



December 23, 2020

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 in 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 fiscal year 2020:

COVID Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic compelled DORS to move service delivery from traditional brick and mortar office spaces to a virtual environment. DORS worked with local service providers to implement various meeting platforms, such as Google Meets, Zoom, or Web Ex and collaborated to transition most in-person services to virtual. In addition, DORS and their providers worked to convert, what traditionally been only offered as in-person services, into virtual versions, including new variations of Career Assessments and Worked Based Learning. The feedback from both providers and consumers indicate that these virtual models were effective, and so a number of these virtual services will become the norm post-pandemic.

Quality Assurance

Quality case management is something that both DORS and MSRC want to see applied to every consumer case. DORS has developed and implemented an in line case management tool that is used to ascertain the quality of services being delivered by the agency. The Quality Review Teams took on a different role in 2020, looking at existing processes to see where streamlining could occur with both staff and consumers, now working in a virtual environment. As these new processes mature, the Quality Review Teams will be looking closely at the new processes to make sure that the high quality that is expected remains, and will offer recommendations on where there needs to be changes

Waitlist

The primary driver in the growth of the waitlist in the increase in the number of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) students who applied to DORS during the year. WIOA requires that a minimum of 15% of each state's VR grant be allocated to Pre-ETS, and that providing Pre-ETS is prioritized. By the end of FY19, that number of students seeking Pre-ETS stood at

5,737, an increase of nearly 2,000 over the previous fiscal year. In FY 2020 that figure grew to 6,124. Pre-ETS will continue to be a factor in the DORS waitlist in the coming year, as the Pre-ETS program will continue to grow and expand as more parents and transitioning students become aware of this new opportunity. However, the pandemic offered a unique opportunity for DORS to review its waitlist. DORS had a group of VR counselors who traditionally provide in person services at the Workforce and Technology Center go through the waitlist and reevaluate the initial eligibility decision to see if additional documentation would allow the individual to move off the wait list. Because of this initiative, 318 individuals were moved from the Category 2 wait list into services. With another 577 individuals deciding that, they no longer need services from DORS.

In closing, I would like to commend DORS for its commitment to the employment needs of people living with disabilities and for its transparency to the people of Maryland through its partnership with the MSRC.

Sincerely,



Anil Lewis, Chair, Maryland State Rehabilitation Council

By The Numbers

In 2020, the Division of Rehabilitation Services:

- Provided VR services to 21,898 individuals with significant disabilities.
- Prepared 7,282 students with disabilities to move from high school to employment, higher education or career training through vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. The agency's Pre-Employment Transition Services program has an additional 6,124 students. Forty -seven percent of the individuals served by DORS are between the ages of 14 and 24.
- Personnel and programs helped 1,145 Marylanders with significant disabilities to become successfully employed in competitive integrated environments. This number reflects changes related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- DORS Business Services staff provided 3,184 direct services to Maryland businesses, including recruitment assistance, disability training, and information and technical assistance on hiring and tax incentives.