

# Nevada State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report

2021



**Nevada**

Vocational Rehabilitation

A Proud Partner of American Job Center of Nevada

At Work for Disability Inclusion

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# MISSION

The Mission of the Nevada State Rehabilitation Council (NSRC) is to help ensure the Vocational Rehabilitation Programs (Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation and Bureau of Services to persons who are Blind or Visually Impaired) are consumer oriented, consumer driven and the programs' services and resources result in competitive integrated employment outcomes for Nevadans with disabilities.

# VISION

A skilled and inclusive Nevada workforce.

## ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Nevada State Rehabilitation Council (NSRC) is a citizen advisory council appointed by the Governor to serve both as a partner and to provide guidance to the state's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program.



### COUNCIL MEMBERS

The Council includes people with disabilities, community rehabilitation program staff, vocational rehabilitation counselors, advocates, VR clients and business leaders.



### PROGRAM PLANNING

Members engage in strategic planning and provide guidance to promote competitive and integrated employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities.



### ASSISTANCE

The Council assists in shaping policy, by guiding and assisting in making thoughtful, participant-focused decisions through needs assessments, consumer satisfaction surveys, and ongoing program evaluations.



### FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information on becoming a council member, contact the Rehabilitation Division Administration office at 775-687-6860, or visit our website at <https://detr.nv.gov>. Applications for Gubernatorial appointment to the Council may be found at <http://gov.nv.gov/boards/application-information>.

# Council Members



Raquel O'Neill - Chair  
Former VR Client  
Blindconnect



David Nuestro - Vice Chair  
Disability Advocate  
Redhead Supports



Rebecca Rodgers  
Disability Advocate



Mary Brabant  
Business, Industry & Labor  
Goodwill of Southern Nevada



Alex Goff  
Business, Industry & Labor



Judith Swain  
Rehab. Program Rep.  
Opportunity Village



Allison Stephens  
Parent Training & Information  
Representative



Marshal Hernandez  
VR Counselor, Non-voting

# Letter from the Chair

*Raquel O'Neill*



As a newly elected chair of the Nevada State Rehabilitation Council (NSRC), it is an honor to present our 2021 annual report. As we reflect on this past year, many of us are reminded of the pandemic and how it impacted so many in varied ways. In Nevada, no one group was unaffected whether through their health or through the loss of a loved one or a job. During this time, we were all joined as one as we endured the repercussions of the pandemic. However, with the negative came some very positive things. We saw people's compassion as they reached out to their neighbors or provided emotional or fiscal support to loved ones or even a stranger during their time of need.

During this unprecedented time, we also saw opportunities created for persons with disabilities like never before. Through the emergence of universal virtual engagement, new opportunities for persons with disabilities to participate and stay involved in community and employment grew. This enhancement of the virtual environment in our daily lives helped bridge gaps in communication access, transportation needs, broaden services to rural areas, and forge new partnerships amongst organizations and groups for growing stronger services.

The NSRC recognized the need to provide guidance to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) leadership and community about challenges and solutions for employment of people with disabilities throughout Nevada especially during and post the pandemic, when employers faced a challenge in finding employees, a very real need resulting in thousands of jobs. While not all the jobs may be tailored for individuals with disabilities, the Council and VR are geared up to find jobs for disabled Nevadans.

While there are many things we continue to learn from the pandemic, I believe adversity and struggle will guide us to innovating a brighter and better future. I look forward to working with other council members and our community partners in making a difference for all Nevadans.

Respectfully  
Raquel O'Neill

# Letter from the Administrator

## *Drazen Elez*



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Respectfully,

Drazen Elez

# PROGRAM HIGHLIGHT

## INTERNAL JOB DEVELOPMENT TEAM



“Teach people how to sell their skills, not their disabilities” is the motto of Sandra Mitchell, the Senior Job Developer on Vocational Rehabilitation’s Internal Job Development Team (IJDT). Sandra is so passionate about the work of the IJDT. She says it is “Our job is to give people hope and confidence.”

This specialized team was formed in November 2019 out of a need for non-supported employment clients, who still needed encouragement, guidance and job seeking skills development to get the supports they needed to find a job, without hiring an external job developer. The IJDT Supervisor, Tammy Riley explained that some of the most valuable services they provide are resume development, application skills, interview preparation, job seeking skills, 700-Hour Program coordination, 30-day

follow alongs and most importantly they listen.

Another key service provided by the IJDT is to register Vocational Rehabilitation clients referred to the team for job development with the state’s EmployNV system, which is the tool in the state to match job seekers with employers seeking employees. Sometimes it takes time to get a job, and it can be a slow and frustrating process. The clients really appreciate having someone to vent their concerns to, and that the human connection is so important.

The philosophy of the IJDT is to not simply provide job development, but to also teach clients skills on how to do their own job development so they will be able to help themselves if they are ever unemployed in the future. The team often hears back from prior clients all the time telling them that the skills they learned while working with the IJDT helped them do their own job search and get hired for a new job. Staff on the team often say with pride makes the work on the IJDT so rewarding.

The IJDT is comprised of Supervisor Tammy Riley, Job Developers Sandra Mitchell, Michele Rey-Morales and Felicia Dorsey, Rehabilitation Technicians Aimee Matts and Margaret Mack and Administrative Assistant April Beets. Way to go team and thank you for making a difference in Nevada!

## Partnership Profile **SEPHORA**

In 2019, Sephora embarked on a journey to hire individuals with disabilities in our Las Vegas Distribution Center, in partnership with the Nevada Vocational Rehabilitation (NV VR) and Capability Health and Human Services. Through our strong partnerships, the distribution center now has 35 full time employees with a disability – and that number continues to grow. The partnership with NV VR has been instrumental in the success of our program. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, counselors have continued to send a steady stream of referrals for potential new employees, which has even resulted in a waitlist!

The program consists of a paid 9 weeks of on-the-job training that readies individuals for full-time employment by teaching specific job skills and providing evaluations. During this training program, trainees will learn three core job functions and are held to the same standards as all employees. At the end of the training program, successful trainees will join Sephora as full-time employees, earning equal pay and full benefits.

The opportunity to employ the clients of VR has had a huge impact on Sephora, and has created more opportunity for individuals with disabilities to have a level of independence and stability that they may have not had before. Overall, we have seen low turnover, absenteeism and safety incidents, plus improved productivity. We look forward to our ongoing partnership.

# Collaborations

*“It is the collaborative effort that paves the path to overwhelming success. Simply, we are just better together.”*



Nevada VR’s ongoing partnership with the Lyon County School District braids funding to improve post- secondary outcomes for students with disabilities in Lyon County by providing them with support, resources and access to college and career pathways.



TheNextStep, is a collaboration with the Carson City School District and VR. The Next Step serves students from 18-22 who are interested in exploring work, having work-based learning experiences and developing their vocational skills in preparation for employment.



The Vocational Opportunities for Inclusive Career Education (VOICE) collaborative between the Washoe County School District (WCSD) and the State of Nevada, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program has served over 150 students during the 2018-2019 school year and focused on pre-employment transition services, work readiness skills training and specialized job development for the achievement of competitive, integrated employment for these students and youth.

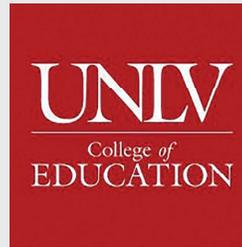


Nevada is proud of the two CareerConnect collaborations between VR, Western Nevada College and the Truckee Meadows Community College. The program focuses on VR youth transitioning from high school to college and it provides guidance to students to acquire the academic preparation, work readiness skills, internship opportunities, and job development necessary to successfully complete college and obtain competitive integrated employment.





Project SEARCH



The Careers, Recreation and Vocational Education (CRAVE) camps held in Southern and Northern Nevada are geared for high school students with disabilities and provide students with hands-on experience with college life, living in the dorms, learning how to navigate the college system, communicating with professors, learning about budgeting for college, time management and job readiness skills.



Job Exploration and Expectation Program (JEEP) is a collaboration between VR and the Clark County School District (CCSD). JEEP provides pre-employment transition services to students and has a focus to prepare, train, and assist students in achieving competitive integrated employment. Students participate in 4 work rotations in various departments within their high school with the final rotation being a work experience opportunity with a local employer in the community.



VR has embraced the legislatively-enhanced 700 - Hour Program, which creates employment pathways for individuals with disabilities. These employment opportunities are with state agencies, and afford the employer and employee 700 hours to determine if the individual is a good fit for the job. This program has been highly successful, having placed over 100 individuals in the last year and a half.



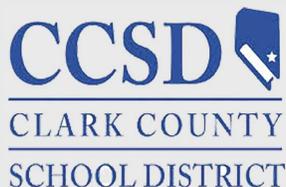
In order to meet the expressed needs of business, VR has partnered with University of Nevada Reno, the College of Southern Nevada (CSN) and Professional Institute of Technology and Accounting (PITA) to develop soft skills classes. These classes prepare VR clients to meet the rigors of today's employment and include resume development, submitting online applications, reporting to work on time, work attire and hygiene, employee relationships/social skills, chain of command, employer workplace culture and culminates with a reverse job fair.



# Collaborations

*“It is the collaborative effort that paves the path to overwhelming success. Simply, we are just better together.”*

There are several Project SEARCH collaborations in Nevada. The first collaboration is with Clark County School District (CCSD), Sunrise Hospital, and Mountain View Hospital and Regional Transportation Commission. In the north, the collaboration is with the Washoe County School District (WCSD) and Atlantis Casino Resort Spa. In both collaborations, high school students are assigned to worksites at locations where they can complete several work rotations with support from their teachers and VR work-based trainers.



Project SEARCH



## SEPHORA

The Sephora Training program is a collaborative training program between VR, Capability Health and Human Services and the Sephora Distribution Center in North Las Vegas. The training lasts 9 weeks, and clients learn soft skills as well as rotate between 3 warehouse/stocking positions in the warehouse. Once successful, the clients become permanent employees of Sephora. This collaborative program has served 27 clients in the last state fiscal year (7/1/19 – 6/30/20). Of those 27 clients, 24 continue to be employed.



The Starbucks Roasting Plant “Inclusion Academy” started in October 2015 by our Business Services Manager. Selected Vocational Rehabilitation clients are given the opportunity to join a customized pre-employment training program in the Starbucks Roasting Plant in Minden, NV. Clients learn in a classroom setting and hands-on in the workplace. Many are offered positions upon completion of the work-readiness training program. All who complete the program receive a certificate of completion of their bona fide training from this recognized industry leader. Over 40 individuals with disabilities have been hired out of this program, for a 77% success rate.



Pathway to Work is a collaboration with Opportunity Village, Desert Regional Center, and VR. With a placement rate of 96%, Pathway to Work is a work-based learning program offering job coaching support and an extended training for individuals located in the community with Intellectual/Developmental Disabilities (I/DD).





## In appreciation, we acknowledge our other partners and collaborations:

American Council for the Blind  
Amplify Life  
Blind Center  
BlindConnect  
Bloom Consulting  
Capability Health & Human Services  
CART- Churchill Area Regional  
Transportation  
Colorado Center for the Blind  
Commission on Services for Persons  
with Disabilities (CSPD)  
Community Services Agency  
Desert, Sierra and Rural Regional  
Centers (ADSD)  
Fallon Paiute Shoshone Tribe  
Fort Mojave Tribe  
Goodwill of Southern Nevada  
Helen Keller National Center for Deaf-  
Blind Youths and Adults  
Jobs for America's Graduates (JAG)  
Nevada  
JOIN Inc.  
Marshall B. Ketchum University (dba  
Southern California College of  
Optometry Low Vision Clinic  
Moapa Band of Paiutes  
National Federation of the Blind  
National Technical Assistance Center  
for Transition (NTACT)

Nevada Aging and Disability Services  
Division (ADSD)  
Nevada Blind Children's Foundation  
Nevada Department of Education,  
Career and Technical Education  
Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law  
Center  
Nevada Governor's Council on  
Developmental Disabilities (NGCDD)  
Nevada JobConnect/DETR  
Nevada System of Higher Education  
(NSHE) member colleges and  
universities  
Nevada Youth Training Center (NYTC)  
NevadaWorks  
Opportunity Village  
Pride Industries  
Regional Transportation Commission  
(RTC)  
Sephora  
Shoshone Paiute Tribes of the Duck  
Valley  
School Districts Statewide  
Starbucks Roasting Plant  
TAI-Talent Assessment, Inc. (PAES Labs)  
The Sho-Pi Tribe in Owyhee  
University of Nevada, Reno, Center for  
Excellence in Disabilities  
The Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assis-  
tance Center for Quality Management (VRT-  
AC-QM)

# Employee Feature

## *Danielle Bay-Trujillo*



Daniel Bay-Trujillo is a Rehabilitation Technician II at the Ely, NV outreach office. She has held numerous positions in various fields throughout her career that have provided here with the experience and knowledge for her current position including her position as a team lead in an automotive service department, a supervisor for hospital admissions, a realtor, a florist, a barista, and cosmetologist. In these diverse careers, she has gained skills for time management, people management, active listening, developing policies and procedures, creating reference manuals, record keeping, phone etiquette, scheduling, multitasking, patience, de-escalating stressful situations, urgency, customer service, and much more.

Having a passion for helping others and wanted to make a difference in people's lives. She knew she wanted to be a part of the of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) when she first read about VR. Coincidentally, there happened to be a position open where I live in Ely, so she applied and was selected for the position. Over the past two (2) years, she has been able to help the Ely area become more aware of Vocational Rehabilitation services. She has spoken at the local high schools and made progress with promoting VR in the clinics, pharmacies, schools, and other businesses around town. With the Rehab Counselor position vacant, Danielle had also been covering the area and taking on more responsibilities as well as assisting the Las Vegas area by filling in when Rehab Tech positions are vacant.

Danielle is also a member of the Policy and Procedure Review Team where they meet to see how they can improve to make the job easier and flow better for all departments. After two years, she continues to be positive and looks forward to learning even more. She is honest and direct about how much she enjoys working for the Nevada Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation's Rehabilitation Division and is thankful for the opportunity's VR has presented.

# Success Stories

## BRANDON GOLONKA



Brandon Golonka applied for services in 2016 as a 17-year-old student of Reed High School, and joined the collaborative program between Vocational Rehabilitation and Washoe County School District known as VOICE. Unfortunately, Brandon's time in the VOICE program was cut short following the school district's decision to cease funding for the program after the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Brandon's case was transferred to adult VR services where his previous VOICE training served as a remarkable foundation for him to start pursuing formal employment. During his time in VOICE, he loved his work-based learning experience at the restaurant Raising Cane's as a lobby attendant where he assisted in collecting trays and keeping the dining area clean. Brandon worked with his counselor and job developer Jenny Weisberg of BRAIN to seek out employment opportunities in the community that were consistent with the interests and skills he had developed during his time in the VOICE program.

Together, they met with a supervisor at Red Robin in Sparks who loved Brandon's attitude and eagerness. He was offered a position on the restaurant's pre-opening prep team and started work in January 2021. Brandon is praised by his supervisors and co-workers as having great initiative. He is always asking how he can help if he completes his assigned job duties early, and completes any task he's assigned effectively and efficiently. His attitude on the job was so appreciated that they made it a priority to keep Brandon employed during the slower times of the pandemic when downsizing was occurring. Brandon loves his job, and Red Robin loves having him as a team member.

## OSCAR CHAVIRA

Oscar Chavira is from Battle Mountain, a small town in rural Nevada, but that did not stop him from achieving his academic and vocational goals. He was admitted to University of Nevada, Reno after graduating from high school and declared a major in mining engineering.

Oscar has the visual impairments of keratoconus, a bulging and protruding of cornea into a cone shape. The condition was rapidly progressing, and Oscar started to lose his central vision. The condition was also making him very light sensitive, and he was struggling with his university courses.

Oscar applied for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Blind Services in 2015 where his VR counselor helped him with a low vision assessment to evaluate his functional limitations and make appropriate



# Success Stories

appropriate recommendations. VR gave Oscar the low vision aids and low vision training he needed to overcome his functional limitations.

Due to the nature of keratoconus, Oscar is required to wear specialized contacts to push his cornea back and see clearly. He did not have insurance to cover the expenses. VR assisted him by purchasing those contact lenses twice a year to help him manage his disability. VR also funded Oscar's tuition and books which were not covered by FAFSA, as well as his rent during his relocation from Battle Mountain to Reno.

Oscar always maintained an excellent GPA and demonstrated great commitment to his VR program. He graduated from UNR with a bachelor's degree in Civil Engineering with a 3.618 GPA in May of 2019. Later, he attended graduate school at UNR with the same major and graduated with a master's degree in December 2020.

Oscar relocated to Denver Colorado in February 2021 and obtained employment with a consulting company called Knight Piesold & Company, as a geotechnical/civil engineer, consistent with his academic and vocational goals. He is working full time at his goal wage with full benefits.

## TABATHA AVILA



Tabatha Avila is 42 years old and has a mild intellectual disability which impacts her written language abilities. She has had three cases with Vocational Rehabilitation, all closed successfully. Her first vocational goal was to find a job in house-keeper, She then she discovered her passion for working with children. Her second successful case was to become a childcare worker, a position she currently holds.

She works in childcare for Munchkinland, a local provider. Tabatha is passionate about her job, and her supervisors are very happy to have her employed there. She decided to obtain her Child Development Associate credential, which would increase not only her earning potential, but expand her duties in the workplace. She enrolled in the required classes at UNR, and embarked on her certification journey.

As Tabatha progressed in class, it became clear to her, and her instructors, that she could grasp the relevant material, but due to her disability would have extreme difficulty with the licensure test. She applied for services with VR in hopes of finding an accommodation, or even an alternate examination mechanism that would allow her to demonstrate the mastery of the material. Her counselor worked closely with her instructor to determine available accommodations, and

provided advocacy with the examination board, which convinced them to allow her instructor to assist her during the examination.

Needless to say, she passed the exam, obtained her license, and due to services provided by VR and coordinated through UNR staff, she was able to advance in her chosen field, and continue to be an asset to her employer and the community. She was given an immediate \$1.00 per hour raise, and with her license she can continue to advance, and receive regular pay increases.

## WAYD RECHARD

Waydd came to VR for services on June 6, 2019. As a military veteran, a former felon, and a person with a disability, he has overcome so many obstacles and faced life head-on with a determined and positive attitude. He was the second graduate from the Governor's Higher Education in Prison Program (HEPP), and he was the first released into the work force. He graduated in December 2018 with an AA in Anthropology with honors (GPA 3.54) and as a Phi Theta Kappa member. While incarcerated, Waydd used his time to turn his life around and was looking forward to getting out and making a difference in the lives of others. He wanted to participate in the 700-Hour Program for the State of Nevada, which gives people with disabilities the opportunity to interview for State positions that they have the skills and abilities to perform.

Sandra, the Internal Job Developer, worked with Waydd and he was approved and placed on the 700-Hour list for several jobs. He was hired by one agency but once the background check came back, he was let go. He felt devastated but never gave up hope. Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) worked to get him back on the 700-Hour List and he was hired by another agency and again, as a result of his background, he was let go. At that time, he was feeling hopeless, so VR started working on using the Federal Bonding Program that is available for people with challenging backgrounds.

When the next opportunity for a State position with the 700-Hour Program came along, Waydd went into the interview prepared, advocated for himself using the Federal Bonding Program and they hired him. Currently, he is still working for the Northern Nevada Veterans Memorial Cemetery helping grieving families make final arrangements for their veteran loved ones. He is giving back and using his positivity to help change the lives of others. Thanks to his tenacity, resilience, passion, and in spite of and even because of his challenges, Waydd is a successful and productive member of society!



# Success Stories



bly proud of him.

## BRIAN RODRIGUEZ

Brian has been on a journey of growth and self-improvement, possibly without being aware of it. Brian is a retuning client, this being his 4th case with Vocational Rehabilitation in Nevada. Brian Rodriguez is a 43-year-old individual with mild intellectual disability. With each case, Brian has learned many valuable life lessons. He has learned the value of employment and the consequences of his actions. More importantly he has learned humility.

When Brian first started receiving services, he expected all to be done for him with little effort on his part. He had a hard-exterior shell and struggled with communicating his thoughts in an appropriate and professional manner.

Through support, encouragement, and real-life lessons, he started working on his approach when things did not go his way. He realized that walking off the job because he was bored, or if something didn't go his way, was not the solution. He began to listen to the guidance he was being given by his support system. He understood that his negative behavior was not going to make things move fast or happen quickly. After being unemployed for more than 2 years, he started putting more effort than ever to secure competitive employment again as a cashier. He began to value the work and time it takes in securing employment.

Brian often spoke about wanting to work in an upscale casino. It became difficult for Brian to obtain employment on the Las Vegas strip due to not providing notice to his previous employer, MGM, about his resignation. However, through perseverance, Brian was offered a cashier position at a gift shop within the Aria Resort on the strip. Brian mentioned in past years wanting to work at a hotel like the Aria. The Aria interviewed him twice and offered him another opportunity right away! He met with HR and worked on setting a schedule that would not conflict with his social security benefits. Brian is scheduled to start his new job this July as a gift shop cashier. He has a new outlook and appreciation for being employed. He understands the work and energy that goes into obtaining employment, which will help Brian value his new employment more than ever. Brian has made significant changes throughout the years. His tone, appreciation, and gratitude are apparent. We are

## ROBERT SANDOZ

Robert Sandoz, a 2019 graduate from Elko, is an avid outdoor person who enjoys hunting and fishing even though has a Mobility Orthopedic/Neurological Impairment due to a stroke when he was in his mother's womb. Robert's parents are his biggest advocates and have always encouraged developing Robert's independence. He uses a cane to walk since the left side of his body is partially paralyzed and goes horseback riding weekly at Ruby Mountain Riding which he has done for years.

Robert first became involved with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) through his VR Transition Coordinator when he was attending Elko High School. Robert participated in Pre-Employment Transition Services classes before he graduat-



ed. Once Robert became a client of VR, he expressed a desire to work in broadcast and radio. Together with his VR counselor, they built a plan for employment based on informed choice. While working with his job developer, Robert was able to secure a position at Ruby Radio, where he is currently employed and was successfully rehabilitated. Robert enjoys the variety of tasks the job provides, such as putting music into the player, clerical tasks supporting marketing campaigns and fielding phone calls. Robert currently earns \$8.25 per hour part time at 10 hours a week, as he is also receiving Supplemental Security Income from Social Security.

Robert benefited from VR services including counseling and guidance, job placement assistance and job readiness training. Currently, he is in a post-employment plan so he can receive some job coaching and guidance and support for work related clothing. His VR Counselor continues to provide Robert counseling and guidance to support his employment. Robert continues to thrive, and VR is assured that he will develop and grow the longer he remains with the company.

## SINAI LOPEZ

Sinai applied for services on February 18, 2020 and was determined to be eligible on April 6, 2020 due to her Cerebral Palsy. However, she was not eligible for Social Security Insurance benefits. Sinai wanted and needed to go to work to pay her bills and her rent and was committed to finding a job.

Because Sinai had never had a work experience or a job before, Vocational Rehabilitation and Sinai decided together that she would participate in a Community Based Assessment (CBA). Her plan was written on June 8, 2020 with a vocational goal of becoming a retail salesperson. She participated in the UNR soft skills course and started working with Jenny, a job coach with Brain Recovery Assistants of Nevada.

Due to her disability, it was not clear how long Sinai would be able to stand and if she would be able to handle such a physical job. Sinai was placed at Once Upon A Child for her CBA. She did an excellent job and the employer really liked her work. She was able to stand and work the physical aspects of the job. After the CBA she continued to work with her Job Coach to find a full-time job, receiving help with a resume, filling out applications and interview practice.

Sinai ultimately accepted a job at Wal-Mart as a retail associate. This was not a good fit for her because it was very fast paced and demanding on her. She was moved into the bakery to see if this would work better for her. She likes working in the bakery. It is a little slower paced and not so demanding for Sinai, and she feels like she can keep up with the pace. Her case was closed successfully on June 15, 2021. She is making her goal wage and gets full benefits.



# Success Stories

## BURNETTA SCHLECHTER



Ms. Burnetta Schlechter applied for vocational rehabilitation services in 2017. She initially expressed an interest in working as a licensed operator of a cafeteria in our Business Enterprises of Nevada (BEN) program. Ms. is legally blind and met all the requirements to be accepted into this program. She had completed the Business Enterprise Program Licensing Training in 2019 and completed an On-The-Job (OJT) training at the Lloyd George Federal Courthouse in 2020. Prior to this, Ms. Schlechter completed her associate degree at Mount San Antonio College, and two certificates from College of Southern Nevada for Travel and Tourism and Business and Office Skills. Ms. Schlechter has worked as a travel agent, receptionist, and administrative assistant.

Ms. Schlechter's challenges were with overcoming barriers presented by her blindness and learning how to manage her stress levels to become a successful manager. Due to her vision loss she requires magnification or audible assistance and non-visual adaptive strategies. She completed training related to daily living skills, assistive technology and orientation and mobility. She received assistive technology devices and quickly learned how to use these devices to help her access her computer, receipts and other documents to process orders, create profit & loss statements, track inventory and many more activities to keep her business operating successfully.

Ms. Schlechter started her OJT during the shutdown at the Lloyd George Federal Courthouse at the Next Level Café. She eventually took over the location as the interim operator in September 2020. During her training and her initial operation of this site she experienced many challenges such as low building occupancy, organized protests outside of the building, shortage of supplies and unplanned building closures. These were unique challenges she faced as a new operator. She worked closely with her BEN Officer to develop strategies on how to plan and organize her work to be effective in her role. As the months went by, and the economy started to slowly return she eventually was able to increase her profits and complete her services. She was closed successfully rehabilitated in May 2021 as the operator of her cafeteria, Next Level Café and continues to operate the cafeteria with success citing the VR and BEN staff as an integral part of her success.



## ALEM ABREHA

Alem Abreha is originally from Ethiopia where he attended high school and pursued his studies in nursing. In December 2004, only three months before completing nursing school, he suffered a stroke resulting in the paralysis of his right side. His disability limited his ability to use his right hand, his dominant hand, and affected his ability to stand or walk for prolonged amounts of times. As a result of these limitations, he could not continue with his dream of becoming a nurse. After immigrating to the U.S., he mainly worked as a parking lot attendant but was laid off. Afterwards, he had difficulty finding a job. He had concerns that employers were hesitant to hire him due to his obvious physical disability and limitations. He applied for and received Supplementary Security Income (SSI), but Alem had a dream to do more with his life.



With a strong desire to have a career and a better life, Alem earned a vocational certificate in Accounting and Bookkeeping, and an Associate of Arts in Accounting at the College of Southern Nevada on his own. Yet, having the ability and aptitude to achieve more, he wanted to go further with his education. So, in 2015, he applied for vocational rehabilitation services to pursue his bachelor's degree.

Along with counseling and guidance, the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) assisted with tuition, textbooks, and school supplies, as well as a laptop and gas assistance to help him reach his educational goal. Due to difficulties taking lecture notes, he received Rehabilitation Technology, which included a Livescribe 2GB Echo Smart Pen, allowing him to record lectures and download notes onto his laptop, and a Mini USB Wireless Keyboard, which is smaller than a standard keyboard and allows him to type more efficiently. He also received support from the Disabled Resource Center (DRC) at University of Las Vegas to minimize educational barriers. With the help from BVR as well as DRC, Alem obtained his Bachelor of Science in Business Administration in Accounting from the University of Las Vegas.

After graduation, BVR provided employment services to help Alem prepare for interviews, develop a resume, create a cover letter, search for jobs leads, and certify for the 700 hour program, which assists people with disabilities to secure employment with the State of Nevada. He also received interview clothing. Eventually, Alem was hired as an Accounting Assistant I with the State of Nevada (?) through the 700-hour program, where he continues to be successfully employed.

On a personal level, he also reached his dream of having a family, and now has a beautiful wife and two young children. But his dream does not stop there, he still has his sights to promote to more responsible positions within the state and someday become a Certified Public Accountant. The Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation is very proud to be a part of Alem's success and has no doubts he will continue to fulfill his dreams and goals.

## JONATHAN SCOTT

Jonathan Scott began Vocational Rehabilitation services in May 2020. When he first started services, Jonathan was searching for a job or career that would be a good fit with his disability and pay a liveable wage. Jonathan's disability is Asperger's and he works best with routine, so he was seeking warehouse opportunities. Vocational Rehabilitation's program with Sephora was the first program discussed and Jonathan was thrilled about the opportunity. Not only was it a warehouse position; his counselor told him that the pay would be \$15 an hour if he got the job. This was the desired wage Jonathan was looking for. Jonathan struggled in the past to find a job that was a good match for him. His previous work experience consisted of being a sign spinner. Jonathan dreaded that position once summertime came around since it is outdoors (in Las Vegas?). Jonathan was not satisfied in that position since there was no room for growth and he felt stuck in having to keep the job since it was his only option at the time.



Jonathan was selected for the position at Sephora and began the training program. He shared that from day one he knew this was the opportunity he had been hoping for. Jonathan's go-getter personality shined at Sephora, and after his training he was hired on full-time. Jonathan thanked his counselor continuously for the opportunity to work at Sephora because even he noticed the difference in his positive attitude. He now feels more confident and hopeful about his future. He is working toward his goal of living on his own.

Jonathan's goals are in reach because Sephora is the first employer to acknowledge his strengths and has helped him shine. His supervisors and co-workers at Sephora offered patience and encouragement whenever he needed the additional support.

Jonathan notes it is the little things that Sephora does that make a world of difference, including giving the staff with t-shirts and tumblers. He feels appreciated and proud to go to work. The Sephora program has helped Jonathan grow into a new person with confidence. His loves for his job can be seen in the picture he shared for this story. When his counselor first met Jonathan, he was very shy and timid but when it comes to talking about Sephora he lights up. Jonathan's smile speaks louder than words.



Congratulations to all of our  
success story superstars!



# LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

The following update from the 2021 Legislative Session cites the law that was approved and became law on July 1, 2021 and will have impact on Vocational Rehabilitation as well as some programmatic updates and changes that were approved by the Legislature.

## **BEN program legislation (SB61)**

SB61 proposes changes to NRS 426, the statutes related to the Blind Business Enterprise of Nevada (BEN) program. The BEN program was established with passage of the Randolph-Sheppard Act in 1936, which gave priority of right to blind licensees in federal buildings and properties to own and operate these vending facilities. States across the nation then created state statutes, often called the “mini Randolph-Sheppard Act,” mirroring the federal law within state law. In fact, Nevada’s statutes have existed for more than 60 years. The state statutes provide the priority of right for blind licensees in state, local and municipal buildings, and properties. The changes in NRS 426 within SB61 accomplish the following: 1) provide clarity to the law’s intent; 2) define terms and use them consistently throughout the statute; 3) align state law more closely with the federal Randolph-Sheppard Act and federal regulations; and 4) add new sections on training and on dispute resolution.



## **Legislative Session outcomes for Rehab. Staff:**

It was welcome news that mandatory furloughs were not continued for the next biennium and the legislature approved a 1% cost of living increase, which took effect until July 1, 2022.

## **VR Budget & Fund for a Healthy Nevada Grant:**

Vocational Rehabilitation was given Legislative approval to upgrade an Administrative Assistant I to a Rehabilitation Technician III. Additionally, Vocational Rehabilitation applied for the Fund for a Healthy Nevada grant, and were awarded a grant in the amount of \$116,000. Since these are state funds, they will additionally draw another \$428,600 in federal funds into VR. This is the amount for the first year of the biennium (SFY22). We will submit a request to continue into the 2nd year of the biennium. That would bring in the same amounts \$116,000 + \$426,600 into VR in SFY23. This grant includes a partnership between Services to Individuals Who are Blind or Visually Impaired (BSBVI) and Blindconnect in Las Vegas, to develop and provide tailored soft skills and job seeking skills training to Nevadans with disabilities who are blind or visually impaired without leaving the state. This training will equip participants with the needed skills to gain or progress in employment and to fully access independent community life throughout Nevada.

## **Disability Innovation Fund Grant:**

Vocational Rehabilitation also applied for a federal grant from the Disability Innovation Fund with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The proposed Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project, Building Nevada’s Health Care for Tomorrow Initiative, will use

a Career Pathways model approach to connect current and past VR-eligible individuals with disabilities, to the education, training, and industry-recognized credentials needed to qualify for high-demand, high-quality careers in the Health Care industry sector in Nevada. Nevada VR requested \$8,039,198 to serve 450 individuals over 5 years through the program. Project partners include: Nevada VR, The Nevada Health Care Opportunities Promoting Employment (NV HOPE) Program; and the College of Southern Nevada (CSN), in addition to crucial partnerships with Health Care sector partners including a strong coalition of employer partners, state Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) administering agencies, WIOA partners, workforce and community organizations to design and build innovative linkages and programs that advance low-skilled workers into higher paying careers with opportunities to advance. Nevada VR and partners will conduct recruitment and program outreach through several pipelines, including contacting individuals who had received VR services and been successfully employed in recent years and students transitioning from high school. After assessment and eligibility screening for VR services, participants will be referred to NV HOPE, which will provide a week-long, non-traditional, Boot Camp education program in health career options ending with credential attainment. Upon completion of the Boot Camp, qualified participants will be referred to CSN for additional education, training, credentialing, and degree attainment in a chosen health care career pathway. The unique strengths of each partner ensure the provision of wrap-around services for participants throughout their entire journey. Nevada VR brings referrals, highly trained Rehabilitation Counselors with expertise in working with individuals with disabilities, and resources to fund measurable skill gains throughout the life of their program. NV HOPE provides intensive instruction and a committed employer network, and CSN provides the opportunity for academic credential attainment and advancement.

The overall purpose of the project is to use career pathways with multiple entry/exit points along the career lattice, as well as case management, transition support and supportive services to help individuals with disabilities acquire the skills and credentials necessary to compete for employment and advance into jobs with higher wages and employer-provided benefits leading to improved employment outcomes, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion in society; and to reduce reliance on public benefits. The proposed the Building Nevada's Health Care for Tomorrow Initiative will meet the needs of health care employers; address the skill development and reduction of barriers to employment; address the diverse workforce's needs for formal training; and influence and inform a systems change to promote collaborations between industry stakeholders. These grants will be awarded to states by RSA in September 2021. Nevada is hopeful to be granted this opportunity.



# STATISTICS 2021

## Key Successes in FFY21



000 Clients Achieved Employment



\$00.00 Average Hourly Wage



0,000 Clients Served

## Average Cost Per Case in FFY21



\$0,000 Vocational Rehabilitation



\$0,000 Supported Employment

## Average Cost Per Closed Case in FFY21



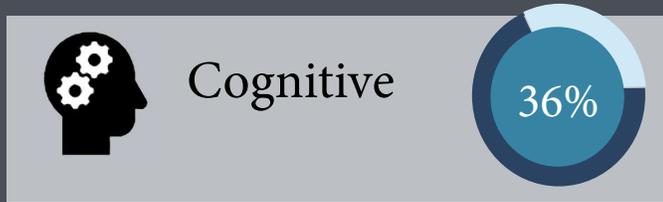
\$0,000 Vocational Rehabilitation



\$0,000 Supported Employment

# STATISTICS 2021

## Disability Breakdown of Served Clients



## Disability Breakdown of Employed Clients

DECTEUR ADIPISCIUNG EDITT EROS



# Top 8 Job Titles of Successfully Employed Clients FFY21



Health Care  
5%



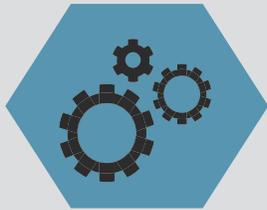
Personal Care  
5%



Social Services  
9%



Sales Jobs  
9%



Maintenance  
10%



Food Preparation  
11%

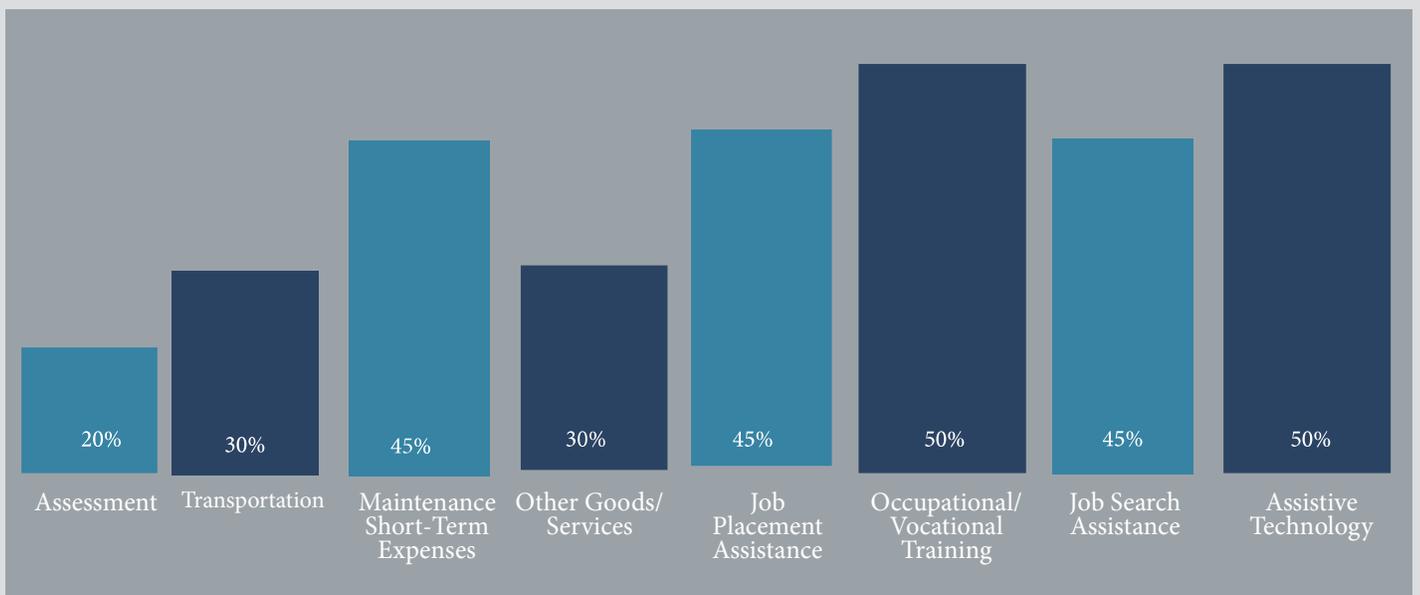


Construction Jobs  
19%

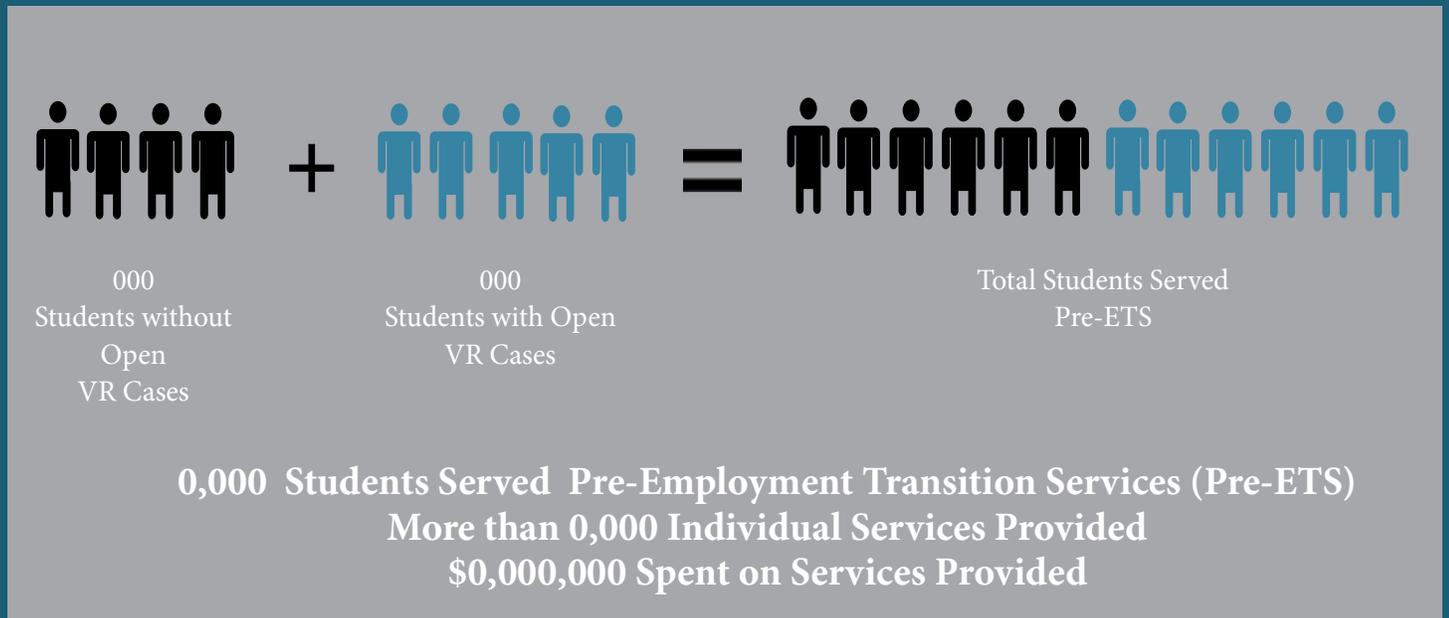


Office Administration  
29%

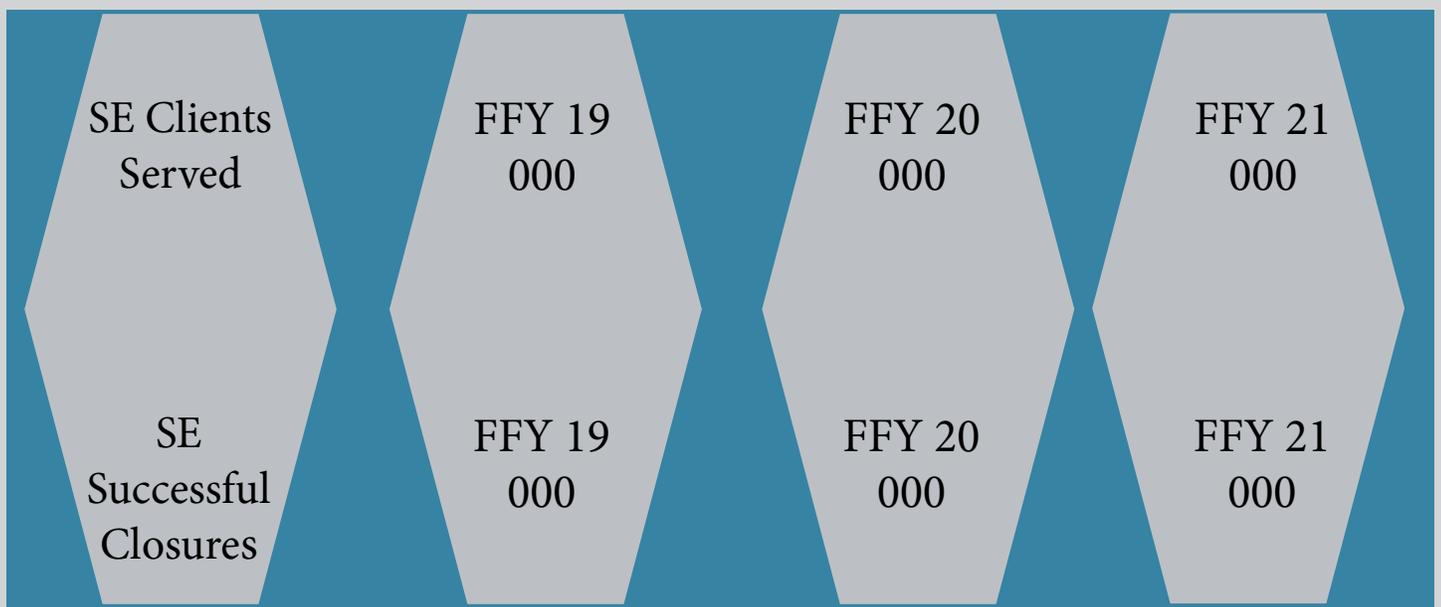
## Top 8 Services Provided



# Students with Disabilities Who Received Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) FFY21



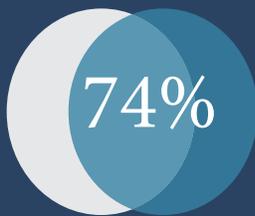
## Support Employment (SE) Outcomes



## Client Satisfaction with VR Branch (% Satisfied)



Overall  
Services  
Provided



Overall VR  
Experience



Helpfulness of  
Staff in  
Achieving Goal



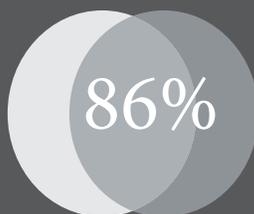
Would  
Recommend



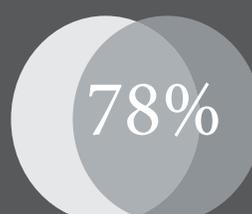
## Client Satisfaction with VR Counselors (% Satisfied)



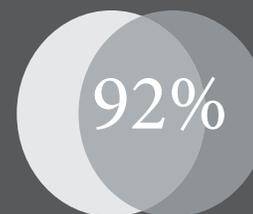
Understanding  
of Needs



Easy to  
Contact



Treated Me with  
Dignity & Respect



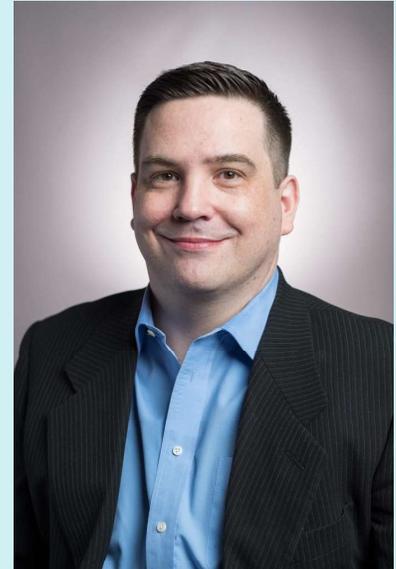


# Special Employee Feature In Honor of Wesley Barton

We all can recall at least one person throughout our careers who exemplifies the best of the best and impacts not only those they serve but those who they work with. Wesley Barton accomplished this throughout his career. Wesley has worked in many different capacities over the last 25 years including the gaming industry, digital marketing and as a contractor for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). While earning his Master of Arts degree at UNLV, he taught at the Writing Center helping students with papers in a variety of academic disciplines for 2 years while earning his degree.

In 2018, Wesley was hired as a contracted Rural Transition Coordinator supporting the VR Transition program. During that time, he was responsible for transition outreach to Humboldt, Pershing, Lander, Eureka, Elko, and White Pine counties, building networks with high schools for delivery of Transition Services (Pre-Employment Transition Services) serving “students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services.” A student with a disability is an individual with a disability in a secondary, postsecondary, or other recognized education setting. Furthermore, Wesley was able to strengthen VR networks to include many rural high schools and communities that had not had or were not aware of the services VR could provide.

While working as the Rural Transition Coordinator, Wesley worked closely with VR Counselors to promote the Transition Services for the VR program. Due to his dedication, he was able to provide supports to develop relationships that brought clients to VR who may have never known the program. Additionally, he aided VR Counselors in registering clients who were youth with disabilities, for the CRAVE Camp (Career, Recreation, Assessment and Vocational Evaluation) and SYIP (Statewide Youth Internship Program ) and provide the necessary feedback to VR staff on these programs.



In 2019, Wesley obtained employment as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor in the Job Connect office in Elko, NV. His employment happened 3 months prior to the COVID-19 pandemic. However, he did not let this deter him and he learned to work with his clients remotely to provide guidance and counseling, explore the challenges of balancing employment and pandemic, he assisted clients in online learning opportunities. Furthermore, Wesley took the assignment to serve the Bureau of Services to Clients who are Blind or Visually Impaired as the counselor for that program in Eastern NV. He also had to identify and learn how to serve the Older Blind and visually impaired transition student population there.

Wesley Barton received his Bachelor of Arts Degrees in Sociology and Political Science from Skidmore College in Saratoga Springs, New York. He earned his Master of Arts Degree from the University of Nevada, Las Vegas with a focus was in political sociology, race relations, and organizational sociology.

Wesley was grateful of the support he has received from both the Northern and Southern District Staff and Southern District Staff as they have been paramount in his development as a VR Counselor learning to serve VR clients. Though Wesley is no longer with us, he will not be forgotten, and his memory will be forever held in these words and in the memories of all those he assisted and worked with.



Nevada VR provides vocational rehabilitation services to eligible individuals with disabilities to prepare for and obtain meaningful competitive, integrated employment, consistent with their skills, abilities and informed choice.

Nevada VR works closely with Nevada's businesses to fulfill businesses' needs for trained and skilled employees in any area of commerce. Additionally, we work collaboratively with other public and private entities to utilize experience, resources and expertise to best serve individuals with disabilities and businesses.

Nevada VR assists students with disabilities to successfully transition from secondary school to work or higher education. VR also provides follow-up services to employers and participants to ensure the satisfaction of both parties.

Nevada VR specializes in services tailored to meet the individual needs of persons with disabilities, including:

- Counseling and Guidance
- Assessments
- Assistive Technology
- Transportation
- Occupational and Vocational Training
- Job Development and Placement

**Please Contact Us At:**

751 Basque Way  
 Carson City, NV 89706  
 (775) 687-6860  
[sghendren@detr.nv.gov](mailto:sghendren@detr.nv.gov)  
[mwmerrill@detr.nv.gov](mailto:mwmerrill@detr.nv.gov)

**Or Visit Us Online At:**  
[www.detr.nv.gov](http://www.detr.nv.gov)  
[www.vrnevada.org](http://www.vrnevada.org)



**Our Mission:**

Actively engaging with Nevada businesses to understand their employment needs and creating innovative programs that develop the strengths, priorities, and talents of individuals with disabilities, ensuring that Nevada works for everyone.

Nevada VR administers the Supported Employment Program to expand employment options for individuals with the most significant disabilities through intensive training, supervision and other vocational rehabilitation services.

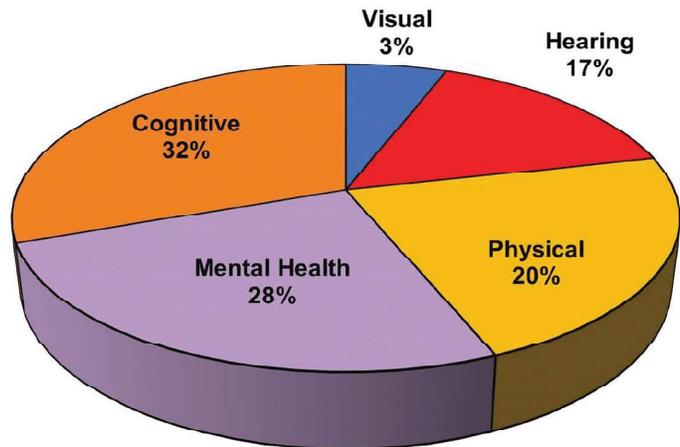
VR Facts for FFY20:

- ❖ 5,265 Participants Served
- ❖ 453 Individuals Achieved Employment
- ❖ \$13.69 Average Hourly Wage
- ❖ 1,228 Students Served Pre-Employment Transition Services

Top Five Job Titles Achieved by Participants:

- Office/Administrative Support
- Construction Occupations
- Food Preparation
- Maintenance
- Sales and Related Occupations

**Primary Disability Breakdown of Employed Participants**



Search 'VR-Nevada' on Facebook, LinkedIn, YouTube and Twitter



# BUREAU OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION OFFICE LOCATIONS

*A Proud Partner of American Job Center of Nevada*

## NORTHERN NEVADA

1933 North Carson Street, Carson City, NV 89701 (Carson)	(775) 684-0400
4001 South Virginia Street, Suite H-1, Reno, NV 89509 (Washoe)	(775) 284-9600
1325 Corporate Boulevard, Reno, NV 89502 (Washoe)	(775) 823-8100
2281 Pyramid Way, Sparks, NV 89431 (Washoe)	(775) 284-9520

## RURAL NEVADA

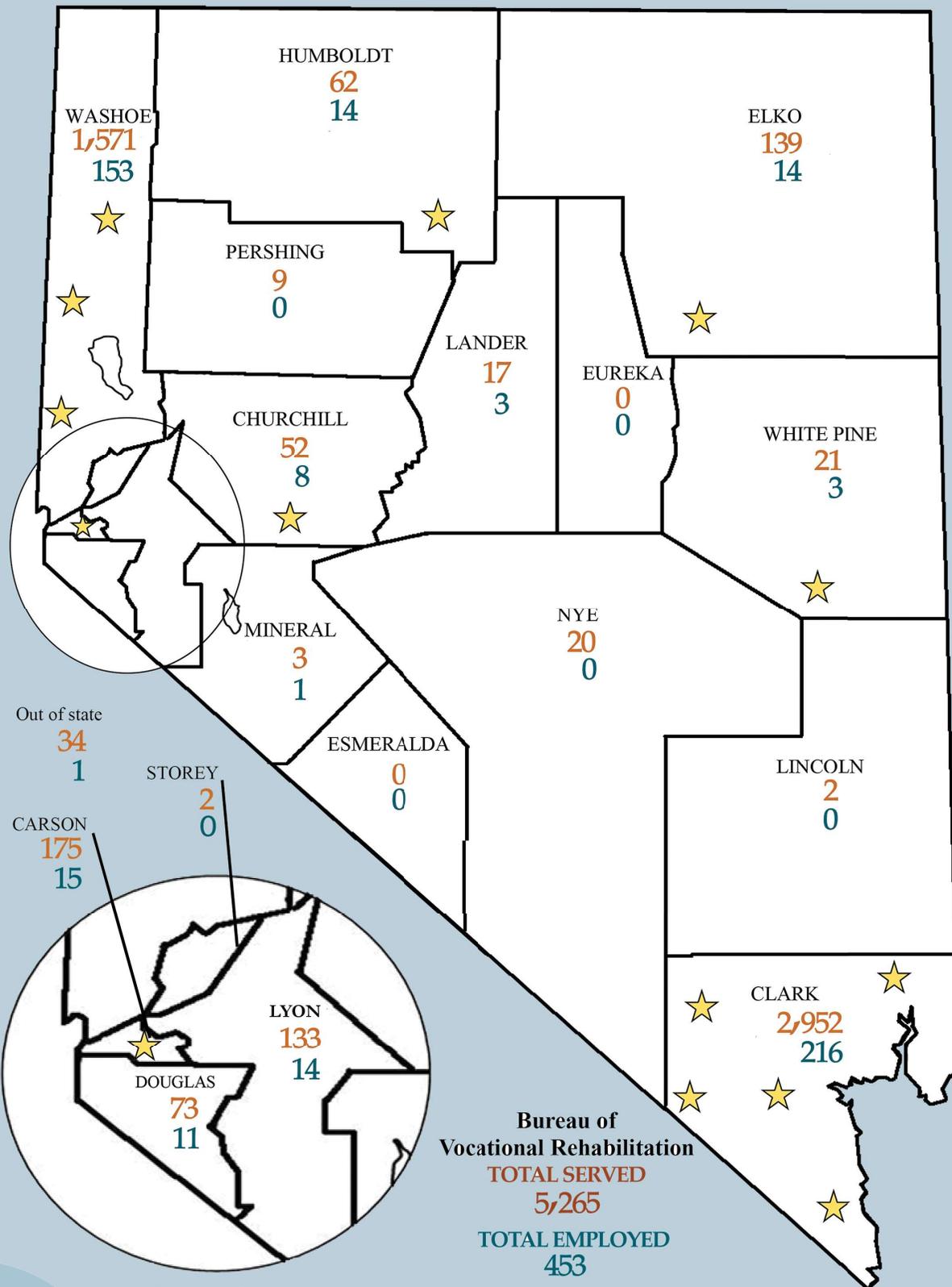
172 6th Street, Elko, NV 89801 (Elko)	(775) 753-1931
475 West Haskell Street, Suite 2, Winnemucca, NV 89445 (Humboldt)	(775) 623-6544
1500 Avenue F, Suite 1, Ely, NV 89301 (White Pine)	(775) 289-1675
121 Industrial Way, Fallon, NV 89406 (Churchill)	(775) 423-6568

## SOUTHERN NEVADA

3405 South Maryland Parkway, Las Vegas, NV 89169 (Clark)	(702) 486-0100
3016 West Charleston, Suite 200, Las Vegas, NV 89102 (Clark)	(702) 486-5230
4500 E. Sunset Road, Suite 40, Henderson, NV 89014 (Clark)	(702) 486-0300
2827 Las Vegas Boulevard North, North Las Vegas, NV 89030 (Clark)	(702) 486-0200
6330 West Charleston Boulevard, Suite 190, Las Vegas, NV 89146 (Clark)	(702) 822-4214

Nevada Relay 711





Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation  
**TOTAL SERVED**  
 5,265  
**TOTAL EMPLOYED**  
 453

 **OFFICE LOCATIONS**

You can also find us on: Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or YouTube



[www.VRNevada.org](http://www.VRNevada.org)  
<https://detr.nv.gov>

Administration Office  
751 Basque Way, Carson City, Nevada 89706  
(775) 687-6860

Vocational Rehabilitation is an Equal Employment Opportunity program/service.

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request during consultations with counselors and service providers.

THE SERVICES AND/OR GOODS DESCRIBED HEREIN ARE FUNDED, IN PART, WITH FEDERAL FUNDS AWARDED BY THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION UNDER THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR), SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT SERVICES, AND/OR THE INDEPENDENT LIVING SERVICES FOR OLDER INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE BLIND (OIB) PROGRAMS. FOR PURPOSES OF THE VR PROGRAM IN NEVADA, THE FEDERAL VR GRANT PAID 78.7 PERCENT OF THE RELATED COSTS. IN FEDERAL FISCAL YEAR (FFY) 2019, NEVADA VR RECEIVED \$19,623,751 IN FEDERAL VR FUNDS. FUNDS APPROPRIATED BY THE STATE OF NEVADA AND/OR ACQUIRED FROM OTHER NON-FEDERAL SOURCES PAID 21.3 PERCENT OF THE RELATED COSTS (\$5,311,130). FOR PURPOSES OF THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM, FEDERAL FUNDS PAID 95 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL COSTS. IN FFY 2019, NEVADA'S VR PROGRAM RECEIVED \$69,685 IN FEDERAL SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT FUNDS. STATE APPROPRIATED FUNDS PAID 5 PERCENT (\$4,003) OF THE TOTAL COSTS UNDER THE SUPPORTED EMPLOYMENT PROGRAM. FOR PURPOSES OF THE OIB PROGRAM, FEDERAL FUNDS PAID 90 PERCENT OF THE TOTAL COSTS INCURRED UNDER THE PROGRAM. IN FFY 2019, REHABILITATION DIVISION RECEIVED \$221,143 IN FEDERAL GRANT FUNDS FOR THIS PROGRAM. FUNDS APPROPRIATED BY THE STATE PAID 10 PERCENT (\$24,571) OF THE TOTAL COSTS INCURRED UNDER THE OIB PROGRAM.