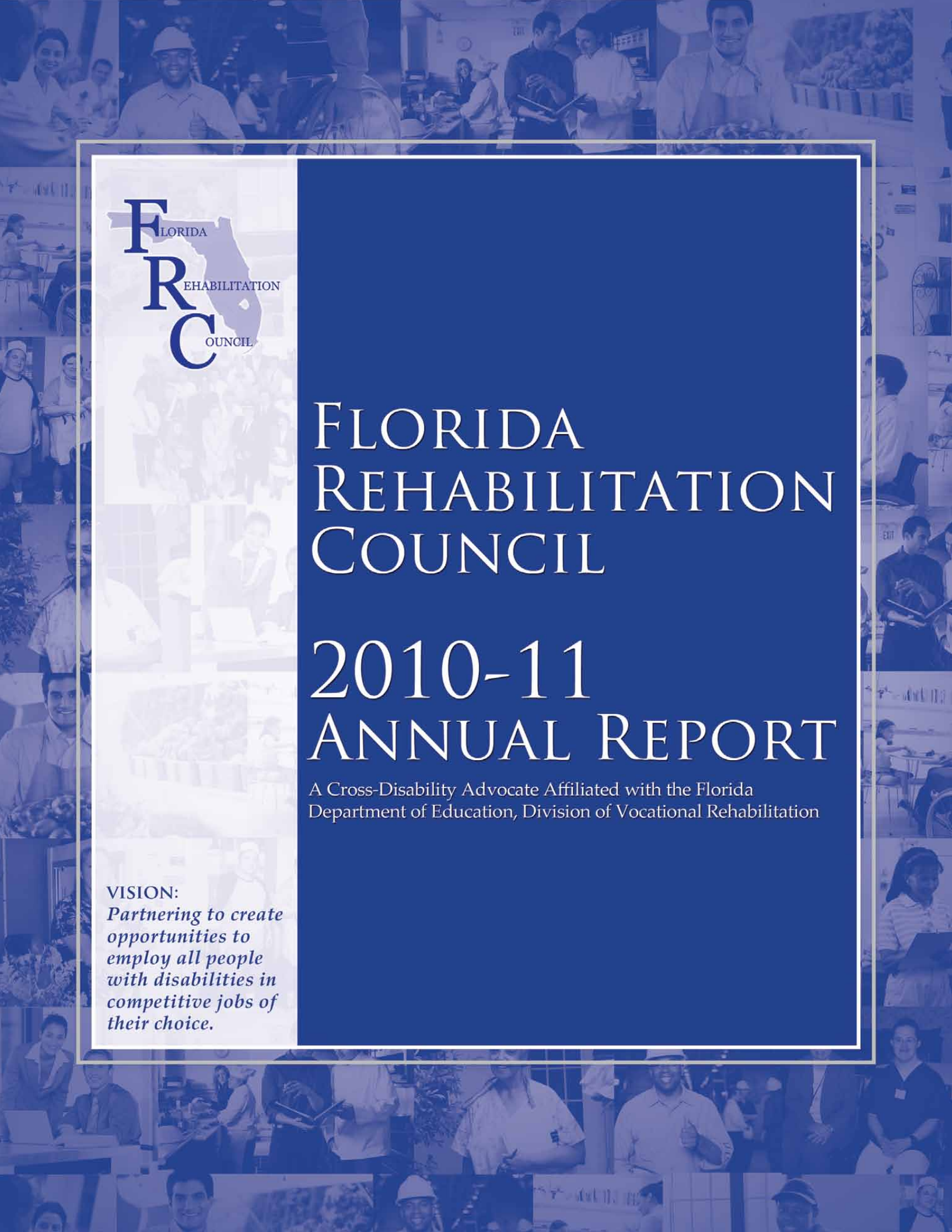

FLORIDA REHABILITATION COUNCIL

FLORIDA REHABILITATION COUNCIL

2010-11 ANNUAL REPORT

A Cross-Disability Advocate Affiliated with the Florida Department of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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

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As the Florida Rehabilitation Council Program Administrator it is my pleasure to present the 2010-2011 Annual Report. This report is required to be sent at the end of the year to State of Florida representatives, such as the Governor, the Senate president, the Speaker of the House, and the Commissioner of Education, as well as federal agencies, such as the U.S. Secretary of Education and the Rehabilitation Services Administration. It is a priority for the council and staff to provide this report to other stakeholders and states to encourage employing people living with disabilities in jobs of their choice. A special thanks to those individuals who worked to create our Annual Report. Should you have any questions please contact me at Roy.Cosgrove@vr.fldoe.org.

Respectfully,

"Thank you so much for helping me get a job."
-Customer comment

The Florida Rehabilitation Council

Mission

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

Vision

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

Values

The FRC believes:

- In the ability, dignity, diversity, and value of each person.
- That everyone should have the opportunity to actively participate in all facets of life, especially in the area of employment.
- That focusing on an individual's assets and strengths leads to success.
- A Person-Centered approach to goal setting, service planning, and delivery systems lead to individual success.
- Employment is the key to inclusion, participation, and access to community life.
- A collaborative approach with partners leads to success.
- The provision of services must be ethical, principled, and fair.

Composition of the FRC

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the FRC are strategic partners in planning resources, developing goals, setting priorities, and in implementing best practices to assist persons living with disabilities in their employment goals. FRC is a disability-neutral council created by state and federal regulations to ensure that eligible citizens with disabilities receive the vocational rehabilitative services they may need. The Council must be composed of a majority of individuals with disabilities. Council members are appointed by the governor for three year terms, and a member may serve two consecutive appointments. Florida State law sets a maximum number of members at 25. This group is a mixture of individuals representing the following:

- Florida Independent Living Council (FILC)
- Parent training and information center established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)
- The client assistance program (CAP), known as Disability Rights Florida, Inc.
- Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

- Community rehabilitation program service providers
- Business, industry, and labor
- Workforce Florida, Inc.
- Disability advocacy groups representing persons who have physical, cognitive, sensory, or mental disabilities
- Parents, family members, guardians, advocates, or authorized representatives of persons who find it difficult to represent themselves
- Current or former applicants or recipients of vocational rehabilitation services
- Director of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (ex-officio, non-voting member)
- Florida Department of Education (DOE) representative of public education for students with disabilities
- Persons who have a disability, representatives of state and local government, employers, and community organizations

FRC Working Committees

Executive Committee

The Executive Committee addresses major issues facing the Council and can make preliminary decisions to be considered by the Council. The Executive Committee also works through the Council's five standing committees to review, analyze, advise and partner with VR and complete other Council requirements. The Executive Committee is composed of the FRC Chair, 1st and 2nd Vice Chairs, immediate Past Chair, the chairs of standing committees, and the Director of VR.

Coordination Committee

The Coordination Committee is federally mandated to dialogue with statewide Councils such as the Independent Living Council, Developmental Disabilities Planning Council, the State Mental Health Council, and others to increase communication, enhance outreach, and to collaborate to prevent duplication of efforts.

Legislative Committee

This highly active committee visits every state legislator at the Capitol during each legislative session. Educating Legislators is the top priority. Communication with Senate and House leadership allows FRC to keep them up-to-date on VR's accomplishments and budget needs. Through strategic partnership, the Division also keeps FRC informed of legislative activities.

Planning Committee

The Planning Committee works as a strategic partner with the Division on holding public forums and developing the goals and priorities for the Division's State Plan.

Evaluation Committee

The Evaluation Committee is responsible for the oversight of the customer satisfaction survey administered by Florida State University Survey and Research Lab. This survey gathers information on customer satisfaction to assist in increasing the efficiency and effectiveness of service provision.

Public Awareness Committee

The Public Awareness Committee develops the Annual Report and marketing materials to garner interest in advocacy efforts for the employment of persons with disabilities.

Functions of the Rehabilitation Council

The Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC), as required of all State Rehabilitation Councils (SRC), must perform primary functions after consulting with the State Workforce Investment Board. These duties include:

- Review, analyze, and advise the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) regarding practices and performanc within all Division support and service systems.
- In partnership with VR, the FRC will develop, agree to, and review state goals and priorities, and assist in conducting a statewide needs assessment every three years.
- Review, analyze, and advise VR on the effectiveness of, and the customer satisfaction with:
    - VR agency function,
    - VR services provided by the Division and other entities, and
    - Employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals served by VR.
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor, Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), and other entities, including the Public, on the status of VR services.
- Coordinate the activities of the FRC with other councils such as: the Florida Independent Living Council (FILC), the advisory panel established under Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the Mental Health Planning Council, and the Florida Developmental Disabilities Council.
- Perform other functions at state and federal levels that the FRC determines appropriate and comparable with Title 1 of the Rehabilitation Act and implementing regulations.

"VR changed my life 100 percent. I was on a dead end road. Now I have opportunities."

- Customer comment

2009-2010 Legislative Visit to the Florida capitol (L-R), Front row: Peggy Douglas, John Henry Douglas, Kara Tucker, and Darlene Maynard. Second row: Cheryl Stone, James Thompson, Debra Thompson, Jeff Barrett, Yolanda Herrera, Yolanda Triplett, and Andrea Schwendinger. Back row: Don Corwin, and Valerie Stafford-Mallis.

2002-A Old St. Augustine Road
Tallahassee, Fl 32301-4862

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E-mail: FRCcustomers@vr.fldoe.org

October 10, 2011

Greetings:

I would like to thank the employees of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and our outgoing director, Bill Palmer for support of the Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC); we could not do our jobs without the effort to collaborate on our mutual goal of serving people with disabilities in the State of Florida. I hope, as you read, you will understand the incredible amount of work that these dedicated people do to improve the lives of citizens, even though the demand for services has increased and the financial resources have decreased. Many lessons have been learned as we continue to improve and meet the needs of our customers.

As the Chair of the FRC, I would like to thank each council member for their hard work and dedication to those persons living with disabilities in Florida. It is not always an easy task to follow through on long term commitments and give it your best each time; this is exactly what FRC members do when they attend a quarterly council meeting, make a conference call, or attend an advocacy event. This not only shows dedication, but it also shows caring and concern for our customers. I would also like to thank the dedicated staff of FRC who make it possible for us to meet our mandates. The value of each staff member is impossible to express; but they do their jobs so effortlessly and joyfully that it makes our jobs easier to complete.

It is an honor and a privilege to continue to serve and work with such groups of determined staff and members. Our collective goal, as always, is to take every step to improve and expand employment opportunities for people with disabilities in the State of Florida.

Sincerely,

Debra Thompson, Chair

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

KATHLEEN SHANAHAN, Chair
ROBERTO MARTÍNEZ, *Vice Chair*

Members
SALLY BRADSHAW
GARY CHARTRAND
DR. AKSHAY DESAI
BARBARA S. FEINGOLD

Gerard Robinson
Commissioner of Education

October 10, 2011

Greetings:

The Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) continues to be a strong and effective voice in advocating for individuals with disabilities throughout the state of Florida.

During the three state fiscal years beginning July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2011, the FRC has evaluated the performance of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) after we invoked an Order of Selection and implemented a financial means test to control the expenditures reflective of a growing caseload. The demand for services had grown by 33 percent while the available financial resources had increased by 6 percent during the three years leading up to invoking the Order of Selection. The number of successful employment outcomes dropped significantly during the first full year that the Division operated under an Order of Selection and also utilized a Financial Participation Determination process. The economic recession and high unemployment rate in Florida coincided with the fact that the VR Field employees were going through a significant transformation now that the only consumers that were being served were individuals with significant disabilities. At first, operating under an Order of Selection was challenging for DVR customers, family members, employees, and FRC members. Many lessons have been learned, and we continue to improve. During the past state fiscal year, the number of successful employment outcomes increased by 30 percent and the rehabilitation rate increased by 24 percent when compared to the prior state fiscal year. The FRC continues to express their vision for improving services to our customers, and the Division has come a long way towards transformation to serving those consumers with the greatest barriers to employment. We recognize that we must continue our quest for continuous improvement.

I have enjoyed a positive working relationship with the FRC members for 6.5 years as the Florida DVR Director. I appreciate the constructive approach that members have taken during my tenure. I am retiring at the end of October, and I want to take this opportunity to wish the new Florida DVR Director, Aleisa McKinlay, the best. I know the FRC will provide her with the same support that I have enjoyed, and will collaborate in making Florida DVR the best vocational rehabilitation organization possible.

On behalf of Florida DVR, **THANK YOU FRC** for your support, dedication, and accomplishments.

Regards,

Bill Palmer

Bill Palmer

BILL PALMER
Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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Florida Relay Service: 1-800-955-8771 (TTY) • 1-800-955-8770 (Voice) • www.rehabworks.org

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

Mission

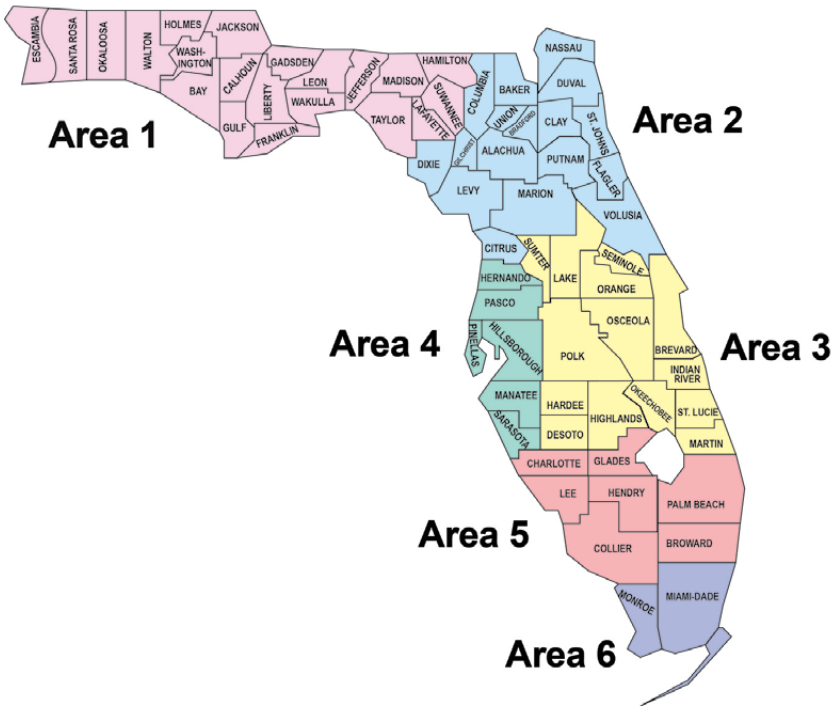
To provide services to eligible individuals with physical and/or mental impairments that will enable an individual to achieve an employment goal and/or enhance their independence.

Vision

VR provides the services that are required for eligible customers to achieve an employment goal, with priority placed on serving the customers with the most significant disabilities. Employers throughout Florida recognize the value of including individuals with disabilities in the workforce and provide equal opportunity for individuals with disabilities in meeting the demand for a well trained and skilled workforce.

The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation has been providing employment opportunities for people living with disabilities since 1920. The VR Division has 951 employees that work across the state in six different areas. Each area has multiple offices (See Figure 1), so our customers are able to access the available services. There are 434 field staff counselors who carry customer caseloads. Given the current number of those served, it averages to about 127 cases, per counselor, per month.

Figure 1 VR Area Map



Programs

School to Work Transition

The School to Work Transition Program helps students with disabilities prepare and plan for employment success after high school.

Deaf, Hard of Hearing Services

Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services ensure that eligible individuals with all types of hearing loss receive VR services. Necessary assistance and skills training for both employee and employer can help persons who are deaf or hard of hearing secure and retain employment.

Supported Employment

Supported Employment serves people with the most significant disabilities who have not been successful in competitive employment. The program helps individuals become employed in their community by using services such as job coaching and follow-up to promote employment stability. This program includes Small Business Development Services, as may be appropriate.

Independent Living Program

The Independent Living Program provides services through a statewide network of private non-profit, non-residential, locally-based and consumer-controlled Centers for Independent Living.

Mental Health Programs

VR coordinates services with available mental health centers, programs, and service providers to assist individuals with mental or emotional disabilities in becoming employed.

Ticket to Work

Ticket to Work is a Social Security Administration (SSA) program. For those who qualify for social security benefits, tickets will be issued and may be taken to Employment Network (EN) participants, such as VR, who offer access to employment and rehabilitation services necessary to help a person secure and retain employment.

Adults with Disabilities

Adults with Disabilities is a Florida specific program funded through state general revenue. The goal of the Adults with Disabilities Program is to provide funding to certain school districts and colleges that give adults and senior citizens with disabilities the opportunity for enhancement of skills consistent with their abilities and needs. Adults with Disabilities Grants are provided to school districts and colleges specifically designated by the legislature in the current General Appropriations Act. Funds may be used in programs to:

- Improve quality of life through recreational activities and intellectual stimulation;
- Serve adults with disabilities who are not suited for workforce development education programs; or
- Provide lifelong learning activities to senior citizens with disabilities.

Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker

The Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Program funds projects that provide vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities who are migrant or seasonal farm workers and the family members who live with them.

Aleisa McKinlay became Director of the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) on November 1, 2011. She looks to build on former Director Bill Palmer's foundation and help VR reach the next level. She joined VR in February 2009 as the Bureau Chief of Partnerships and Communication. Prior to joining VR, she was Chief of Adult community Mental Health at the Florida Department of Children & Families (DCF), as well as the Director of the Protection and Advocacy for Individuals with Mental Illnesses (PAIMI) Program at the Advocacy Center for Persons with Disabilities (now Disability Rights Florida). In addition to holding her law degree, McKinlay has significant experience in the administration of public mental health services and will be a tremendous advocate for the needs of VR customers. "There have been many positive changes within VR since I arrived in 2009," Aleisa says. "I look forward to the future as we strengthen services to our customers, and strengthen ties between VR and our many external partners – in times of scarce resources, coordinating, prioritizing and maximizing what we have are essential strategies."

Vocational Rehabilitation

Native American Outreach

VR works with the Lower Muscogee Creek Tribe, the Georgia recipient of the Federal Section 121 Grant under Title I of the Rehabilitation Act, as amended. VR and the Tribe have a Memorandum of Understanding to coordinate services for eligible Native Americans.

Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST)

FAAST envisions a seamless, supportive partnership between Florida businesses and government to provide assistive technology devices and services that will enable persons with disabilities to participate in independent living, education, work, and recreation from birth to death.

Rehabilitation Technology

The Rehabilitation Technology Program encourages the customer to try various jobs, tasks, virtual environments and assistive technologies prior to entering the actual employment setting through the use of virtual reality, simulators, robotics, and feedback interfaces.

Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reemployment Services (BRRS)

BRRS is a program within the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation responsible for the administration of the rehabilitation and reemployment provisions under Florida's Worker's Compensation law (Section 440.491, Florida Statutes).

Mission Focus: Employing Our Customers

Young man with disabilities helps others find balance

Brandon, FL - When Jon Viera, who has muscular spinal atrophy and uses a power chair, first met with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor Karen Wilkinson to discuss his career goals, he knew that he wanted a job where he could work with people and make a difference in their lives. Now, as an Independent Living Coordinator for Self-Reliance, Inc., Jon is living his dream as he helps others find their way. "I love it. I absolutely love it," Jon says. "It's exactly what I wanted to do."

Jon teaches independent living skills, provides peer mentoring, and organizes community activities. Isabel Gonzalez, Jon's supervisor, says that Jon's disability makes it easier for him to interact with and relate to the customers he serves. "Jon is the perfect person for this job," she says. "The work that he does, he was absolutely meant to do." Recently, Jon led a ten-week workshop designed to help people with disabilities live a healthy, full life by teaching them how to set goals, stay physically active, balance their lives, and maintain that balance.

When she was working with Jon, Karen saw his motivation to work, but employers turned him away because of inexperience. Seeing Jon's frustration, Karen knew that VR's On-the-Job Training (OJT) program would give him the skills and hands-on experience he needed. With the On-the-Job Training program, VR reimburses employers for the trainee's salary, training costs, and any accommodations needed. It's a win-win situation for both the business owner and the employee. After a 16-week OJT with Self-Reliance, Inc., Jon was hired permanently. He was thrilled to finally get the opportunity. "If it wasn't for the OJT program, I would never have been able to get hooked up with Self-Reliance," says Jon.

To help Jon transition to Self-Reliance, VR provided a computer and voice-activated software so he could convert paper documents to a digital format, along with a wireless key fob to access the building and a specialized headset so he could answer and make calls. VR also paid for modifications to Jon's home, providing a shower chair and a specialized door opener. Jon said that those were the little things that make him successful. "Now I don't have to wait for someone to be home to get in and out of my house," he says.

Jon said the support from VR and Karen was instrumental in helping him find the perfect job. "She was awesome," Jon said. "Karen helped me get so many different tools that literally make me almost, completely independent at work." Jon hopes to continue working and eventually take on more responsibility. He said that coming to VR is a two-way street that requires hard work from both sides, but was definitely worthwhile. "If you're willing to put the work in, VR is an amazing asset to have behind you."

Stakeholders bringing home success

Tampa/Panama City, FL – For more than 12 years, Hyatt Hotels of Florida has partnered with Hands On Education and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to provide a reality-based hospitality training program designed specifically for people with disabilities. The students are referred by VR, become temporary Hyatt employees, and are paid during their two weeks of training. The program began at the Grand Hyatt Tampa Bay, and thanks to the driving force of John Ficca, it has grown to include eight Hyatt Hotels in Florida, three in Washington DC, and eight in Texas.

Justine Szatkiewicz of Panama City is one of over 1,200 students who have been trained since the program began in 1998. The 19 year-old, who has a mild mental disability with a speech and comprehension skills deficiency, has always wanted a career in food services. With the help of VR, Hyatt Hotels and the Hands On Education program, Justine is one step closer to achieving her goals.

According to her supervisor at the Hyatt, Betsy Shimberg, Justine was a model employee. "When she started, she didn't have a lot of experience and was a little hesitant, like a lot of our students. But once she got going, she became more comfortable and really hit it off well with the other staff members at the Hyatt. The students work right along with the rest of the members of Hyatt. They are in there slicing and dicing, they clock in and clock out and get paid for the two weeks that they are working."

Justine met VR counselor Pam Cramer during her junior year of high school. Pam helped Justine take advantage of work experience opportunities that became available, such as job shadowing and Disability Mentoring Day. Pam knew that Justine would benefit from the Hands On Education program, so VR funded her training. "Justine is a hard worker, she really wants to work. She is doing exactly what she wants," said Pam. "I think employers can trust her to do her job well. She is the ideal employee."

Justine's father, Francis Szatkiewicz, was hesitant to send his daughter far away from home. "We didn't know what her true capabilities were before the program," he says. After the program, Francis was amazed at his daughter's progress. "Without that program, I don't think she would be where she is now," he said. Francis points out that both Justine's cooking and her life skills have improved in a remarkable way. Justine did so well, she was offered a permanent position with Hyatt; however, she turned it down because she didn't want to relocate at this time. She volunteered in her school cafeteria when she returned home and currently works at McDonald's in Panama City. She is looking to further her career in the culinary arts.

"The opportunity that VR provided Justine with Hands On Education has built her confidence level more than we could have expected. She spent two weeks taking care of herself, which really opened her eyes to say 'hey, I can do this.' Hopefully, at some point, she will be able to make it on her own," Justine's Dad said. All individuals who participated in the employment goal partnership benefitted in one way or another, and each are encouraged to foster the next opportunity to advocate for employing a person living with a disability.

National & State Profile of Employment

- According to the 2010 American Community Survey one year estimates, approximately 10 percent of working-age people (ages 18 and over) in Florida report having a disability. Specifically, 2,366,590 of the 11,335,279 individuals over the age of 18 in Florida reported one or more disabilities. These working-age adults with an employment disability may qualify for vocational rehabilitation services. However, as expected, this number far exceeds VR's service capacity.

- According to the American Community Survey, income levels for working-age people with disabilities vary. For example, the median annual earnings of non-institutionalized persons aged 16 years and over with a disability in Florida who were working in 2010 was $18,279.

Despite these challenges, VR continues to educate businesses and the larger community about the benefits of hiring individuals with disabilities. Employers throughout Florida are recognizing the value of including individuals with disabilities in meeting the demand for a well-trained and skilled workforce.

- Florida's unemployment rate has declined slightly from the 12 percent reported this time last year. However, the rate still remains in the double digits, 10.3 percent (October 2011). The state is still challenged with a high unemployment rate. According to a report by the Florida Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research, the current unemployment rate of 10.3 percent equates to approximately 955,000 individuals not working. Information from this report also shows that Florida's unemployment rate continues to run higher than the national average of 9 percent.

- Furthermore, The Florida Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research reported that 37 of the state's 67 counties have unemployment rates in the double digits. The unemployment rates in these counties ranged from 11.2 to 18.1 percent.

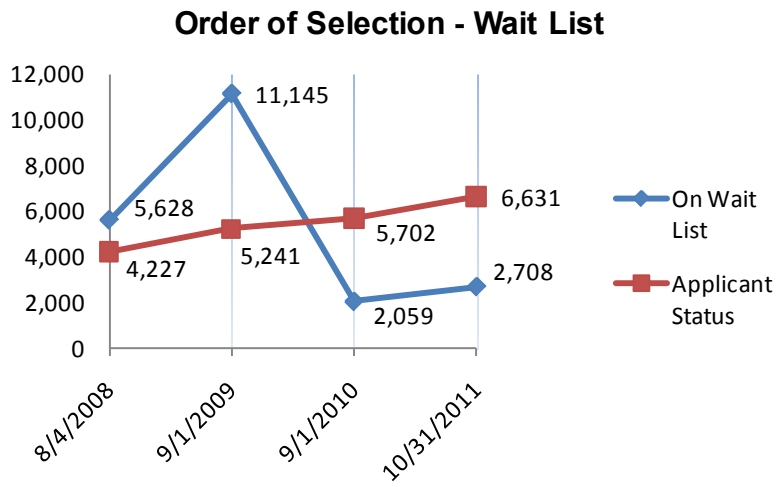
"I would recommend your service to all my friends who need help."

- Customer comment

VR and the Customer Profile

VR is a federally mandated program, in existence for nearly 90 years, that provides vocational and other rehabilitation services to all types of individuals with disabilities. The VR Mission emphasizes services to achieve employment and/or enhance independence. The following customer profile data points highlight the broad spectrum of disability types and individuals that the agency serves to achieve tax payer status. The VR agency statutory authority and governing guidelines may be found in 34 Code of Federal Regualtions (CFR), Chapter III, Part 361 and Chapter 413, Part II, Florida Statutes (F.S.). Federal law requires that the functions of the VR program may not be delegated to any other agency or individual. For the State of Florida, the Vocational Rehabilitation Program is a stand-alone Division within the Florida Department of Education.

Figure 2



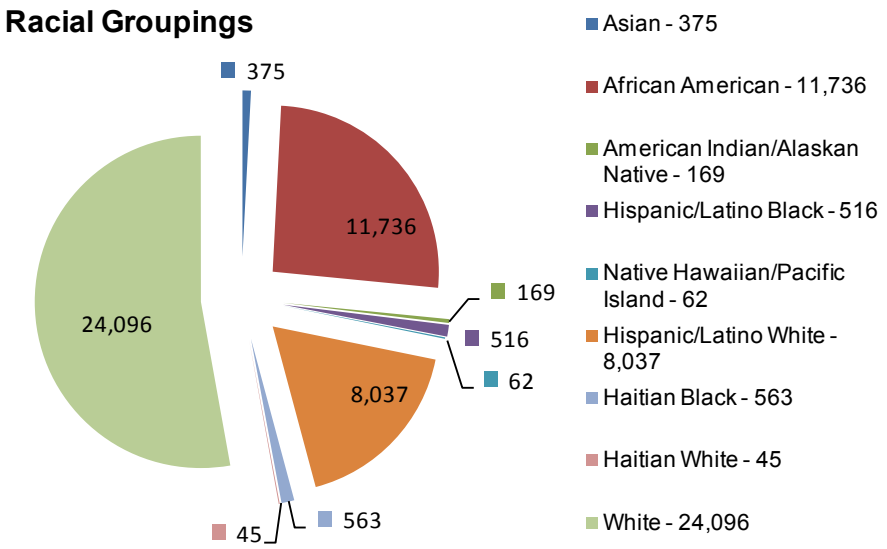
- Florida entered into Order of Selection (OOS) in August 2008 based on use of funds in the preceding years, projected funding, projected number and types of referrals, number of eligible individuals, and counselor case loads. An OOS system is required by RSA when the division is unable to provide rehabilitation services to all eligible individuals in the state who apply for the services. In Figure 2, various points in time have been presented, with the most recent numbers pulled at the end of the federal fiscal year. Category (CAT) 1 represents individuals determined to have a most significant disability; CAT 2 represents persons who have a significant disability and CAT 3, represents all other eligible individuals determined to have a disability. The numbers on the wait list vary throughout the month and year, but it appears to highlight the increasing need for services in the third Category, or individuals with the least severe work limitations. In 2010, OOS status was as follows: Cat 1=0 individuals waiting, CAT 2=0, CAT 3=2,059; whereas in 2011, October 31st, the OOS wait list statuses were CAT 1= 0, CAT 2= 0, with Severity CAT 3= 2,708 individuals.

Figure 3

Age Group in Years	Count
< 16	81
16-24*	17,957
25-33	5,425
34-42	6,208
43-51	8,817
52-60	5,721
61-69	1,218
70-78	146
79-87	28
88-96	4

- The age groups who received services from VR during the 2010-2011 state fiscal year vary (Figure 3.) The ages of 16 to 24 years are an area of interest for many groups, as these are our leaders of tomorrow *(Transition aged as defined by RSA). The average age served through VR services is 34.1 years old. These individuals still have many years to contribute to their community, to be self-sufficient and productive citizens of Florida.

Figure 4



- The customer racial groups who received services are presented in Figure 4, with the highest group served being Whites, followed by African Americans, then Hispanic and Haitian individuals served throughout the state.

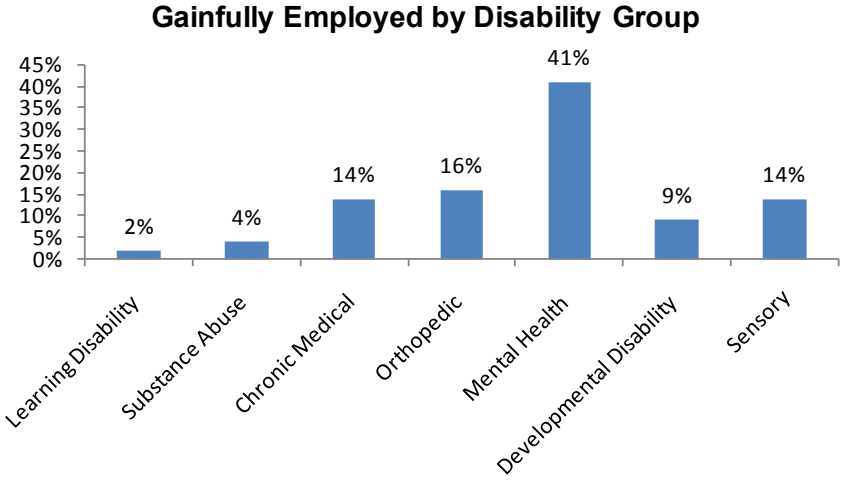
- The average number of active customers at state year-end, 2010 – 2011, is 50,515. This ever increasing number appears to be evidence of the growing service delivery demands from VR staff and community partners. The number of active customers is at an all-time high, with 45,912 being served in the 2009-2010 state fiscal year, compared to the 2006-2007 number of 36,039 active customers. For state fiscal year 2010-2011, 39.4% of total customers are transition-aged youth, 16 to 24 years old.

- The number of Individual Plans for Employment (IPEs) written by VR counselors for the state fiscal year 2010-2011 is 21,215 plans. That equates to approximately 1,767 new case plans written each month.

- The annual number of gainfully employed customers for the State Fiscal Year 2010-2011 reached 5,018. Gainful employment occurs when a customer has job stability for at least 90 days and is placed in employment that is not a sheltered workshop. The Florida rehabilitation rate is 45.6% of customers gainfully employed. This rate is consistent with other states in Order of Selection. Note the average length of time spent working with VR is 16 months.

- VR works with individuals across multiple disability groups, as shown in Figure 5. VR encourages each person to become gainfully employed in competitive jobs of their choice. Disability groups gainfully employed follow past trends, with minor variances.

Figure 5



- The top 20 occupations for people living with disabilities placed through VR this past state fiscal year, Figure 6, represent a variety of statewide occupation categories including:

Management, Business, Science, and Arts • Sales and Office
Natural Resources, Construction, and Maintenance
Production, Transportation, and Material Moving
Service • Sales and Office

Figure 6

Types of Top Occupations	
Customer Service Representative	Janitors and Cleaners
Stock Clerks and Order Fillers	Security Guards
Retail Salespersons	Nursing Aides, Orderlies, and Attendants
Food Preparation Workers	Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners
Cashiers	Office Clerks, General
Dishwashers	Waiters and Waitresses
Packers and Packagers	Childcare Workers
Laborers, Freight, Stock, and Material Movers	Home Health Aides
Licensed Practical and Licensed Vocational Nurses	Light Truck or Delivery Services Drivers
Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers, All Other	Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food

Note that additional jobs are held by VR customers, such as engineer and computer technician, but are less frequently identified. Above are the most common jobs, not all jobs for all customers.

- Those with significant or most significant disabilities averaged $2,614 in case costs, and those categorized as without significant disabilities (CAT 3) averaged $132. The average overall cost per case life for fiscal year 2010-2011 for all customers is calculated to be $1,131. These are the costs of assisting an individual to move from being a tax user to a tax payer in the State of Florida.

- VR Customers work an average of 31.06 hours per week. They have an average hourly wage of $10.89 with the average of $17,597 annual earnings. At closure, 72.8 percent of customers were determined to be self-supporting, as compared to 22.8% at program acceptance.

Figure 7

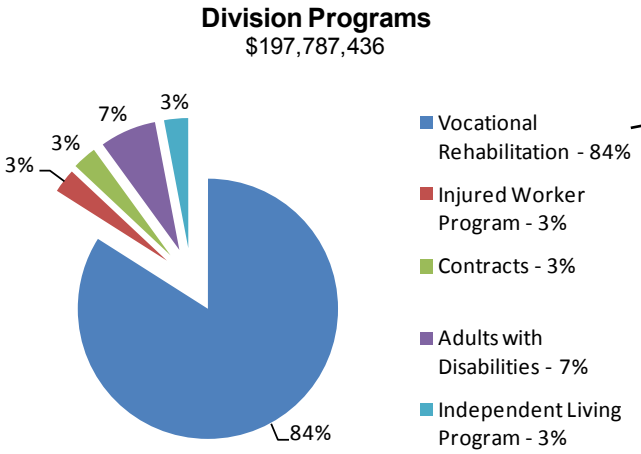


Figure 8

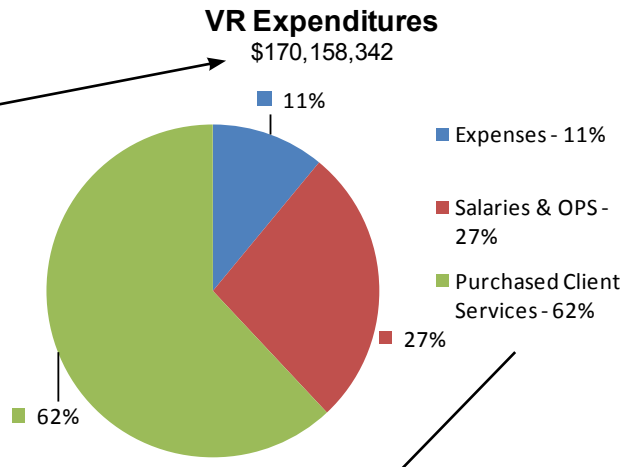
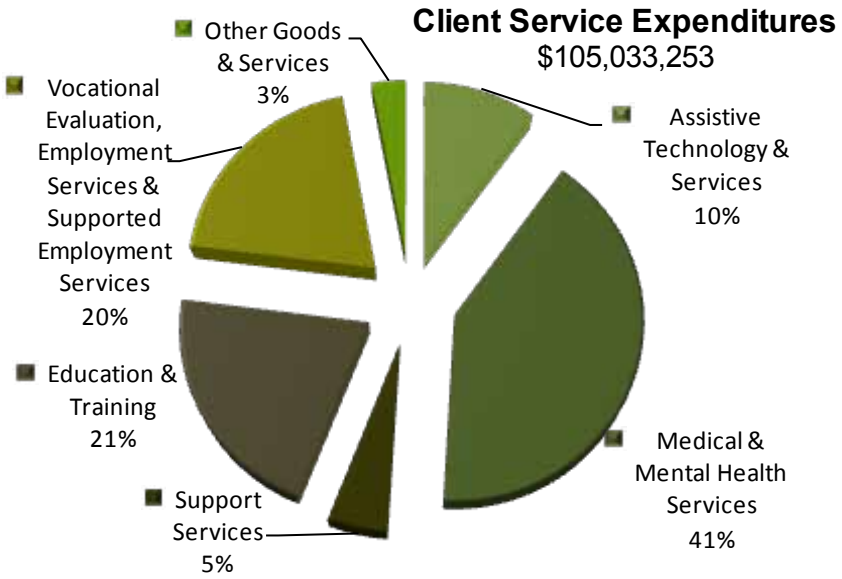


Figure 9



- Displayed above are Division expenditures (Figure 7), VR expenditures (Figure 8), and Purchased Client Service expenditures (Figure 9) for the 2010-2011 State Fiscal Year. The total Division expenditures were $197,787,436. Those Division expenditures include contracts and program funds for the Adults with Disabilities and Independent Living Programs and the Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reemployment Services (BRRS), Florida's Injured Worker Program. BRRS is a state program that provides rehabilitation and reemployment service to individuals injured on a job covered by the State Workers' Compensation Administration Trust Fund. In addition to the previous programs, 84 percent goes to VR expenses. The VR program works with people living with disabilities to prepare for, gain or retain employment. The VR expenditures (total $170,158,342) are broken out in Figure 8 with general expenses of 11 percent and salaries at 27 percent. The major expense item for VR is the category of Purchased Client Services (62 %.) In Figure 9 the breakdown of the 62 percent of Purchased Client Services equates to total expenditures of $105,033,253. These purchased client service expenditures include assistive technology, support services, education and training, evaluations and employment services, as well as medical and mental health services which is the largest expense category at this time.

- As tax users are employed, they become tax payers, and the investment of both the state and federal government is returned across the economy of the entire state. Collective projected customer earnings at job placement for the first year are estimated to be $88,302,131. This is an increase of over $23 million dollars from last year. The return to the state through taxes paid (at a rate of $0.075 per dollar earned) is estimated to be $6,622,659. At the state fiscal year end, the calculated Return on Investment (ROI) indicates that $5.46 is returned to the state economy for every $1 spent in providing services to customers.

- VR does have a financial participation determination process to examine the extent of customer investment in costs for services. These costs are paid directly by the customer to the service vendor. There are exemption status' that include those individuals who receive public aid, etc. This determination process is applied to all individual plans, but impacted 2,427 customers.

- Third party payers include private insurance companies, Medicare, and Medicaid. These funds help cover VR customer expenses that are medically necessary. The amount recovered by VR for state fiscal year July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011 totaled $4,162,082. This amount is over $900,000 higher than last year's total amount recovered. This emphasizes the fact that the money originally spent in VR goes further with the additional dollars recaptured or deferred to another paying source.

VR is a federal/state partnership –

78.7% of funds for VR program expenditures come from federal sources and 21.3% from State of Florida General Revenue.

This equates to an approximate ratio of 4:1 funding, federal to state.

Customer Self-Advocacy Opportunities

Advocacy, equality, and dignity are very important aspects that the FRC and VR encourage. Each individual, family member, or interested party is invited multiple times throughout the year to speak up concerning VR services and plans for the state. All VR staff and FRC members and staff want each person to reach their full potential, with each encounter as important as the next. The FRC would like to encourage all of our customers to:

- Believe in yourself – you CAN do it.
- Be polite and open to hear what the person is saying.
- Ask about programs, rules, laws, and plans that may influence your life.
- Discuss your questions and concerns. Speaking to someone in person or by phone can be an effective way to advocate.
- Listen, but if you disagree with a decision, be calm, and ask for it in writing along with the reasons for the decision.
- Learn about ways to help yourself, as well as better the life of another person living with a disability – offer to volunteer.
- Remember to thank people along the way. Recognize those individuals that provided helpful information and good service.
- Self-determination and freedom of choice is your right and your responsibility.

There are various ways you, your family members, vendors, staff, and other interested parties are needed to help determine how VR conducts business – YOUR VOICE IS WANTED!!!

The following sections are examples of efforts by the FRC and VR to open the lines of communication and to hear from our stakeholders. Opportunities for everyone's voice to be heard are presented below and include:

• Public Forums • the State Plan •

• Needs Assessment • Customer Satisfaction Survey •

Public Forums

Everyone is invited to future FRC public forums scheduled for the following cities…

February 2012 in Tallahassee • May 2012 in Jacksonville

August 2012 in Orlando • November 2012 in Boca Raton

Additional FRC/VR Public Forums or opportunities for input on the State Plan will be provided around April and May of 2012. To find out more information about this or other meetings, please log on to www.rehabworks.org.

The State Plan

The VR State Plan, sometimes called the RSA State Plan, is a document that is sent to the federal government informing them about what VR plans to do for the following year. This plan includes information about the services that will be provided through VR in the next year, the agreements that will be made with school boards for transitional students, what government agencies VR will work with, how VR will work with the Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and Client Assistance Programs (CAP), how VR will work with and train staff, VR goals and priorities for the next year, and the scope of supported employment services, among other areas. The State Plan is a document that affects anyone involved with VR – staff member, customer, vendor, or other stakeholder. VR and the FRC are required to get input into this plan from all stakeholders.

In strategic partnership with VR, the FRC helps in the design and facilitation of getting input into the State Plan. It remains a top priority for the FRC and VR to inform the public and capture input from customers, vendors and stakeholders on the State Plan. The FRC members representing all standing committees form a State Plan Task Force each year to study the draft of the VR State Plan for the following year, e.g., in 2011, work on the 2012 State Plan is conducted. Comments from all public meetings are reviewed so the FRC members will know how vendors, customers, and staff view VR planning and service delivery.

In 2011, VR and the FRC conducted eight public meetings in four locations around the state, beyond the FRC forums held at council quarterly meetings. These State Plan public meetings were held in the following VR areas, two forums in each city: Area 1 (Pensacola), Area 2 (Daytona Beach), Area 5 (Ft. Myers), and Area 6 (Miami). At each meeting, attendees were provided with contact information for submitting additional comments directly to the FRC, along with various options for submitting thoughts to VR. The FRC Executive Committee receives the State Plan Task Force recommendations where observations and discussions are reviewed with the VR Director as part of the FRC input into the State Plan.

For the 2013 State Plan, discussions and planning have already begun. It is the goal of the FRC and VR to offer an efficient, effective, approach to gathering comments for the next State Plan. Look for the next opportunity to be involved. The past State Plans and comment cards are available online at www.rehabworks.org.

Needs Assessment

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), in cooperation with the Florida Rehabilitation Council, is required to conduct a comprehensive statewide needs assessment describing the rehabilitation needs of individuals residing in the state. The assessment is conducted every three years, consistent with the intent of the Rehabilitation Act. VR and the FRC are currently conducting an assessment to identify the vocational rehabilitation needs of customers, as well as their satisfaction with the services they receive. A cross-functional team comprised of VR and the FRC staff and the chairman of the FRC planning committee was established to guide the implementation and reporting of the project.

The purpose of the assessment is to identify the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities. The objectives for this research include the following:

- To identify VR services considered as important, including the need for supported employment services to get or keep a job
- To identify barriers to VR services

- To identify customers' opinions about service quality and capacity. Service quality refers to how well services are provided. The term service capacity refers to the availability of services identified as necessary and valuable in assisting customers in achieving an employment outcome.
- To analyze information for individuals on the waiting list to determine the characteristics of those individuals who are currently unserved by VR.

The Needs Assessment included multiple methods of collection for the information. Included were customer focus groups, stakeholder interviews, customer surveys, counselor surveys, and a review of the customer satisfaction survey responses from the last year. It is anticipated that a full copy of the needs assessment will be available in 2012.

Assessing VR Customer Satisfaction in Florida
Customer Satisfaction Survey 2010-11 Annual Results

The Florida Rehabilitation Council contracts for two separate surveys of VR Customers conducted by Florida State University's (FSU) Survey Research Laboratory. These surveys are conducted on a monthly basis throughout the year. Quarterly, the FSU Survey Research Laboratory prepares reports, and the FRC Evaluation Committee is charged with analyzing the results. The survey of customers whose cases are closed began in Fiscal Year (FY) 2001-02, while the survey of customers who are currently active started a year later (FY 2002-03). Both surveys have been conducted continuously since their inception, which allows for monitoring changes in satisfaction levels over time.

Why Should the FRC Survey VR Customers?

The survey provides customers an opportunity to give feedback to an "outside party" that monitors and provides feedback to the Division. Sometimes customers may feel uncomfortable giving feedback directly to the Division. The survey effort is designed to allow detailed analyses by areas and disability types. The information gathered from the customers provides data about regional and statewide trends. It can also be used to address specific concerns raised by the Council or VR. The feedback provided by the survey is used to improve existing services while planning for the future. All highlighted quotes used in this Annual Report are pulled from the customer comments.

Who Is Surveyed?

Customers with Closed Cases. All customers whose cases were closed during the previous month were sent a survey. Both those who "successfully" closed (Status 26) and "unsuccessfully" closed (Status 80-87, 89) are asked to give us feedback. The surveys are sent out each month throughout the year. In FY 2010-11, 8,413 surveys were sent to customers whose cases were closed, with 1,903 returning them, to date (23%). The response rates for customers with closed cases prior to FY 2009-10 have been between 22 percent and 33 percent.

Customers with Active Cases. All customers who completed their IPE six months earlier were sent a survey. The surveys are sent out each month throughout the year. In FY 2010-11, 19,584 surveys were sent to customers whose cases were active, with 5,547 returning them, to date (28%). The response rates for customers with active cases since FY 2002-03 have been between 28 percent and 34 percent.

Efforts are made to achieve the highest response rates possible by making the surveys convenient and accommodating for customers. Customers may mail in their responses, use a web access, call toll-free and complete the survey by phone, or use a TTY line to respond. Two mailings are done, as well as re-mailing the survey to a corrected address.

Program Changes in 2008

Changes made during FY 2007-08 had an impact on caseload and the types of clients served. In April 2008, the program implemented a "financial needs" test for new clients. In August 2008, the program began accepting new clients based on "order of selection". These major program changes may account for some of the patterns found beginning in FY 2008-09.

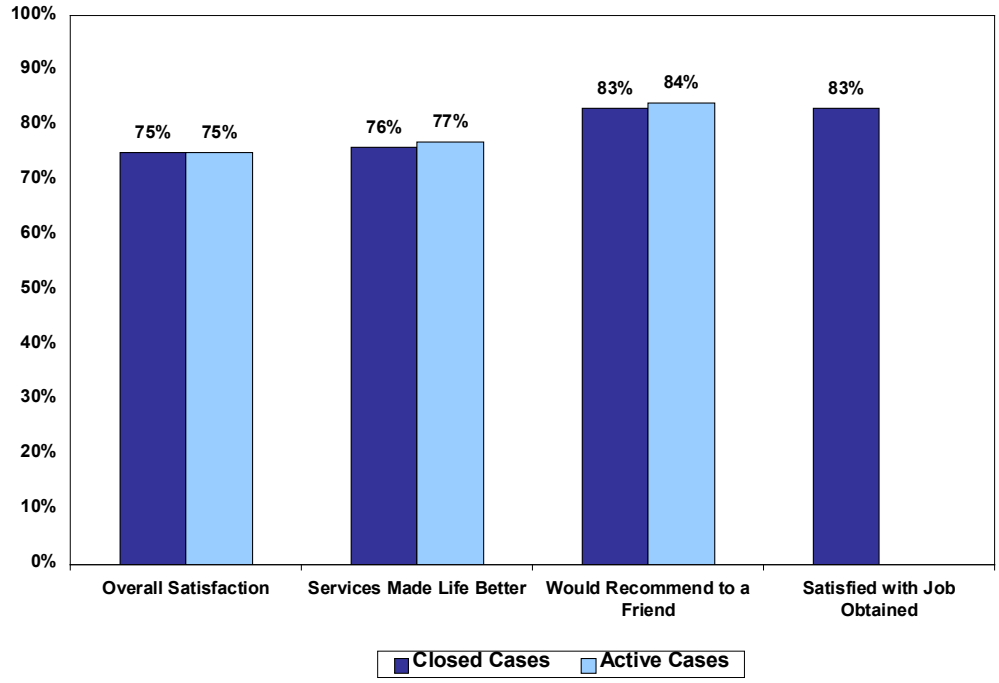
What Questions Are Asked?

The surveys ask customers about the performance of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services in four areas: program outcomes, choice, services, and staff. The surveys consist of closed-answer questions and two open-ended questions concerning program services and improvements. The two surveys parallel each other. Feedback about these areas provides longitudinal information that can help monitor and improve VR services. Customers whose cases are closed and who were not employed prior to coming to VR for services were asked why they did not get a job.

Program Outcomes

Customers who are currently in the program and those whose cases are closed report similar levels of satisfaction. The satisfaction levels for customers whose cases were closed improved slightly from FY 2009-10. The satisfaction with program outcomes for those customers currently in the program remained at about the FY 2009-10 level (see Figure 10).

Figure 10 – Program Outcomes



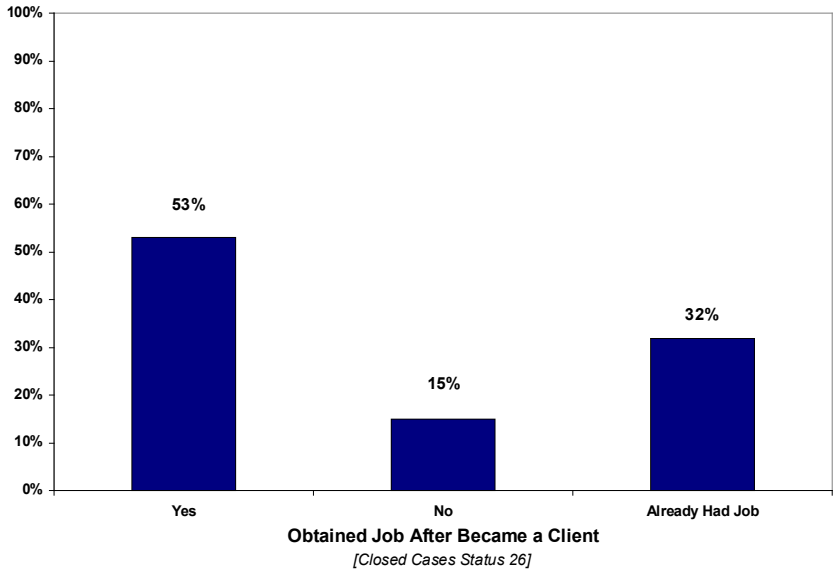
Overall Satisfaction with Services. In FY 2010-11, 75 percent of the customers whose cases were closed and 75 percent of those with active cases reported that they were "very" or "mostly"' satisfied with the services they received from VR [Overall Satisfaction]. In the previous year, 74 percent of the customers with closed cases and 77 percent of the active customers were "very" or "mostly" satisfied with the services.

Services Made Life Better. A similar pattern is observed concerning services making the client's life better [Services Made Life Better]. In FY 2010-11, 76 percent of the customers whose cases were closed and 77 percent of those with active cases felt the services made their life better. In the previous year, 73 percent of the customers with closed cases and 77 percent of the active customers felt the services made their life better.

Would Recommend Services to A Friend. In FY 2010-11, 83 percent of clients whose case was closed reported they would recommend VR services to a friend. Among customers whose cases were active, the percentage was higher (84%). In FY 2009-10, 81 percent of the customers with closed cases and 85 percent of customers with active cases would recommend the program to a friend.

Employment Status and Satisfaction with Job Obtained. A majority of the customers with closed cases (Status 26) obtained jobs since becoming a VR client (53%). Among those who obtained a job since becoming a client, 83 percent reported they were "mostly" or "very" satisfied with this job. This was about the same level or satisfaction as in the previous year (82%).

Figure 11 – Employment Status

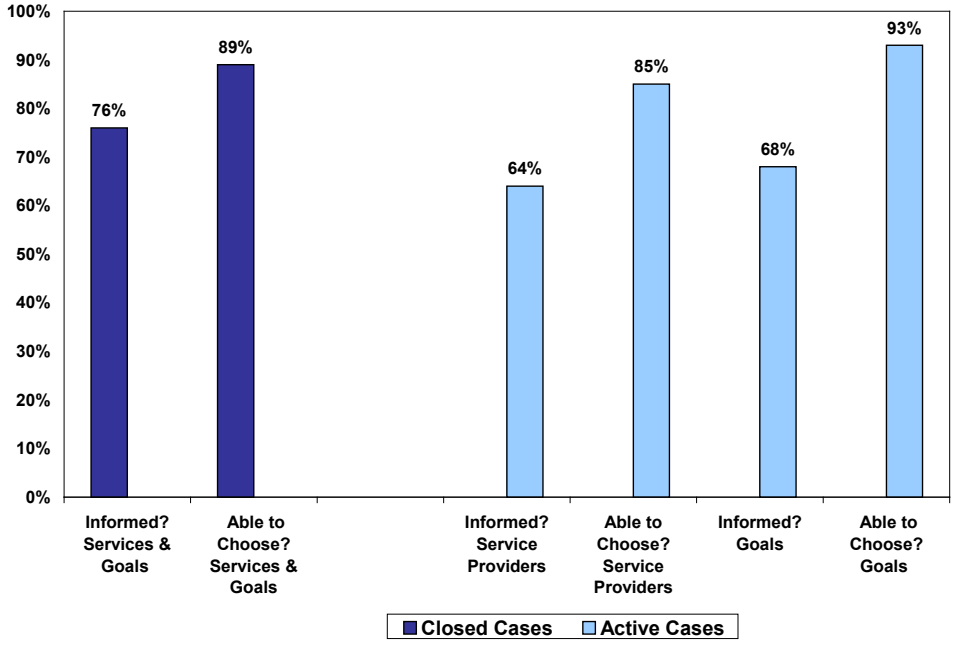


Employment Status. Among the respondents whose cases were closed under Status 26 (Successfully Rehabilitated), over one-half (53%) reported that they got a job and 15 percent did not get a job after becoming a VR client (see Figure 11). About one-third (32%) already had a job when they became a client. The proportion of those who already had a job has dropped dramatically since the program changes made in FY 2007-08 implementing order of selection and a financial needs test. Between FY 2005-06 and FY 2007-08, the proportion of customers who indicated they already had a job had been steadily increasing to 60 percent. In FY 2007-08, 60 percent of those responding to the survey reported they already had a job when they became a client compared to 48 percent in FY 2008-09 and 31 percent in FY 2009-10.

Program Choice

A higher proportion of customers whose cases were closed state they were informed of alternative choices in service providers and vocational goals than active customers. However, a large proportion of customers, regardless of their case status, who were informed of alternatives report they were able to choose service providers and vocational goals. (See Figure 12).

Figure 12 – Services and Vocational Goals



Services and Vocational Goals

Closed Cases: Choice. The same proportion of customers (76%) stated they were informed of alternative choices in service providers and vocational goals and were able to make choices as the previous two fiscal years. Of those reporting they were informed of choices, 89 percent responding to the Customer Survey were able to make choices with respect to service providers and vocational goals. This was slightly higher than the previous fiscal year (87%).

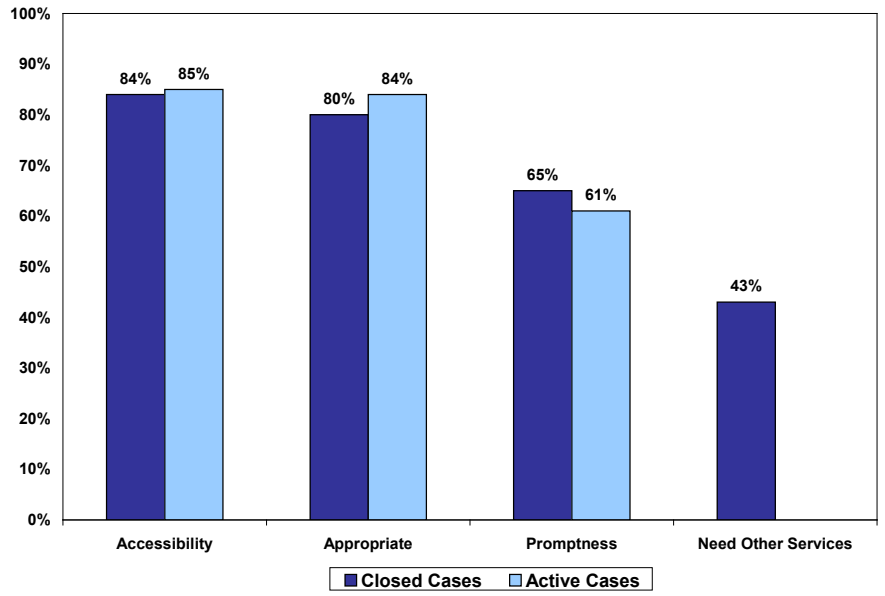
Active Cases: Choice. A lower proportion of FY 2010-11 current customers (64%) stated they were informed of alternative choices concerning services than in the previous fiscal year (68%). Of those who were informed, 85 percent reported they were able to make choices in service providers in FY 2010-11. In the previous year, 85 percent reported they were able to choose services.

The proportion of FY 2010-11 current customers stating they were informed about alternative vocational goals (68%) decreased slightly since the previous fiscal year (70%). In FY 2010-11, 93 percent of those customers informed of vocational goal alternatives stated they were able to choose vocational goals. This was the same percentage that reported they were able to choose goals in the previous fiscal year.

Program Services

Satisfaction with the accessibility of offices and the appropriateness of services are rated highly by all customers surveyed, regardless of their case closure status. Promptness of service delivery has lower levels of satisfaction than other areas. Over 40 percent of customers whose cases were closed reported they needed other services and did not receive them (43%). (See Figure 13).

Figure 13 – Program Services



Accessibility to VR Offices. Clients whose cases were closed (84%) and active clients (85%) expressed about the same levels of satisfaction with VR office accessibility. These were both at the same levels as the previous fiscal year.

Appropriateness of Services Considering Rehabilitation Goals. A slightly lower proportion of customers whose cases were closed (80%) compared to current customers (84%) feel the services provided were appropriate. The level of satisfaction with the appropriateness of service remained about the same as in previous years among active clients.

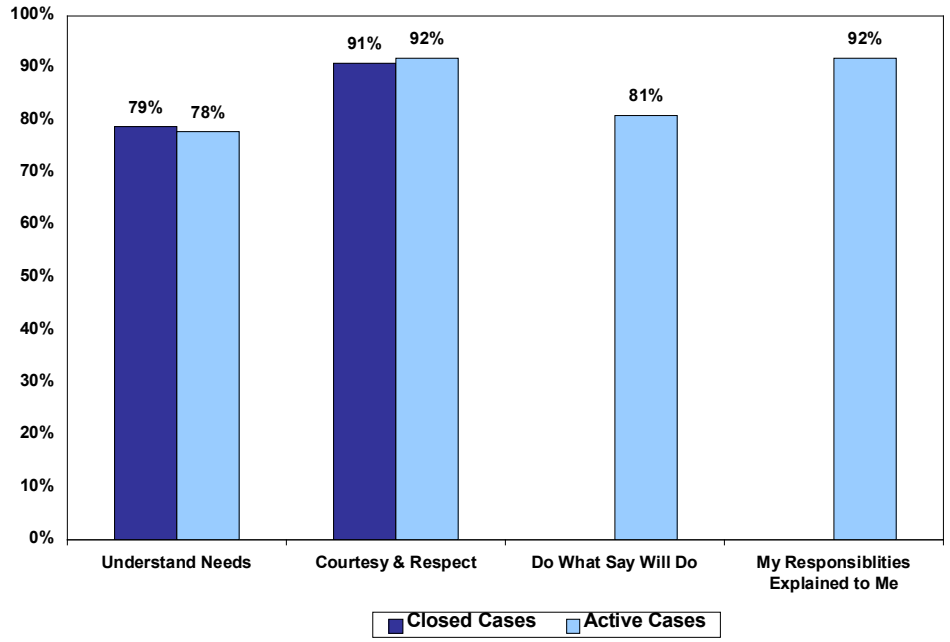
Promptness of Services Provided. Promptness of service delivery continues to have lower levels of satisfaction than other areas. Only 65 percent of customers whose cases were closed and 61 percent of the current customers felt that services were delivered promptly. The proportion of customers with closed cases who felt that services were delivered promptly declined from 77 percent in FY 2006-07 to 63 percent in FY 2009-10. Among current customers, the satisfaction with promptness (61%) declined slightly from the previous fiscal year (63%).

Need Other Services But Did Not Receive. Only customers with closed cases were asked about the need for additional services. The proportion of customers (43%) reporting they needed other services from VR but did not receive them increased slightly from the previous year (42%).

Program Staff

VR staff continues to treat customers with courtesy and respect. Customers, regardless of their case closure status, rate program staff high in terms of their professionalism and ability to understand their needs and feelings. Over 90 percent of the customers responding to the two surveys felt staff treated them with courtesy and respect. The proportion of current customers (92%) who felt that staff treated them with courtesy and respect fell slightly from the previous year (94%) (See Figure 14).

Figure 14 – Program Staff



Understand Needs and Feelings. About the same percentage of clients whose cases were closed (79%) and clients with active cases (78%) felt that VR staff understands their needs. The proportion of active clients in FY 2010-11 (78%) who reported staff understands their needs declined slightly from the previous year (80%). The proportion of customers with closed cases who felt VR understood their needs (79%) is about the same as the previous year (78%). In FY 2006-07, 88 percent felt that VR staff understood their needs compared to 79 percent of the current closed cases respondents.

Treated with Courtesy and Respect. Over 90 percent of the clients responding to both surveys reported that VR staff treated them with courtesy and respect. Ninety-one percent of clients whose case had been closed stated they were treated with courtesy and respect by VR staff. This was at the same level as the previous fiscal year. Current clients responded in a similar manner (92%). However, the proportion of current customers who felt they were treated with courtesy and respect (92%) declined slightly from the previous fiscal year (94%).

Do What They Say. Eighty-one percent of active clients reported that VR staff "do what they say they will do" in FY 2010-11. This decreased slightly from the previous fiscal year (83%).

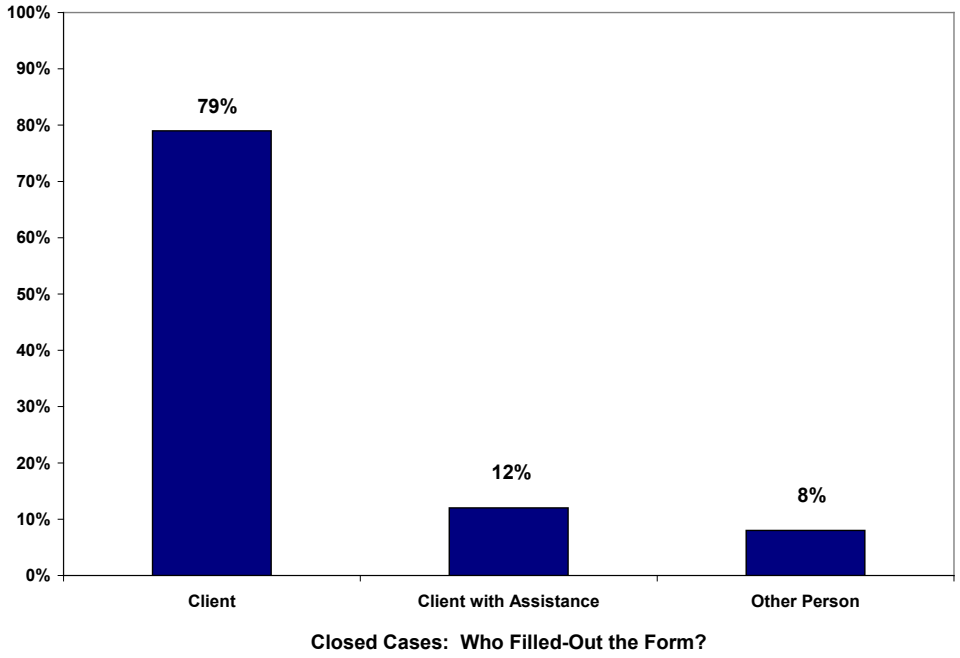
Explained Responsibilities as Client. Since FY 2002-03, nearly all the active clients (92% to 94%) felt that their responsibilities as a client had been explained to them. In FY 2010-11, 92 percent felt this way, as well.

> **"They helped me in so many positive ways. My counselor did more to help me than I ever imagined possible. With their assistance, I got a job and have been able to support myself and my child."**
>
> **- Customer comment**

Survey Respondents

Over three-fourths of the respondents with closed cases filled-out their own form. (See Figure 15.) The respondents to the Closed Cases Customer Survey are asked who filled out their form. The proportion filling out their own form (79%) increased from the previous fiscal year (76%). In FY 2010-11, only 12 percent reported having assistance. Since the major program changes made in FY 2008-09, the proportion of respondents filling out their own form decreased dramatically. In FY 2007-08, 85 percent of the respondents with closed cases filled out their own form. In FY 2009-10 this rate dropped to 76 percent.

Figure 15 – Respondent for Closed Cases Survey



> **"I'm very thankful for the services that were provided, for I would not have been able to make this change without their aid. My Counselor listened to my needs and I feel as if they really went out of their way to make my personal and professional goals possible. Thank you for your assistance it will surely not be wasted."**
>
> **- Customer comment**

Meet the FRC Members

It takes the collective cooperation and meaningful investment of many to advocate for people living with disabilities in the State of Florida. The investment of time and effort is found in private industry, the Federal government, State legislators, the Florida Department of Education, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, with families, and with other interested parties. Without these entities and persons, advocacy efforts of the FRC council members and staff would be limited. Following are the FRC Members, as appointed by the Governor of Florida, for the period of July 1, 2010 to June 30, 2011:

Council member: **Jeff Barrett**
Hometown: Hollywood, Florida
Represents: Business, Industry, and Labor
Why involved: I have worked in the field of Rehabilitation for nearly 40 years. Service on the FRC has been an opportunity to have a voice to advocate for accessible, high quality services for the people I have served most of my working life. More important to me has been the exposure and learning that comes with serving with people of such diverse perspectives and experiences.

Council member: **Cathy Bishop**
Hometown: Tallahassee, Florida
Represents: Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Department of Education (DOE)
Why involved: I am pleased to represent DOE/ Bureau of Exceptional Education and Student Services. Interagency collaboration is an activity that is very important to me because it holds so much promise to improve the services we offer to students with disabilities.

Council member: **Tara Bremer**
Hometown: Holiday, Florida
Represents: Parent Training Information Center
Why involved: As a parent of a child with a disability, I reached out to the Family Network on Disabilities (FND) and others for guidance and assistance. I was introduced to the services of VR and believe so strongly in the mission that it is important to support and encourage families and their children to become independent.

Council member: **Don Chester**
Hometown: West Palm Beach, Florida
Represents: Business, Industry, and Labor
Why involved: In December 2004, I was hit by a car while on a morning run. I became a quadriplegic and subsequently became aware of the many important services provided to people with disabilities by VR. With their assistance, I was able to return to my position as Assistant Administrator of St. Mary's Medical Center. It is extremely important to me that people with disabilities receive the invaluable benefits of VR programs.

Don's Service Companion: Pollyanna, canine hero

Council member: **Don Corwin**, Council 1st Vice Chair and Public Awareness Committee Chair

Hometown: Riverview, Florida

Represents: Community Rehabilitation Provider

Why involved: While being appointed to the FRC is both an honor and a privilege, it is also a commitment and responsibility. A commitment to advocate for competitive employment and independence for all Floridians experiencing a disability, and a responsibility to advise the Division of VR on best practices in rehabilitation processes.

Council member: **John Henry Douglas**

Hometown: Lake City, Florida

Represents: Florida Independent living Council (FILC)

Why involved: John Henry is a combat-wounded veteran, awarded two Purple Hearts, and a tireless advocate for independent living and full participation in public life for ALL persons with disabilities.

Council member: **Becki Forsell**

Hometown: Tampa, Florida

Represents: Business, Industry, and Labor

Why involved: My committment is in public awareness and legislative advocacy. I feel my appointment has been a portal where I am seen as a person with abilities, not my disability. My personal task is to be a partner in enrichment, education, and empowerment of other individuals with disabilities, to break down attitudinal barriers, and to advocate for independence and inclusion as we work, volunteer, live and play in our society.

Council member: **Alan Getreu,** Evaluation Committee Chair

Hometown: Odessa, Florida

Represents: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Why involved: It allows me to be part of a process that helps Florida residents, adolescents, as well as adults, with all types of disabilities enter or return to the work force.

Council member: **Benedict Grzesik**

Hometown: Melbourne, Florida

Represents: Workforce Florida Board

Why involved: The FRC provides the opportunity to better understand issues about employment for the disabled. This information enables one to become a stronger advocate.

Council member: **Yolanda Herrera**
Hometown: Miami, Florida
Represents: Groups and persons with physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities.
Why involved: The experiences I acquired assisting parents influence educational barriers for their children, to help them become valued members of society and the successful transition to adult life has become my primary goal. Being a member of the FRC has offered the opportunity to influence change for the benefit of young people with severe developmental disabilities in their path to work and independence.

Council member: **Valerie Stafford-Mallis**
Hometown: Bradenton, Florida
Represents: Other persons with disabilities, representatives of state and local government, employers, and community organizations.
Why involved: It is important to me, as a person with a disability, to give back to the community by advocating for other persons with disabilities.

Council member: **Cheryl Stone**, Coordination Committee Chair
Hometown: Orlando, Florida
Represents: Parents, family members, guardians, advocates, or authorized representatives of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves or are unable to represent themselves.
Why involved: The FRC emphasizes the inclusion of ALL persons with disabilities rather than a specific group in the attainment of employment. This encourages and promotes cross-disability awareness to promote education and communication between employers, those needing a job, and VR.

Council member: **Debra Thompson**, Council Chair
Hometown: Riverview, Florida
Represents: Groups and persons with physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities.
Why involved: Being on the FRC is important to me because it is an opportunity to help educate and advocate for persons with disabilities; not just be a spectator, but a participant.

"They were kind, understanding, so very knowledgeable, and relieved so much stress."

- Customer comment

Council member:	Kara Tucker, 2nd Vice Council Chair and Legislative Committee Chair
Hometown:	Neptune Beach, Florida
Represents:	Other persons with disabilities, representatives of state and local government, employers, and community organizations.
Why involved:	I am committed to helping those who cannot always help themselves. I feel strongly about emphasizing ability rather than disability, and I want everyone to reach their full potential.

Council member:	Roberta "Rusty" Van Sickle, Planning Committee Chair
Hometown:	Palm Beach Gardens, Florida
Represents:	Groups and persons with physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities.
Why involved:	I am very active in local transportation boards and other service boards which help people with disabilitiies. My FRC participation helps me gather and share information and to bring new legislative information back to my local community. I am a member of my local CIL where much of the information is shared.

"I am really grateful for VR, my counselor, all the staff in the office, and all the help you are giving me. I now have a goal, I am gaining confidence in myself, and hopefully in the future, I can give you guys support to help more people like me. Thank you so much."

- Customer comment

The Council would like to thank Director Bill Palmer (VR Director, Ex-Officio Council Member from May, 2005 through October, 2011) for his meritorious service to the people in Florida living with disabilities. We thank him for his leadership of VR and his willingness to partner and collaborate with the FRC. The Council and staff wish him well in his retirement.

The Council would like to welcome our new VR Director and new Ex-Officio Council Member, Aleisa McKinlay (starting November, 2011). The Council is looking forward to the partnership and collaborative efforts with the new VR Director during the upcoming fiscal year.

Full Council (L-R), Front row: Don Chester, Rusty Van Sickle, Darlene Maynard, John Henry Douglas, and Cheryl Stone. Second row: Becki Forsell, Cathy Bishop, Kara Tucker, Debra Thompson, Yolanda Herrera, Suzy Hutcheson, Back row: Don Corwin, Valerie Stafford-Mallis, Jeff Barrett, Barbara Cain, Camille Wallace-Washington, and Director Bill Palmer.

Special thanks go to the following FRC members for their meritorious services; for they have moved on to other advocacy roles during the 2010/2011 fiscal year:

Suzy Hutcheson • Barbara Cain • Darlene Maynard • Camille Wallace-Washington

The FRC wishes to recognize Corey Hinds, from Disability Rights Florida, for continuing to advocate with the FRC on behalf of the Client Assistance Programs and members of Florida.

Meet the FRC staff

Front row (L to R): Andrea Schwendinger, Paige Sharpton, and Yolanda Triplett. Back row: Roy Cosgrove.

Staff Member:	**Roy Cosgrove**
Position:	Program Administrator – responsibilities include managing all FRC programs, staffing Business and Executive committees.
Contact Information:	Roy.Cosgrove@vr.fldoe.org

Staff Member:	**Andrea Schwendinger**
Position:	Government Analyst – responsibilities include the Annual Report, Strategic Planning, reviewing the State Plan and staffing the Legislative, Public Awareness and Planning committees.
Contact Information:	Andrea.Schwendinger@vr.fldoe.org

Staff Member:	**Paige Sharpton**
Position:	Staff Assistant – responsibilities include program support, processing and tracking council travel, and some purchasing.
Contact Information:	Paige.Sharpton@vr.fldoe.org

Staff Member:	**Yolanda Triplett**
Position:	Administrative Assistant – responsibilities include managing and tracking fiscally related activities (purchasing and contract payments); staffing and providing oversight to the Coordination and Evaluation Committees.
Contact Information:	Yolanda.Triplett@vr.fldoe.org

Accomplishments and Goals

The FRC has many accomplishments that should be highlighted:

- The Council advocates regularly for best practices and policies that are effective and efficient. This is achieved by networking with Florida VR, other State Rehabilitation Councils (SRC), evaluation groups, the National Council on State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC), and the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR).
- Staff and council members of the FRC work closely with VR to educate legislators about services and to advocate for the employment of persons with disabilities in competitive jobs of their choice. This is furthered by members visiting each legislative delegate every year and providing information about the cross-disability focus of VR and the need for sufficient resources to meet the demand. Legislators are provided state and home district profiles, which include census data, VR caseloads, the number of customers served, the number of customers employed, the projected earnings, the government return on investments, and the approximate costs associated in serving our customers.
- The FRC has spent time this past year to strengthen and restructure their strategic plan with stronger outcome measures to ensure quality VR service and support systems.
- Many of the FRC Members are recognized within the State of Florida, as well as nationally, for advocacy efforts on behalf of people living with disabilities.

VR has special accomplishments that should be highlighted:

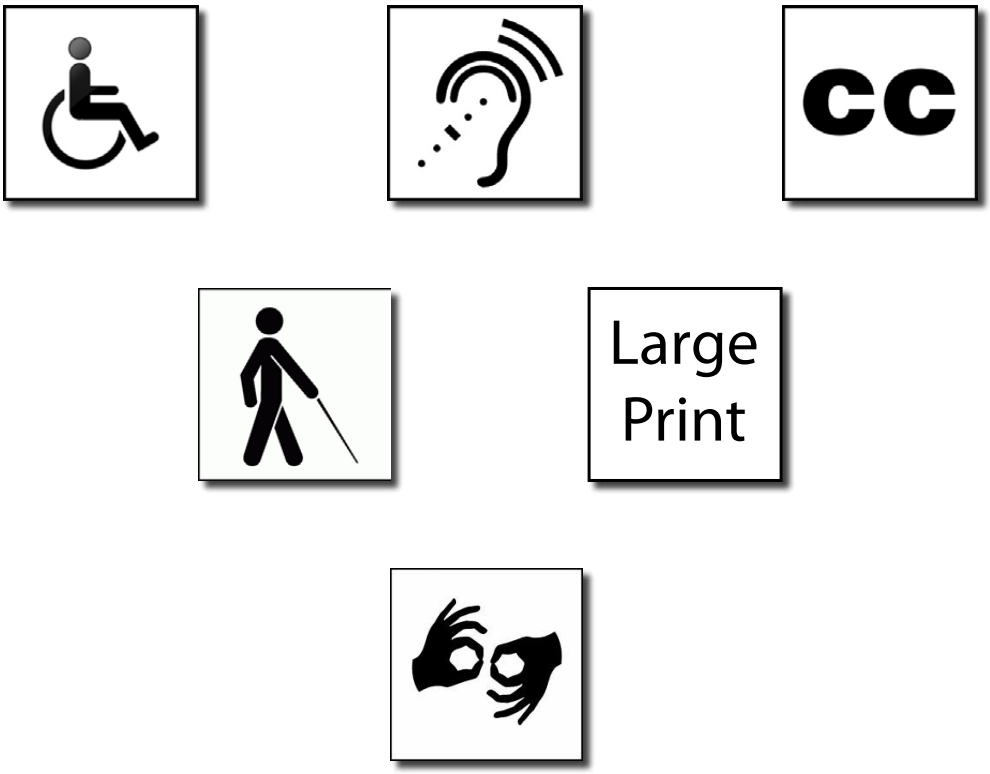
- VR sponsored the National Rehabilitation Evaluators Summit and had several VR staff present at the event.
- The second Florida Independent Living Conference had nearly 130 representatives from across the state in September 2011.
- Innovations and upgrades were made to RIMS.net for counselor input of customer data. There is also a new electronic invoicing system, called REBA, for VR service providers and school districts to speed up processing for referrals, approvals, and submission and payment of invoices.
- The Florida VR office was instrumental in the Consortia of Administrators of Native American Rehabilitation conference held in Orlando.
- VR Human Resource Development is strengthening the Employee Learning Management System to ensure efficient and effective training opportunities for new counselors, supervisors, and individuals.
- The VR Business Leadership Network continues to grow within the State of Florida and is driven primarily by private industry.

Both VR and the FRC have some goals for the next fiscal year that include:

- Strategic plans and objectives had been established previously for both entities. Both include outcome measures but continue to be reviewed and strengthened to meet the current and long term needs.
- A combined goal of improving service delivery with efficient and effective efforts.
- A renewed effort to work in partnership to advocate for people living with disabilities in the State of Florida.

Available in Alternative Formats

To find out more information about alternative formats, please email FRCcustomers@vr.fldoe.org or call toll free: 1-800-451-4327.



Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) Statutory Authority:

Governing guidelines may be found within the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Part VI 34, Part 61 contained in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The 1998 amendments strengthen State Rehabilitation Council's by requiring the Council and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to work together as strategic partners. Further regulations are specified in the 2008 Florida Statutes (F.S.) Final Rule Chapter 413.405 and 413.273 pertaining to VR, specific to the FRC.

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Florida Rehabilitation Council

Vocational Rehabilitation