

**Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation (DETR), Rehabilitation Division
Biennial Report for SFY 2015 and 2016
Shelley Hendren, Administrator**

Purpose: The Rehabilitation Division is responsible to primarily address assessment, training, treatment, job placement and job retention for Nevadans with disabilities. The Division places emphasis on providing necessary goods and services that remove barriers for consumers with disabilities leading to competitive, integrated employment and self-sufficiency.

Organizational Structure: The Division is comprised of three bureaus and one program:

Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR)
Bureau of Services to Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired (BSBVI)
Bureau of Disability Adjudication (BDA)
Blind Business Enterprise of Nevada Program (BEN)

Activities of the service bureaus and operational units are directed and supported by Division Administration, which consists of 12 FTEs, including the Administrator and two Deputy Administrators.

This report, as mandated in NRS 615.180, includes the accomplishments of the Division's Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) and Bureau of Services to Persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired (BSBVI).

Statutory Authority:	NRS 232.910, NRS 426.550, NRS 426.640, NRS 615.190
Number of Employees	275 FTE/2016
Telephone:	775.687.6860
Website Address:	www.nvdetr.org

BVR/BSBVI Key Objectives/Accomplishments:

Objective: Enhance the economic benefits to the State and the community through successful long-term competitive, integrated employment, increased income, and reduction in the amount of public support needed for individuals with disabilities in Nevada.

Accomplishments: BVR/BSBVI placed 922 individuals with disabilities into competitive, integrated employment in SFY 2015, with an average wage of \$11.88/hour; and 898 individuals with disabilities in SFY 2016, with an average wage of \$11.98/hour. Wages each year exceeded the federal performance goals, as determined by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) for this population with multiple barriers to employment. Over the biennium, 501 individuals who reported receiving public support at application (including TANF, SSI/SSDI, worker's compensation, veteran's administration and other benefits), no longer required public support at case closure. Additionally, 47% added *private* medical insurance at successful case closure, likely eliminating prior *public* medical insurance like Medicaid and Medicare.

Objective: Eliminate duplication of services through collaborative ventures with community partners, State agencies, and local and non-profit organizations, to develop systematic approaches for shared information, client services, and applicable resources.

Accomplishments: BVR/BSBVI have interlocal contracts with government agencies: Nevada Division of Public and Behavioral Health, Division of Welfare & Supportive Services, Aging and Disabilities Services Division, 16 school districts in Nevada, Nevada Department of Education (DOE), and Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). The Bureaus also hold interlocal contracts with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Sec. 121 Native American agencies: Moapa Band of Paiutes, Fort Mojave Indian Tribe and Shoshone Paiute Tribe of the Duck Valley. The Bureaus contract with community rehabilitation partners: Easter Seals of Nevada, Goodwill Industries, Opportunity Village, and High Sierra Industries. Additionally, BVR/BSBVI have provider agreements in place for 175 independent service providers ranging from medical service providers to job coaching and job development and interpreter services.

BVR/BSBVI staff are co-located within all of the state's JobConnect offices and One-Stop centers, and work collaboratively with their Title I, Title II and Wagner-Peyser workforce partners.

Objective: Maintain a comprehensive system of personnel development to ensure staff are qualified professionals with a 21st century understanding of the needs of individuals with disabilities and the needs of employers in the local economy in order to provide a high level of service to consumers and accomplish critical job functions in an effective, efficient manner.

Accomplishments: The Division collaborated with San Diego State University and its Interwork Institute to provide technical assistance and training in the field of vocational rehabilitation counseling to BVR/BSBVI staff, including strategies for implementing required programmatic changes, as mandated within WIOA. Through the creation of "e-rehab," training is also provided to staff and job development service providers through a series of on-line modules. The Division's Quality Assurance team created two training programs for staff: the New Counselor Academy and the Rehabilitation Technician Academy, both of which launched during the biennium. Specialized training has also been provided to staff. The Division collaborated with the DOE to bring Denise Bissonnette to Nevada (author, trainer, keynote speaker) to provide information to DOE and BVR/BSBVI staff on consumer career development, job development and workforce development. The Division also brought Abby Cooper (renowned leader from San Diego State University in defining employment practices for individuals with the most significant disabilities) to provide training on supported employment practices and customized employment strategies.

Objective: Provide faster, more efficient and accessible services through the use of Internet and other technology.

Accomplishments: In SFY 2016, the programs' orientation video was added to the Division's web site for ease of use for its consumers with disabilities and to streamline their application process. Staff have also arranged for the provision of Internet-based assessments and training classes for consumers. The Division contracted with American College Testing, Inc. (ACT) to provide its consumers with assessments through NSHE colleges on math, reading and locating information. Through this contract, staff were also able to assist consumers through Career Ready 101 training modules on creating career goals, job search, financial awareness, communication, problem solving, critical thinking, self-management, employer expectations and working in teams. Staff that work with transition-age students were provided with smart phones for communication with students in the mode they prefer. Staff effectively utilized video conferencing equipment, GoTo Meeting, JoinMe and V-See for meetings with consumers, other staff, management and partners and service providers, rather than through travel.

In SFYs 2015 and 2016, the Division received state grant funds from the Fund for a Healthy Nevada, which was nearly double the amount it received in SFYs 2013 and 2014. In each year of the biennium, the Division received \$159,840 for assistive technology equipment for BVR/BSBVI consumers, and staff training on assistive technology equipment and best practices. In SFY 2015, the Division served 84 consumers from this grant, and provided staff training to 92 attendees.

Objective: Provide comprehensive rehabilitation services for successful transition from school-to-work and post-secondary education for all students with disabilities.

Accomplishments: The Division developed and implemented interlocal contracts with 16 of Nevada's 17 school districts (Esmeralda County does not have a high school) for efficient coordination of services and to properly delineate roles and responsibilities. 24% of transition-age consumers successfully transition to competitive, integrated employment or postsecondary education or training programs. Over the biennium, Project Search, a collaborative program between Clark County School District (CCSD) and BVR/BSBVI that provides work experiences for CCSD students with disabilities, added three new employer sites including Sunrise Hospital, Regional Transportation Center and University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV).

To better serve students and youth with disabilities, and to leverage unmatched federal funding, the Division added 5 Third Party Cooperative Arrangements (TPCAs) this biennium for a total of 6 to date. TPCAs have been implemented with CCSD and WCSO to provide soft skills, work readiness training and on-the-job work experiences and job search assistance for co-enrolled students with disabilities. The Division also has TPCAs with Western Nevada College, Truckee Meadows Community College, College of Southern Nevada and UNLV for the collaborative "CareerConnect" program. This program provides services to students and youth with disabilities that help them transition from secondary school to college, including providing assistive technology equipment and training, intensive tutoring, work readiness training, internship and other work experience opportunities, and job development services. The TPCAs additionally added over \$1.2 million into the BVR/BSBVI program.

Objective: Provide convenient, accessible and equitable services and opportunities to Nevada businesses and job-seeking individuals with disabilities.

Accomplishments: The Division launched a public relations and marketing campaign in SFY 2015 with employers as its target audience. Marketing materials were created, including a website (www.vrnevada.org), logo and tag line, television commercials and print ads. Social media sites were developed including YouTube, LinkedIn, Face Book and Twitter. (All can be searched using "VR-Nevada"). 21 video success story vignettes were created and air on the Division's YouTube channel, which has had 4,964 views to date. The videos feature employers talking about their positive experiences with consumers that they hired. Additionally, since the campaign's inception, BVR/BSBVI social media has reached a total of 420,628 individuals. The Division has 354 Twitter followers, 2,575 Face Book followers, and 2,000 LinkedIn followers.

The Division considers Nevada employers as its consumers to the same degree as its job-seeking consumers with disabilities. The Division therefore created its own business development team, which provides recruitment and retention services to Nevada employers, consultation and training on workplace accessibility and other disability related issues, and education/information on financial incentives and other advantages of using agency services and hiring individuals with disabilities. The team reaches out to employers through contacts developed from participation at job fairs, expositions, the economic development forum, local and state workforce boards, human

resource associations, regional workforce consortia, chambers of commerce membership/participation, sector councils, and statewide economic development efforts.

Additionally, the team works directly with BVR/BSBVI job-ready consumers to provide them job search assistance, resume building, mock interviews, and job matching and referrals. Each team member serves around 200 consumers each year, and overall program outreach over the biennium has reached over 33,800 individuals.

The team has also been successful in partnering with employers to create work-readiness, on-the-job training programs for BVR/BSBVI consumers, including with Starbucks Carson Valley Roasting Plant and Distribution Center in Minden, PepsiCo bottling plant in Las Vegas and OfficeMax/Office Depot (Distribution and Retail) in North Las Vegas. Starbucks has completed six, 6-week training classes resulting in 24 total hires at starting wages of \$13.25/hour. OfficeMax/Office Depot has completed seven, 6-week training classes resulting in 18 total hires at starting wages of \$11.60/hour. The Division is currently in discussions with Walgreens, CVS Health and Jet.com to create similar work-readiness training programs for BVR/BSBVI consumers.

Additional Key Long-Term Objectives:

1. Increase the number of consumers with disabilities who become successfully employed at a competitive rate and in an integrated setting;
2. Implement a statewide supported employment model to meet the vocational needs of people with the most significant disabilities to become successfully employed at an increased rate;
3. Provide appropriate goods and services to consumers that properly prepares them for in-demand jobs in the new Nevada, that meets the skills needs of employers;
4. Leverage unmatched federal funding for innovation and expansion activities;
5. Promote the State as a model employer, including promotion and expansion of the 700-Hour program;
6. Ensure the statewide provision of pre-employment transition services to all eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities in need of said services;
7. Continue marketing and outreach efforts in order to inform and better collaborate with employers in the new Nevada;
8. Capitalize on telehealth availability for assessments and service delivery to BVR/BSBVI consumers, especially in rural Nevada.

Significant Legislation or Executive Action Affecting the Agency:

Executive Order 2014-16 – Established the Taskforce on Integrated Employment to examine and evaluate current employment programs, resources, funding, and available training and employment opportunities for individuals with intellectual/developmental disabilities (I/DD), and provide a report to the Governor, setting forth their findings as well as three, five and ten-year strategic plans for creating a more integrated workforce and expanding competitive, integrated employment opportunities for individuals with I/DD. The Division Administrator was appointed to this Taskforce and assisted in its facilitation. The Taskforce presented its findings report and strategic plans to the Governor on July 1, 2015, as required. It outlined seven Critical Issues (Resource Development and Sustainability; Collaboration and Coordination; Professional Development; Transportation; Employer Engagement, Development and Support; Government as a Leader and Model Employer; and Early and Timely School Assessment and Planning for Transition), 12 Goals and multiple strategies for implementation.

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014 – Included amendments to the Rehabilitation Act within Title IV. WIOA’s most impactful, new requirements include: Submission of a Unified or Combined State Plan by the four core partners (Adult, Dislocated Workers and Youth, Wagner-Peyser, Adult Education and Family Literacy and Vocational Rehabilitation); better alignment of systems thereby reducing duplication of efforts and creating career pathways; data sharing and collecting and reporting on common performance measures; focusing states’ vocational rehabilitation programs’ funding and efforts toward serving students with disabilities and requiring pre-employment transition services for them; focusing states’ vocational rehabilitation programs on individuals with the most significant disabilities and providing support services to them such that they may achieve competitive, integrated employment; and moving independent living to the federal Department of Health and Human Services.