compiles statistical summaries of the employment outcomes and expenditures for case services. As mentioned above, case reviews are also conducted by the manager of the DRS Field Rehabilitation Services to ensure compliance and high-quality service delivery. In addition, statewide meetings are convened several times a year to strengthen programming and to enhance consistency of services offered across the state.

Similar quality assurance procedures apply to the **Substance Abuse Service Program**. The Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services (DMHMRSAS), which jointly sponsors this program with DRS, also conducts annual monitoring visits to program sites and reviews employment outcomes and case expenditure information.

As above, the Program Specialist for the **DRS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Program** is responsible for the quality and effectiveness of its services. In general, oversight practices are the same as for other DRS specialty programs, but the Program Specialist also holds periodic community meetings to obtain direct feedback from service recipients. Program Staff members participate in quarterly meetings to receive ongoing training and to address service issues to enhance service delivery to this population.

Standard oversight practices also apply to the **DRS Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Program**. Program Specialists use site-monitoring visits to provide technical assistance, training, and other guidance to the staff of the collaborating local social services departments. On-site audits to monitor fiscal management of TANF funds by these local departments are conducted by the Department of Social Services (DSS).

DRS maintains formal vendor agreements with Employment Services Organizations (ESOs). These agreements outline specific expectations and standards regarding **Supported Employment** services. In addition to the standard quality assurance practices that apply to the DRS Vocational Rehabilitation Program, these ESOs must be accredited by the national **Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF)**. Program accreditation must be reviewed and renewed by CARF every three years. Four statewide DRS vocational rehabilitation counselors oversee **Supported Employment for Individuals with Physical Disabilities** “follow-along” services. These counselors work with service recipients, ESOs, and DRS Supported Employment Program specialists to monitor and evaluate services. When applicable, ESO vendor agreements also include specific standards for the provision of **Extended Employment Services** and **Long-Term Employment Support Services**. These programs are further monitored through a quality assurance review developed by DRS in cooperation with the **DRS Employment Services Organizations Advisory Committee**.

The **Work Incentive Specialist Advocates (WISAs)** are trained and certified through the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) with funds from the Medicaid Infrastructure Grant. Qualified WISAs can apply to become DRS vendors who provide work incentive services for vocational rehabilitation customers. WISAs must abide by the agency’s standards for such providers and must agree to accept the agency’s fees for the work incentive services.

Vocational training programs at the **DRS Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center (WWRC)** are accredited by the **Accrediting Commission of the Council on Occupational Education**, with Accreditation Team Site visits scheduled every six years. In addition to the typical DRS oversight mechanisms described above, WWRC outcome data are reported annually to its accrediting organization, the state Department of Planning and Budget, and the state Workforce Investment Board. WWRC also distributes an annual report to the general public.

WWRC collects sponsor-satisfaction information about individuals referred for Employment Services. A computer-based survey is sent out to each sponsor after case closure for clients receiving vocational evaluation services, rehabilitation counseling services, and life skills’ transition services. Sponsors answer questions pertaining to the usefulness of vocational evaluation recommendations, overall case management satisfaction, and the timeliness of reports.

WWRC service recipients are asked to complete a satisfaction survey after completion or exit of a WWRC program. Graduates of vocational training programs are contacted for further feedback one year later regarding employment outcomes achieved as a result of services. Concerns and suggestions for improvement are gathered and addressed through focus groups of training program students, in combination with customer comments and suggestions submitted

either on the satisfaction survey or through WWRC's Consumer Comment Database. This information is shared with relevant WWRC staff and their supervisors, as indicated, with individual follow-up as appropriate. Evaluation mechanisms are reviewed annually and changed as necessary to improve their effectiveness.

DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Services: As with DRS, the federal **Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA)** provides oversight and evaluates the performance of the DBVI vocational rehabilitation programs. RSA reporting, monitoring, and corrective action processes for DBVI are equivalent to those for DRS. The Commissioner of DBVI is responsible for oversight of the agency's vocational rehabilitation program and for ensuring compliance with both the Code of Federal Regulations (34 CFR 361.1 et seq.) and the *Code of Virginia* (Title 51.5, Chapter 12). Specific federal performance Standards and Indicators (34 CFR 361.80–89) have been established by the federal RSA. In the 2006 RSA Annual Review Report, DBVI met or exceeded the required performance level for compliance with standards and indicators.

RSA's Section 107 Monitoring and Technical Assistance Review for DBVI vocational rehabilitation services last occurred in 2005. The sole material finding from that review pertained to the presumptive eligibility provision of federal regulation 34 CFR361.42(a)(3). DBVI submitted a Corrective Action Plan, and subsequently implemented all corrective actions to ensure consistent compliance with that provision.

The **DBVI Strategic Plan** includes agency goals, objectives, and performance measures. Annual evaluations of vocational rehabilitation counselors are based, in part, on individual objectives tied to these performance measures. If individual objectives are not met, appropriate corrective action occurs. Local supervisors are responsible for ongoing monitoring of case activities by individual DBVI staff members.

At the state level, the **DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Director** is responsible for direct monitoring of DBVI programs. DBVI's central office reviews case work by regional offices annually. The central office also conducts telephone and mail surveys to determine recipients' satisfaction with services received. All service recipients have the opportunity to participate in these surveys. Feedback is shared with appropriate staff members and is used to improve and enhance services. These same oversight practices apply to the VRCBVI.

During state Fiscal Year 2007, 371 customers completed their DBVI VR program. Of those customers, 163 (44 percent) responded to the satisfaction survey. Among the respondents, 117 (72 percent) successfully reached their goals while 46 (28 percent) did not. In addition, 143 respondents (88 percent) indicated that they had no problems with service providers or vendors, while 15 respondents (9 percent) said that they did have problems with service providers, and 5 (3 percent) reported problems with vendors.

Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) and Workforce Network: At the national level, the **U.S. Department of Labor's Employment Training Administration (ETA)** is responsible for oversight of the VEC's federally funded programs. Each of these programs has its own negotiated and prescribed performance measures, and VEC is required to provide quarterly

reports on outcomes. The number of individuals with disabilities receiving services and securing employment through VEC can be found in the access/delivery section of this chapter.

At the state level, in response to mandates of the national Workforce Investment Act (WIA), the **Virginia Workforce Council (VWC)** assists the Governor in developing a five-year strategic plan that details how the requirements of the Act will be met and how special populations will be served. Membership on the VWC includes representatives from organized labor, the business community, local governments, the community college system, and the General Assembly, as well as the Secretaries of Commerce and Trade, Education, and Health and Human Resources. There is no requirement that VWC membership include people with disabilities. The Secretary for Health and Human Resources (HHR), however, has the responsibility for representing all HHR agencies, including the Department of Rehabilitative Services, the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired, and the Department for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

In 2005, the VWC established a task force focusing on hard-to-serve populations in Virginia, including people with disabilities. The purpose of this task force was to ensure that these populations received equal attention at the state's One Stop Workforce Centers. This task force no longer exists on its own, but has become a part of the Council's **One Stop Committee**. This committee has been responsible for reviewing and proposing changes in the One Stop Certification process, strengthening the overall accessibility survey process of the One Stops, developing a One Stop staff certification and credentialing course, and focusing on ways to increase the number of GEDs acquired by One Stop customers in the pursuit of their employment goals.

As described earlier, One Stop Workforce Centers operate in 16 Workforce Investment Areas statewide. Each has its own local **Workforce Investment Board (WIB)** that works with the state level VWC to guide operation of the One Stops. Community representation varies between WIBs based on local needs and services, but typically includes area employers, educational institutions, labor unions, economic development agencies, One Stop partners (including DRS and DBVI), and other community-based organizations. The local WIBs provide a forum to ensure that workforce training and employment initiatives meet local economic development and business needs.

The federal **Employment Training Administration (ETA)** is also responsible for oversight of the state's One Stop Workforce Centers. It requires the WIBs to negotiate an annual agreement with the state on performance levels for 17 individual measures covering services to adults, minors, and dislocated workers. The two customer-satisfaction measures are based on quarterly samples of employers or program exiters. The survey participants are asked a series of questions regarding the services they received. This information is reported to the U.S. Department of Labor by the Governor's Office for Workforce Development. Survey results were not available for this publication because all programs are aggregated by WIB and not by service. In addition, the survey style generates a single score that does not translate into what is normally seen as traditional satisfaction; and the number of surveys returned is so small it does not accurately represent all customers seen in the One Stops.

The **Virginia Employment Commission** conducts annual reviews of WIB activities, delivery of services by One Stops in general, youth programs in particular, and management of WIA funds. The Workforce Center Certification process is based on the Malcolm Baldrige criteria for performance excellence, which applies the Americans with Disabilities Checklist for readily Achievable Barrier Removal to ensure accessibility of the One Stops. The One Stop Committee of the Virginia Workforce Council has discussed changes to strengthen One Stop Certification requirements to include increasing the frequency of accessibility surveys conducted by DRS and other partners. The **Disability Program Navigator (DPN)** initiative, in partnership with DRS, is taking the lead on writing a more-formalized accessibility policy or guideline to be used as part of the One Stop Certification process. At this time, however, no formal changes to the One Stop Certification standards have been adopted by the Council. There are currently 35 One Stops that are certified as “comprehensive centers.”

Ticket to Work and Work Incentive Planning Assistance Programs: The federal Social Security Administration (SSA) is responsible for oversight of the Ticket to Work and the Work Incentive Planning Assistance Program. WIPA providers must apply for funds annually and submit quarterly program and semiannual financial reports to the SSA. SSA also conducts periodic site visits and on-site audits. The SSA should be contacted directly for additional Ticket to Work and WIPA monitoring and evaluation information.

G. Areas of Concern for Employment Services

This chapter provides information on the breadth and depth of services available to persons with disabilities seeking vocational training and employment. Cited throughout the chapter are statistical and qualitative data as well as information regarding program activities and performance indicators and information on improvements to the system and services, describing these activities and outcomes where such information is available. This section focuses on those areas that may need further improvements to move the system forward and to ensure that the needs are met for persons with disabilities seeking gainful employment. The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) identified the issues and concerns cited below through a variety of mechanisms, including: (1) review and analysis of the source documents referenced within and listed at the end of this Chapter; (2) public comment received via VBPD’s six public forums held throughout the state in the spring of 2007; and (3) written comment and information provided and verified by state agencies in their reviews. The issues below are not all-inclusive, but represent those that VBPD has identified as important to systems improvement. Many of the issues from 2006 remain as challenges.

1. **Inadequate State Agency Coordination:** As reported in the 2006 *Biennial Assessment*, the fragmentation of employment services among the different agencies for people with disabilities presents considerable barriers to employment. Virginia’s infrastructure does not integrate employment services for individuals with disabilities in a manner that is directed by individuals with disabilities and is user-friendly. The existing system is complicated with various agencies maintaining employment-related service options for individuals with disabilities, different points of entry and application processes for services, and different

eligibility requirements for various employment programs. Services available to people with disabilities, especially those with significant disabilities, are often inadequate to facilitate a person's desire to seek self-sufficiency through employment. Service capacity expansion is needed. Service capacity is a large, overarching issue that encompasses transportation, training, placement, job coaching, and worksite accommodations (such as assistive technology, workplace accessibility, and personal assistance services).

2. **Effect of Order of Selection for Vocational Rehabilitation Services:** As allowed under the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, vocational rehabilitation systems may use an Order of Selection to serve individuals with disabilities when the system's resources are limited. The Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) has operated under an Order of Selection for several years. In 2007, due to increasing resource challenges, DRS tightened this Order of Selection further by restricting new applicant eligibility to the category of "Most significant disability." Individuals already receiving services through DRS continue to receive those services, but those who do not meet the Order of Selection criteria are placed on a waiting list. Since DRS is the primary provider of vocational rehabilitation services to persons with disabilities, the continued tightening of resources in this program is extremely problematic. Many job-seekers with disabilities have no options other than the VR system to obtain assistance in preparing for, finding, maintaining, or advancing in employment. The Order of Selection may also disproportionately affect students in transition who may not have access to needed transition services that will help them achieve successful postsecondary outcomes if those services are not normally provided by or available from the school system. Unfortunately, without substantial additional commitment of dollars, this scenario is unlikely to change any time soon. Budget proposals pending before the 2008 General Assembly would provide additional state dollars to eliminate the Order of Selection waiting list, but it is not known at this time whether these proposals will be funded.
3. **Concern over Potential Expansion of State Use Programs:** In October 2006, at the request of Virginia's legislative Disability Commission, presentations on State Use programs for people with significant disabilities were provided by the Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) and NISH. NISH is a Central Non-Profit Agency (CNA) whose mission is to create employment opportunities for people with severe disabilities by securing Federal contracts through the AbilityOne Program (formerly called the Javits-Wagner-O'Day or JWOD Program) for the network of Community Rehabilitation Programs (or Employment Service Organizations "ESOs" in Virginia). A further update was provided to the Disability Commission in the fall of 2007. State Use programs are based on the federal model that has had a long history of use in the blind community. The goal of State Use programs is to enable the Commonwealth of Virginia (as well as other government entities) to establish a system to encourage government purchases of goods and services from organizations that employ people with severe disabilities. While these employees do receive benefits such as medical insurance, annual leave, and sick leave, the individual with the disability is actually working for the ESO, which is not an employer in the competitive marketplace. In addition, the work is most often performed in a segregated work environment (sheltered workshop).

In their 1997 study, *“Sheltered vs. Supported Employment: A Direct Comparison of Long-Term Earnings Outcomes for Individuals with Cognitive Disabilities,”* John Kregel and David H. Dean of VCU–RRTC observe:

A significant amount of evidence indicates that integrated employment options improve consumer employment outcomes, cost less than other adult day programs, and generate savings for taxpayers. Benefit-cost analyses completed in the last ten years indicate that integrated employment options dramatically improve individuals’ earnings and economic self-sufficiency.... Local employment programs can serve more individuals for the same amount of money, and achieve better outcomes, if they adopt an integrated employment approach.... It has been repeatedly demonstrated that supported employment programs lead to a decrease in dependence on federal disability benefit programs, a reduction in the need for costly alternatives such as workshops or activity centers, and an increase in the taxes paid by workers with disabilities.

There is no reason to believe that this information is any less valid in 2008 than it was ten years ago.

Most states have increased the availability of individual supported and customized employment options and moved away from segregated sheltered workshop programs. While the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) has not recommended closing current sheltered workshops in Virginia, it does not support the expansion of segregated employment programs for people with disabilities. VBPD wants to avoid an increase in the number and size of segregated employment programs and the long-term maintenance of the programs. Expansion of State Use would further solidify the segregated model of employment in Virginia and potentially result in more individuals being directed toward such settings rather than toward integrated, competitive supported employment. VBPD understands that movement toward an expansion of State Use in Virginia is currently on hold. Any further development towards State Use should be closely monitored, with advocates both for and against the concept involved in all discussions.

4. **Fear of Benefits Loss:** A continuing concern for many Virginians with disabilities who choose to work is the potential loss of Medicaid eligibility if their earnings are too high. As a result, many either do not seek employment or limit their hours or actual wage level. Several individuals commented about their fear of losing benefits or the need continually to alter their work schedules so that they would not exceed the number of hours worked and then lose their benefits. When pay periods are inconsistent and three checks are received in a month rather than two, for example, a person’s benefits are put at risk. The Medicaid Buy-In Program, Medicaid Works, was implemented in January 2007, permitting higher income and resource levels while ensuring continuation of needed health-care coverage, thus providing an opportunity and incentive to seek gainful employment. As of December 2007, however, only 14 individuals had enrolled in the program. As shown with the low usage of other work incentives and the complexity of the programs, it has proven difficult to educate people with disabilities and disability professionals across numerous state agencies about Medicaid

Works. It has been shown that educational programs targeting this audience can have an impact. Another work incentive, the 1619(b), allows Medicaid recipients to work and keep Medicaid (with a lower threshold than Medicaid Works). As a result of intensive SSA work-incentive training to state agencies and disability professionals, people with disabilities and families of people with disabilities (sponsored by the Virginia Board, DMAS and DRS), there has been a 40 percent increase in use, from 1,441 in 2003 to 2,018 in 2006.

5. **Financial Disincentives to Employment:** The caps on earned income and the resources that can be saved by individuals with disabilities serve as a clear disincentive to employment. Participation in gainful employment can reduce a person's benefits or other resources that support his or her ability to continue to live and work in the community. In all areas—from housing, to health insurance coverage, to personal care—substantial financial disincentives affect individuals with disabilities who seek self-sufficiency through competitive or community-based employment. (One example is the low Personal Maintenance Allowance reported in an earlier section.) There are also financial disincentives for providers who receive more revenue if individuals with disabilities do not work (because they cannot be paid for a service that is not being provided while the individual is at work), resulting in conflicts between day support and work opportunities and the real potential that consumers can be discouraged from working. Financial disincentives are often the unintended consequence of the complexity of dated and conflicting federal, state, and local disability policies across programs and agencies. Often these disincentives cause people to lose the services and supports they require to achieve independence and self-sufficiency. For people with disabilities on SSI or SSDI, few take advantage of the SSA work incentives that are available. These work incentive programs are complicated and difficult to understand, and require cumbersome paperwork following qualification, which limits their use by professionals, people with disabilities, and their families.
6. **Inequitable and Inaccessible Services:** The current service delivery system, including the Virginia Employment Commission (VEC) One Stop Services System established under the federal Workforce Investment Act (WIA), still does not provide equal access to services to people with disabilities, a requirement of the WIA. This issue remained unchanged from comments made in 2006. The system is underutilized by people with disabilities because of lack of physical and program accessibility, lack of training on specialized equipment, and inadequate training of One Stop staff members, who often are inadequately informed about the unique employment and support needs of individuals with disabilities.

The Virginia Workforce Network has made great improvements to the One Stop system. As previously reported, the Network has implemented the Disability Program Navigator (DPN) Program with 13 DPNs serving the 16 One Stop Workforce Centers throughout the Commonwealth. The Charlottesville Workforce Center opened in 2007 with a consortium of local and state disability agencies and organizations. Because it is both physically and programmatically accessible to people with disabilities, this facility will serve as a model for all of the One Stops in Virginia. According to the Governor's Office on Workforce Development, the DPNs are working with all of the One-Stops to obtain updated accessibility surveys and to implement the recommendations of those surveys to make all

Virginia One Stops fully accessible. Unfortunately, there is no timeframe or written plan within which to complete this assessment, and the grant that pays the DPN salaries concludes in 2008. At the time of this report, no new source of funding to preserve these positions had been identified.

7. **Inadequate Focus on Career Development versus Job Placement:** People with significant disabilities who receive vocational training and job placement continue to report that they experience a “one size fits all” mentality. Numerous individuals who had either received vocational rehabilitation (VR) services in the past or were currently receiving services attended the six public forums on the Biennial Assessment hosted by the Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) in the spring of 2007. The attendees’ comments were consistent with those received in 2006, noting dissatisfaction with employment and training services and feeling that they were being geared to low-level jobs not consistent with their abilities or employment goals. This complaint related to jobs found through both the One Stops and the VR system. Individuals felt that their abilities and strengths were not assessed, that they were trained for traditional jobs (office work, food services, janitorial), and were sometimes trained for jobs that did not exist in their locality or region. They noted the need to have an advocate with them to obtain the services they needed. Other issues cited in public comments were that once “placed” in a job they had no opportunity for advancement. Individuals who spoke out at the public forums also felt that their choices were frequently not respected and that creative opportunities for employment, such as self employment enterprises, were discouraged. Consumer-directed employment-support services, which will be available under the Money Follows the Person demonstration initiative, will be a positive development with respect to ensuring consumer choice and increased opportunities.
8. **Lack of Reliable Transportation to Job:** As noted in the chapter on Transportation, transportation or the lack of it affects all activities of daily life, including employment. If an individual does not have reliable transportation, he or she cannot keep a job. If an individual is receiving vocational rehabilitation services, he or she may receive transportation services during periods of assessment, training, and job development. Once the individual is employed, however, lack of transportation can be a significant obstacle to maintaining employment. The Board agrees with the statement in Virginia’s *2007 Comprehensive Cross-Governmental Strategic Plan to Assure Continued Community Integration of Virginians with Disabilities*. “Transportation is basic in the integration into and survival in community living for individuals with disabilities. . . . Transportation of all kinds must be consistently available, affordable, accessible, reliable, safe, and meet the needs of individuals with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth.”
9. **Challenges with Transition Services for Students with Disabilities:** Although federal law identifies the local school division as the primary entity responsible for transition services for students with disabilities, the participation of other local and state agencies—including vocational rehabilitation agencies, community services boards, and case managers—can be critical to successful movement from high school to postsecondary options, such as further education, employment, and independent living. Public comment continues to denote dissatisfaction with regard to how often and when the Department of Rehabilitative Services

(DRS) becomes involved in the transition process for students. Even though DRS has counselors focused on transition, there appears to be miscommunication or perhaps a misinterpretation of policy as to when DRS can or should serve students. The current Order of Selection under which DRS is operating also results in much greater challenges for students with disabilities who could benefit from services offered through vocational rehabilitation.

H. Board Recommendations for Employment Services

Employment for many people with disabilities is critical to ensuring their full integration into community living, self-sufficiency, and independence. The Virginia Board for People with Disabilities (VBPD) makes the following targeted recommendations to improve the availability and accessibility of appropriate employment services and opportunities for people with disabilities in the Commonwealth.

- 1. Provide Greater Career Options and Opportunities for People with Disabilities:** VBPD recommends that the Commonwealth expand, and make more flexible, training, coaching, placement, assistive technology, and other workplace accommodations and career development services. Employment training should include job placement that is part of a career path. One important option is Customized Employment, which is a process for individualizing the employment relationship between an employee and an employer in ways that meet the needs of both parties. It is based on a match between the unique strengths, needs, and interests of the job candidate with a disability, and the identified business needs of the employer or the self-employment business chosen by the candidate. Self-Employment is another creative option that can provide opportunities for employment for people who have few other options, such as those in rural settings, those who experience significant disabilities, have limited transportation options, and other barriers to employment in a traditional setting. These options should be expanded in order to provide a variety of career choices, especially for people with significant disabilities. VBPD believes that customized, supported, and other integrated employment options should be the focus of Virginia's job training and employment efforts, rather than the expansion of State Use or segregated-employment programs.
- 2. Eliminate Barriers to the Utilization of Work Incentives:** Although there has been some increase in the use of work incentives, such as the 1619(b) (Medicaid While Working), most Social Security Administration (SSA) work incentives are underutilized. In addition, the Medicaid Buy-In program (launched in 2007 with a higher threshold for earnings and savings than 1619[b]) has resulted in 14 enrollees for its first year. VBPD recommends ongoing training and technical assistance for staff members in state and local agencies that provide services to people with disabilities, particularly local social services agencies and public school transition personnel, who may be the first point of contact for many individuals with disabilities. Increased coordination among state agencies and federal Work Incentive Projects is needed in order to inform and encourage beneficiaries to enroll in work incentive programs.

3. **Provide Sufficient Funding to Eliminate Vocational Rehabilitation Waiting Lists and Lift Order of Selection:** The Department of Rehabilitative Services (DRS) is currently operating under Order of Selection with only one category open. The Department for the Visually Impaired (DBVI) currently has all categories open but an Order of Selection has been imposed at this agency in the past. VBPD recommends that sufficient state general funds be provided for vocational rehabilitating (VR) services to supplement flat federal funding. The Board also recommends consideration of additional resources specifically for implementation of transition services by VR to all students with disabilities who require such services in order to meet postsecondary school outcomes for education or employment.
4. **Explore Funding Resources to Ensure That the Disability Program Navigator Initiative Will Continue:** The two-year U.S. Department of Labor grant that provided funding for 13 DPN staff members to support the 16 One Stop Workforce Centers throughout the Commonwealth will end in June 2008. As of February 2008, it is uncertain whether the Commonwealth will receive funding to continue the program. The Board recommends that state and federal funding resources be explored for the DPN Initiative to ensure that physical and programmatic accessibility and employment services for people with disabilities seeking job assistance through the One Stops will continue.

Employment Services Sources Referenced in This Chapter

Web Sites:

Social Security Online–The Work Site: <http://www.ssa.gov/work>

Social Security Administration Ticket to Work Program: www.yourtickettowork.com

Employment Network Directory (Ticket to Work):

<http://www.yourtickettowork.com/endir?action=state&state=VA&Find=Find>

WIPA Projects in Virginia at Social Security Online:

<http://www.socialsecurity.gov/work/ServiceProviders/providers.html>

U.S. Department of Labor, Employment & Training Administration, Disability Program Navigator Initiative: <http://www.doleta.gov/disability/>

Virginia Association of Community Rehabilitation Programs: <http://www.vaaccses.org>

Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired: <http://www.vdbvi.org>

Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services: <http://www.vadrs.org>

Order of Selection 2004-Key Points: www.vadrs.org/downloads/ooskeypoints.pdf

Order of Selection Effective October 1, 2006:

www.vadrs.org/downloads/412c2aorderofselection.doc

Order of Selection Effective October 1, 2007:

www.vadrs.org/downloads/attachment411c3.doc

School to Work Transition Services: www.vadrs.org/downloads/transitionservices.pdf

Your Path to Work: <http://www.vadrs.org/yourpath.htm>

Virginia Employment Commission: <http://www.vec.virginia.gov/vecportal/>

Resources for Local Workforce Investment Boards:
<http://www.vec.virginia.gov/vecportal/wia/localwia.cfm>

Virginia Rehabilitation Center for the Blind and Vision Impaired: <http://www.vrcbvi.org>

Virginia Workforce Network: <http://www.workforce.virginia.gov>

Woodrow Wilson Rehabilitation Center: <http://wwrc.virginia.gov>

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Virginia Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired. *Agency Strategic Plan, 2008–10*. Retrieved from www.vdbvi.org/downloads/DBVIAgencyStrategicPlanMaster.doc.

Virginia Department of Mental Health, Mental Retardation and Substance Abuse Services. (2007). *A Study of the Mental Retardation Service System in Virginia: Appendix G, Employment Focus Team Report*. Richmond, Virginia. Retrieved from: [http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/By+Year/RD2572007/\\$file/RD257.pdf](http://leg2.state.va.us/dls/h&sdocs.nsf/By+Year/RD2572007/$file/RD257.pdf).

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Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services. *Rehabilitation Services Administration Annual Review FY 2006*. Richmond, Virginia. Retrieved from: http://rsamis.ed.gov/de.cfm?form_id=107&program_id=&mode=view&grant_award_id=10422.

Virginia Department of Rehabilitative Services. *Agency Strategic Plan, 2008–10*. Richmond, Virginia. Retrieved from: <http://www.vadrs.org/strategicplan08.htm>.