



December 29, 2023

As Chair of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC), it is an honor to serve the people of Maryland. The MSRC is the people's champion for employment of Marylanders with disabilities, for enhanced awareness of the capabilities of students, youths, and adults with disabilities, and for promotion of State and national policies that support those goals.

The MSRC is appointed by the Governor of Maryland, in compliance with federal law, to monitor, advise and oversee the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). Established by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Council reports its findings annually to the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Governor of Maryland and, most importantly, the people of Maryland.

For the Program Year 2023

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit

In 2023, DORS established a dedicated Deaf and Hard of Hearing Unit (DHHU) to provide DORS services to Maryland job seekers who are Deaf or hard of hearing.

The DHHU team includes rehabilitation counselors for the Deaf (RCDs), support staff and a rehabilitation supervisor, all of whom are fluent in American Sign Language (ASL). The DHHU administrative office was established in Frederick, Maryland, under the supervision of DORS' Region 1 Director, Sharon Plump, while the RCDs continue to be located at DORS offices throughout the State.

As part of the establishment of the new DHHU, DORS welcomed Dr. Ju-Lee Wolsey to the position of DHHU Supervisor. Dr. Wolsey brings many years of experience to DORS, including experience working with Deaf, Deaf-Blind, and hard-of-hearing children and adults in the private and public sectors, in schools, and in various capacities in the community.

The Waiting List

DORS Quality Assurance (QA) staff manages waiting list consumers by evaluating monthly the total number of Referrals, Applications for Service, Eligibility Determinations, and the number of newly eligible individuals added to the waiting list. Then, DORS Executive Staff compares monthly totals to previous 12-month averages to determine availability of resources and staff capacity to remove individuals from the waiting list.

Should conditions support a waitlist rollout, QA staff work in conjunction with DORS Executive Staff to identify a cohort of eligible individuals on the waiting list based on their application date, and make contact by mail, email and text messaging, where available, to invite those individuals to confirm their continuing interest in receiving vocational rehabilitation services from DORS. Staff also take the opportunity to update personal, educational, and vocational information. Then, QA staff notify the appropriate field counselors and Regional leadership to begin developing an Individualized Plan for Employment for the consumer.

Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitation Services Recommendations

In early spring 2023, the House Bill 660 Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitation Services (the Commission) issued six recommendations related to 10 topic areas that were addressed by the Commission. Actions were taken by DORS staff on all six recommendations, including:

- Partnered with the Developmental Disability Administration (DDA) to provide training to providers and disseminated information to underserved populations.
- Updated the Memorandum of Understanding between DORS and each Local Education Agency.
- Reduced the vacancy rate of vocational rehabilitation counselors and streamlined internal processes and policies to decrease the time it takes to provide services
- Increased partnerships with local, statewide, and national employers.
- Provided current performance data on the DORS website.
- Updated DORS brochures and website in plain language to assure that information being communicated to consumers provides a clear understanding of what is being asked of them and of the services that DORS provides.

Student Services

To better engage students and families with DORS services, and to respond to some of the Commission's recommendations, DORS revised its informational materials and created two new videos.

The new online and printed materials describe the two sets of services DORS offers to Students with Disabilities:

- Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)
- Student Employment Services (traditional vocational rehabilitation services for students)

In partnership with Maryland Public Television, videos about Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and about Student Employment Services have been created. Both videos are available in five languages in addition to English on the DORS public website and on YouTube, and in accessible formats.

The Student Services online and printed information is information is available in eight formats, including seven languages, and Braille.

Sincerely,



Katherine L.R. Jones, Chair
Maryland State Rehabilitation Council

By The Numbers

In Program Year 2023, the Division of Rehabilitation Services:

- Provided VR Services to 19,497 individuals with Significant or Most Significant Disabilities.
- Served 6,795 Youth and Students with Disabilities, aged 14 -21.
- Assisted 994 individuals with Significant or Most Significant Disabilities to achieve Competitive Integrated Employment.
- Made 4,693 eligibility decisions.
- Decreased the waiting list by 1,275 individuals.
- Attended more than 360 educational, outreach, professional development, student resource, or employment events across Maryland.