

2024 - 2025



FLORIDA REHABILITATION COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
fldoe.org





Table of Contents

1	Florida Rehabilitation Council
2-3	FRC Members
4	Message from the FRC Chair
5	VR Director's Message
6	Program Overview
7	Becoming a VR Customer
8	Success Story
9	Success Story
10-11	VR Program Performance
12	Steven R. Wise Award
13	Customer Feedback Survey
14	Becoming a Council Member
15-19	Summary of Council Recommendations to the 2024-2028 Combined State Plan
20	Data Definitions





Florida Rehabilitation Council

ABOUT THE FRC

The Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) is part of a network of state rehabilitation councils created by the 1992 Amendments to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. The FRC was established to help the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in planning and developing statewide rehabilitation programs and services and recommending improvements to programs and services. FRC members are appointed by the Governor.

FRC MISSION

The FRC is committed to increasing employment, enhancing independence and improving the quality of life for Floridians with disabilities.

FRC VISION

Partnering to create opportunities to employ all people with disabilities in competitive jobs of their choice.

For updated information please visit the FRC
Calendar and Events page:

<https://www.rehabworks.org/frc/frc-events.html>.

FRC MEMBERS



Kelly Rogers
VR Director



Farides Garcia
Represents Parent
Training



Derek Arnold
Chair
Represents Community
Rehabilitation Providers



Richard Ippolito
Represents Current or
Former Applicants/
Recipients of VR Services



Peggy Aune
Represents Public
Education



Allison Klein
Represents the Disability
Rights Client Assistance
Program



Bonnie Barlow
Represents Business,
Industry and Labor



Chris Leto
Represents Business,
Industry and Labor



Diane Cholcher
Vocational Rehabilitation
Counselor



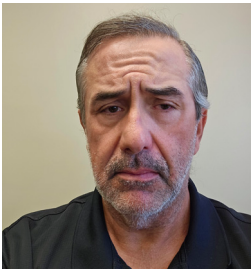
Paul Micklow
Represents Business,
Industry and Labor



Jose Morales
Represents Individuals
with Disabilities



Denis Roy
Represents Individuals
with Disabilities



Matt Motko
Represents Community
Rehabilitation Providers



Meredith Stanfield
Represents the
CareerSource Florida
Board of Directors



Nicole Reed
Represents the Florida
Independent Living
Council



Alisa Stock
Represents Individuals
with Disabilities



Christopher Romero
Represents Current or
Former Applicants/
Recipients of VR Services

Message from the FRC Chair

With great pride and on behalf of the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), I am honored to present the 2024–2025 Annual Report.

As one of the Council's newest members and now serving as Chair, I am deeply encouraged by the progress FRC has made in partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). The Council's strength lies in its cohesiveness, with members representing varying backgrounds and communities whose lives are impacted by VR services.

I would like to express sincere gratitude to Director Kelly Rogers for her leadership and steadfast support of the Council. Under her guidance, an environment of authenticity and collaboration has flourished, enabling us not only to celebrate VR's successes but also to thoughtfully consider how we can achieve even more.

Over the past year, the FRC has proudly:

- Made enhancing self-employment and entrepreneurship services offered by VR a top priority.
- Continued to be instrumental in promoting a dual-customer approach, central to WIOA, that recognizes both job seekers and employers as key customers of VR.
- Welcomed twelve new Council members, bringing fresh expertise from business, education, service providers, parents, recipients and VR professionals.

As I begin my first full term as Chair, I am excited to continue building upon these accomplishments while also boldly challenging our collective understanding of the evolving workforce. Together, we are committed to preparing the VR community to be fully engaged and equipped for success in Florida's dynamic economy.

Respectfully,



Derek Arnold
Chair, Florida Rehabilitation Council





VR Director's Message



It is my privilege to share this year's annual report and to reflect on the accomplishments we have achieved together. At the heart of our success is VR staff whose dedication to the customer and positive outcomes can't be underscored enough. Additionally, the guidance and partnership of the FRC continues to strengthen the mission of VR. The council's commitment ensures that we remain accountable, effective and focused on delivering meaningful opportunities for the individuals we serve.

VR's purpose is clear - to help Floridians with disabilities reach their full potential through the power of employment. Work provides more than a paycheck. It builds dignity, independence and stronger communities. That is why our priority remains centered on helping each individual chart a path to self-reliance, achieve personal goals and contribute their talents to Florida's growing workforce.

This mission requires collaboration and VR is able to realize success through the combined efforts of individuals, families, employers, educators and our workforce partners. By working together, we ensure that every job seeker has the opportunity to experience the pride that comes from hard work.

As we look ahead, I am confident that VR will continue to deliver on its promise of helping people with disabilities find jobs, start careers, achieve independence and live productive lives. By keeping Employment First at the forefront of our efforts, and by working together with purpose and resolve, we are building a Florida where everyone has opportunities to succeed. Together we are making a lasting difference.

Respectfully,

Kelly Rogers

Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



Program Overview

Florida's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) provides services for individuals with disabilities, consistent with their unique strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests and choice so that they may prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency (34 CFR 361.76). VR also serves as a critical resource for employers in need of qualified employees.

To accomplish this, VR offers a number of programs and services, including pre-employment transition services; general and supported employment services; Ticket to Work (Social Security Administration); Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind Services; Independent Living Program; and Business Relations.

Any individual, regardless of disability type, may be referred to VR for services. If a person is found eligible, VR:

- Provides guidance and counseling related to employment and disability.
- Helps customers identify career goals and the training and services necessary to reach that goal.
- Connects customers to jobs and careers that meet their strengths, interests, abilities and choice.

VR's Business Relations program builds and sustains partnerships with businesses and industries through effective services that are driven by the needs of employers. Business Relations Representatives customize employer services to assist employers with recruiting, hiring, promoting and retaining qualified individuals with disabilities.

Florida's VR program has far-reaching positive effects on both VR customers and the Florida economy.

Becoming a VR Customer



Individuals with disabilities who are seeking to find, maintain or advance in their careers may benefit from VR services. VR is a division of Florida's Department of Education, dedicated to assisting people with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment.

Who is eligible for VR services?

Eligibility is determined on an individual basis by a VR Counselor. To be eligible, an individual must have a physical and/or mental disability which causes a significant barrier to employment and need VR services to obtain, maintain or advance in a job or career. Individuals who receive Social Security Disability Insurance or Supplemental Security Income due to a disability and plan to become employed, are presumed eligible for VR services.

What services does VR have for youth?

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) offer students with disabilities an early start at career exploration and preparation for adult life. Every student aged 14-21 with a disability has the opportunity to participate in:

- Job-exploration counseling;
- Postsecondary educational counseling;
- Self-advocacy training and peer mentoring;
- Work readiness training; and
- Work-based learning experience.

How to Apply

Individuals should contact their local VR office to submit a referral form. A directory of VR offices is available at RehabWorks.org.

SUCCESS STORY

Danny Margagliano

Danny Margagliano was born and raised in Ocean City, New Jersey. There he lived an adventurous and active lifestyle as a professional surfer, traveling the world and competing on international stages. After surfing, he became a firefighter and gave back to his community until an accident resulted in a quadriplegia diagnosis.

Quadriplegia impacted every aspect of his daily life, including his career. Danny needed to find a new way to support himself and his family and came to VR for assistance. He wanted to start a real estate business but needed accommodations to work from home and access his community reliably to meet with clients. Through VR, he was able to obtain voice-activated door openers for his home and modifications to his vehicle so that he could drive again.



Danny is now a licensed realtor with multiple certifications serving communities along Florida's Emerald Coast from Okaloosa County to Bay County. Danny says what he enjoys most about his work is meeting people, helping them discover their dream homes and guiding them through the homebuying and investment process. Danny and his wife are thriving partners in their real estate business.

When asked about his experience, Danny recounts, "My VR counselor and the VR team have been invaluable partners throughout my journey. From the beginning, they advocated for me, explained the process with professionalism and honesty and reminded me that VR is not a quick fix but a partnership that requires patience. I am deeply grateful for new technologies that allow me to remain active and continue building a meaningful career. To others with disabilities considering Vocational Rehabilitation, my advice is simple: demonstrate your need, be patient and trust the process. There are people who genuinely care and want to help. I am deeply grateful to the entire VR team for their role in helping me reclaim independence, pursue my goals and continue making an impact in my community."

SUCCESS STORY

Grease Monkey

When the VR Business Relations Representative met with Jace Harken from Grease Monkey, she asked him about the most challenging part of running his business. Jace responded without hesitation: finding dependable employees. Despite repeatedly advertising open positions, he said it was rare to find even one candidate to interview.

Jace invited VR staff to tour the oil change and vehicle services facility in Ruskin, FL. During the visit, she observed that the building was clean, well-organized and equipped with numerous safety measures. The tour gave her a clear understanding of the type of work performed and the overall shop environment.



Following the visit, the VR representative discussed Grease Monkey's open positions with local counselors. A VR Counselor was working with a young man, Tony Sullivan, who was interested in working with cars but had no prior experience. Jace interviewed Tony and with the assistance of Vocational Rehabilitation, they arranged an on-the-job training (OJT) opportunity. Tony started working with Grease Monkey in June 2025 and was hired full-time in September 2025.

The experience was so positive that Grease Monkey brought on another VR participant, Isaiah Prosper, for OJT. The company has opened two new shops in Manatee County and VR is continuing to implement the same OJT model there, with the goal of creating a steady pipeline of trained, dependable employees.

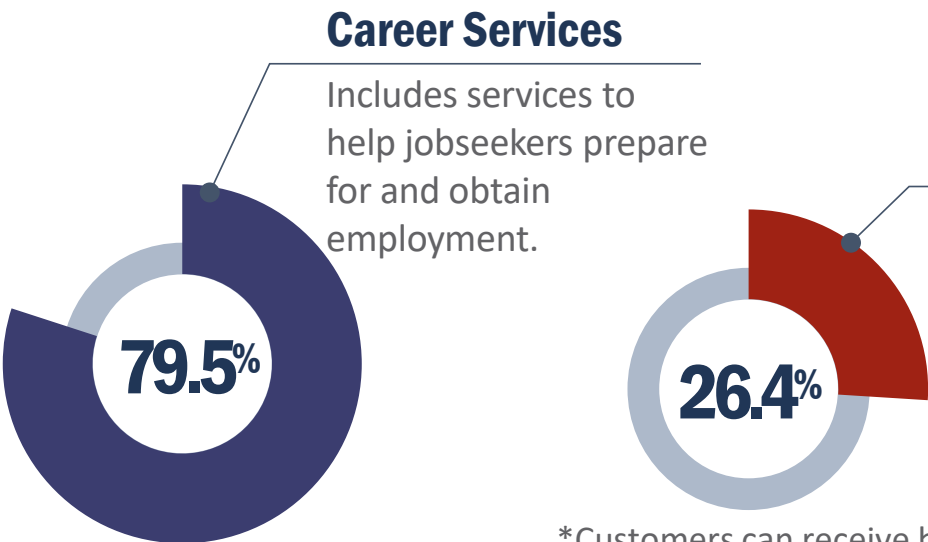
VR Program Performance

VR provided services to 45,065 jobseekers in 2024-2025.

VR supports customers’ career and training needs. The charts below indicate the percentage of customers who received each type of service.*

Additionally, 17,939 students received Pre-ETS in 2024-2025.

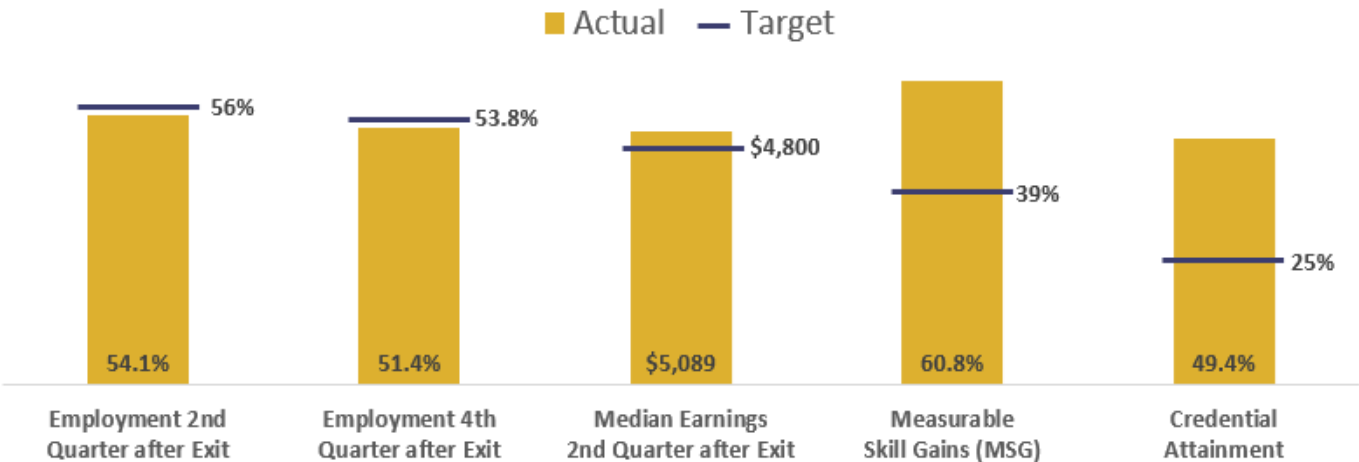




*Customers can receive both career and training services.

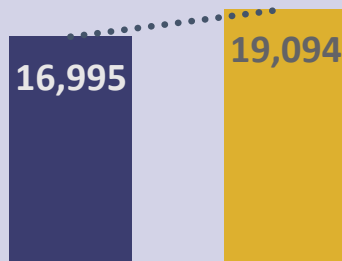
Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Performance Measures

WIOA is designed to allow jobseekers easier access to employment, education, training and support services needed to succeed in the labor market, and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. The chart below displays Florida VR’s WIOA performance results for 2024-2025.



2024-2025

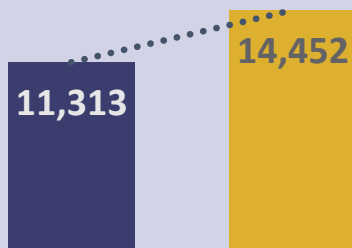
Applications



**12.4%
Increase**

Participation in statewide initiatives like FL WINS will allow even greater access to VR services.

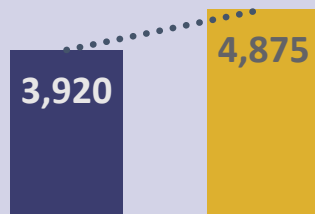
Employment Plans Completed



**27.7%
Increase**

Even with more jobseekers completing employment plans and receiving services, VR's focus on efficiency has resulted in a 14-week reduction in service delivery time since 2023.

Closed with Employment



**24.4%
Increase**

VR continues to prioritize quality employment outcomes for Florida's jobseekers with disabilities.

■ 2023-2024 ■ 2024-2025

See page 20 for data definitions.

Steven R. Wise Award

The annual Stephen R. Wise Advocacy Award recognizes dedicated leaders and champions in the cause of helping persons with disabilities to achieve independence and dignity through meaningful employment.



Dr. Jim Murdaugh, President of Tallahassee State College (TSC), demonstrates excellence through a clear commitment to empowering students with disabilities to achieve independence and success. Under his direction, TSC has expanded access to higher education, workforce preparation and community participation, ensuring that students with disabilities graduate at higher rates and transition to meaningful careers. His approach combines innovation and compassion, removing barriers and building partnerships and systems of support that create lasting, life-changing outcomes for Floridians with disabilities.

Through strategic investment in career and technical education, Dr. Murdaugh has opened more pathways for students with disabilities to earn industry-recognized credentials, certificates and associate degrees. He has strengthened career services by expanding tailored job coaching, resume support and interview preparation. These enhancements have helped students, including those who are Vocational Rehabilitation consumers, achieve greater independence, confidence and self-sufficiency as they transition into the workforce. By partnering with local employers, he has advanced hands-on learning opportunities, like internships and job-shadowing experiences, improving long-term retention of TSC graduates with disabilities.

Dr. Murdaugh is a champion of community-based initiatives that inspire students with disabilities to explore career interests and prepare for employment. Through TSC's active role in the Tallahassee Chamber Talent Development Council, the College collaborates with business and education partners to align workforce needs with emerging talent. As a primary sponsor of North Florida Worlds of Work, area high school students, including those with disabilities, are introduced to potential careers at an earlier age. The College also hosts an annual education fair exclusively for High School High Tech students, connecting them to post-secondary programs and hands-on experiences that spark career curiosity.



Customer Feedback Survey

The FRC is required to review and analyze the effectiveness of and participant satisfaction with VR functions, rehabilitation services and employment outcomes achieved by eligible participants. The Customer Feedback Survey data is being utilized by the FRC and VR to focus on specific areas of excellence for recognition as well as opportunities for improvement.



A summary of the annual Customer Feedback Survey results is below.

- Overall satisfaction with VR: 70%
- VR services will help reach long-term career goals: 68%
- VR services will help achieve financial security: 65%
- VR understands what people with disabilities need to find good jobs: 72%
- VR counselor gave helpful information for choosing a job goal: 69%
- VR counselor listens: 78%
- VR counselor treated respondent with dignity and respect: 83%
- Respondent would recommend VR to others: 74%

BECOMING A COUNCIL MEMBER



Federal and state law governing membership requires that certain stakeholder groups be represented on the council (e.g., businesses, community rehabilitation providers and disability groups). These appointments are made by the Executive Office of the Governor. Individuals who serve on the FRC represent the following stakeholder groups and contribute perspectives and insights into the opportunities and challenges facing individuals with disabilities and of the stakeholder groups they represent.

- Business, Industry and Labor
- Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider
- Individuals with disabilities from various disability groups
- Parent Training Information Center
- Statewide Workforce Investment Board
- Current or former applicants of VR services
- VR Counselor
- Florida Independent Living Council (FILC)

FRC members work in strategic partnership with VR to increase the employment of people with disabilities in competitive, integrated jobs of their choice and in keeping with their skills and abilities.

If you wish to apply to serve on the FRC, please send a letter of interest and resume to FRCCustomers@vr.fl DOE.org.



Summary of Council Recommendations to the 2024-2028 Combined State Plan

FRC provided the following feedback and recommendations to the VR services portion of Florida's 2024-2028 Combined State Plan consistent with requirements in state and federal law.

The FRC applauds the Fiscal Year (FY) 2023 budgetary increase in compensation for VR staff and hopes it will result in improved recruiting, hiring and retaining staff. To identify the impact of this increase, the FRC recommends that VR conduct ongoing correlative monitoring related to the recruiting, hiring and retaining of staff. FRC views the compensation increase as a positive step and encourages VR to continue to explore additional pay and non-pay increases for all staff.

The FRC recommends that VR continues its efforts at outreach with partners and reinstitute quarterly or semi-annual partner meetings throughout the state to increase and improve communication and the working relationship between VR and community rehabilitation providers (CRPs) including the synchronization of provisional services and billing processes.

Additionally, the FRC emphasizes the need for VR to increase the quality of employment outcomes for VR participants and for VR to continue to engage in efforts to reduce placements primarily occurring in low-pay and unskilled jobs that have historically high turnover rates. The FRC also encourages initiatives to reduce the length of time it currently takes for VR participants to move through the plan development and eligibility determination process of VR applicant to Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

The FRC looks forward to continuing to fulfill its statutory requirements, consistent with section 413.405, Florida Statutes, in reviewing, analyzing and advising VR as it plans, develops and improves its programs.



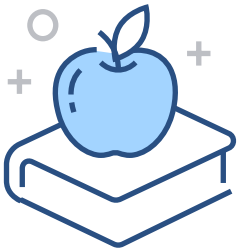
RECOMMENDATION 1 - Counselor Recruitment And Retention



- Work toward increasing pay and non-pay incentives for all staff.
- Create more in-person training opportunities.
- Build a stronger connection between administration and field staff to help improve the capacity of staff and address the recruitment and ongoing retention concerns.
- Report on the efficacy of these initiatives during quarterly FRC meetings.



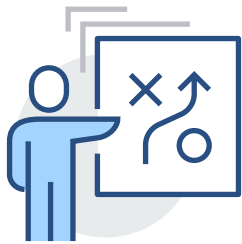
RECOMMENDATION 2 - Transition



- Continue to promote early contact and assistance to all students with disabilities under an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) or 504 Plan.
- Continue to expand and increase offerings of career paths to include vocational exploration, technical training, registered apprenticeships and pre-apprenticeships, encouraging transition students to consider early identification of post secondary options.
- Evaluate and report on policies and practices that could potentially create barriers when transitioning from education to employment.
- Reestablish peer mentoring projects throughout the state for youth and students with disabilities and identify service providers to help implement the projects statewide.
- Identify the opportunities to develop marketing strategies to better target all students, Exceptional Student Education directors, teachers, school counselors and parents, including digital and other materials.



RECOMMENDATION 3 - Business Outreach Strategies



- Evaluate the existing system for VR to strengthen efforts with business leaders to improve median earning jobs and retention in career-oriented employment, including increasing partnerships.
- Remain focused on participants' strengths and develop tools to communicate effectively and succinctly to potential employers.
- Consider including registered pre-apprenticeships as well as registered apprenticeships.



RECOMMENDATION 4 - Rights And Conflict Resolution



- Ensure all VR staff and participants are aware of and provided the options of the services of Disability Rights Florida Client Assistance Program (CAP) and the VR Ombudsman's Office. This information should be provided through increased collaboration and additional engagement, including VR staff collaborating with CAP and providing decision letters with appeal rights and policies.



RECOMMENDATION 5 - Public Awareness And Outreach



- Prior to release of marketing materials, engage VR marketing staff to review for person-first language and authentic representation of persons with disabilities.
- Explore collaboration with the Florida Department of Education's Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services to better reach students with disabilities and their parents.
- Explore collaboration with healthcare entities to expand awareness of VR.



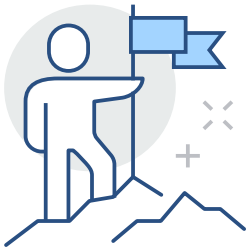
RECOMMENDATION 6 - Individuals With The Most Significant Disabilities



- Examine creative ways to address transportation barriers statewide to better support employment outcomes for VR participants.



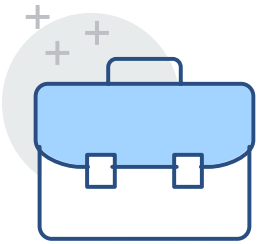
RECOMMENDATION 7 - Overall Agency Performance



- Explore improvements in the reporting of data on VR performance in targeted areas including rapid engagement and unserved and underserved participants.
- Increase the quality of employment outcomes for VR participants such as reducing low pay and unskilled jobs that have historically high turnover rates and increasing higher median-earning jobs and retention in career-oriented employment.
- Increase coordination with federal and state agencies, including creating a system that integrates information and services.
- Ensure benefits planning services are provided to VR participants as well as youth and students with disabilities prior to exiting secondary school so they can have the requisite knowledge to make informed decisions related to pursuing self-sustaining employment.
- Reinstitute quarterly or semi-annual partner meetings throughout the state to increase and improve communication and the working relationship between VR and CRPs.
- Track, monitor and review the demand versus the capacity of fulfilling the referral for rehabilitation engineering services categories by service type and geographical area.
- Increase or enhance synchronization of provisional services and billing processes with VR-authorized employment services providers and vendors.



RECOMMENDATION 8 - Self-Employment And Job Customization



- Evaluate and compare current self-employment services with other entrepreneurship-centered programs in Florida to better meet VR participants' employment goals. Consider ways to streamline and expedite the provision of self-employment services.
- Further build capacity for job customization and innovation and expansion projects.
- Ensure benefits planning services are provided to VR participants so they have the requisite knowledge to make informed decisions related to pursuing self-employment and entrepreneurship.



Data Definitions

by order of occurrence in the report

Competitive Integrated Employment	For VR participants, Competitive Integrated Employment is achieved when an individual is employed for 90 consecutive days in a workplace where people with disabilities are paid fairly, work with others without disabilities and have the same opportunities for advancement as their coworkers.
Received Services	The number of VR customers who have an approved Individualized Plan for Employment and have received employment, education or other services during the reporting period.
Employment Rate 2nd/4th Quarter after Exit	Percentage of program participants who are in competitive, integrated employment during the 2nd/4th quarter after program exit.
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit	Percentage of program participants who are in competitive, integrated employment during the 2nd quarter after program exit.
Credential Attainment Rate	Percentage of participants who either: • Attain a recognized postsecondary credential before program exit or up to 1 year after program exit; or • Attain a secondary school diploma or equivalent and enroll in postsecondary education or become employed within 1 year after program exit.
Measurable Skill Gains Rate	The percentage of participants who are in an education or training program that leads to a recognized secondary or postsecondary credential or employment and are achieving MSGs based on attainment of at least one type of gain.



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
fldoe.org



The Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), is an equal opportunity employer. It is against the law for VR as a recipient of Federal financial assistance to discriminate against any individual in the United States on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, disability, political affiliation or belief. The application process used by VR to determine eligibility for services, any subsequent services and the entire VR process are subject to these non-discrimination requirements. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. VR program receives 78.7 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For the 2024 Federal fiscal year, the total amount of grant funds awarded were \$184,931,573. The remaining 21.3 percent of the costs (\$50,051,366) were funded by Florida State Appropriations. Revised October 2024.