



Minnesota

STATE
REHABILITATION
COUNCIL

2006 *Annual Report*

October 1, 2005 – September 30, 2006



2 State Rehabilitation Council



State Rehabilitation Council Members

Minnesota's governor appoints the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to assist the Department of Employment and Economic Development's Vocational Rehabilitation Program (VR) to develop and evaluate statewide employment services for Minnesotans with disabilities. To accomplish this, the SRC works jointly with state officials to develop VR goals and priorities and review them annually. This year, the council collaborated on the development of the program's mission and vision statements.

The SRC sought community input from program participants, advocates, employers, educators and other stakeholders. The council gathered additional information at two public forums held in June and September. To better understand the daily work of Vocational Rehabilitation, the SRC convened two VR staff panels, one in the metro area and another in Greater Minnesota.

The council's members are a cross-section of Minnesotans who have a stake in vocational rehabilitation services. Members serve three-year terms.

The SRC's 2006 annual report is submitted to the Honorable Tim Pawlenty, Governor of Minnesota; to Dan McElroy, Commissioner, Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development; and, especially to the people of Minnesota.

Who We Are

Steven Ditschler, Chair Community Rehabilitation Program Eagan	Justin Page Client Assistance Project Minneapolis
Anne Dykstra Business Golden Valley	Thant Pearson Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Blaine
Anne Geoghegan Advocate Minneapolis (term ended 03-06)	Kimberley Peck Rehabilitation Services Director Saint Paul
Rod Haworth Governor's Workforce Development Council Apple Valley	Elena Polukhin Advocate Maplewood
Lois Johnson Statewide Independent Living Council Windom	Wendy Rea Former VR participant Foley (appointed 08-06)
Candy Kriska Former VR participant Owatonna	Sean Roy PACER Minneapolis
Mickey Kyler Former VR participant Crookston	Ardis Sandstrom Former VR participant Motley
Gloria LaFriniere American Indian Project White Earth Reservation	Jayne Spain Special Education Roseville (term ending 07-06)
William Negaard Business Vernon Center	Robyn Widley Special Education Roseville (appointed 08-06)

Rehabilitation Services Mission, Vision and Values

Mission

Empower Minnesotans with disabilities to achieve their goals for employment, independent living and community integration.



Vision

Minnesotans with disabilities experience economic self-sufficiency and community integration, contributing their skills and energies to Minnesota's economic, political, social, cultural and educational life.

The business community and Rehabilitation Services engage one another as trusted workforce development partners.

Community rehabilitation programs, educators, employers, and other stakeholders and customers pursue partnerships with Rehabilitation Services to break through barriers to employment and independent living.

Rehabilitation Services is customer centered and recognized for the public transparency of its operations.

Rehabilitation Services staff are exemplary employees and leaders, the organization's valued asset. They are successful learners who take risks with new ideas, share knowledge, think critically, and adapt to change.

Values

- Meaningful Work
- Self-determination
- Informed Choice
- Inclusion
- Freedom from Discrimination
- Service
- Purposeful Collaboration
- Excellence

2006

On Behalf of the State Rehabilitation Council:

Letter from the Chair



Steven Ditschler

On behalf of the SRC, I am pleased to present our annual report for 2006. It was a year characterized by planful action and positive results. I believe we responded positively to the significant changes of the previous year while building on the foundation and tradition in place from the work of past councils. We started the year with a facilitated planning session that assigned tasks to specific meetings which helped us fulfill our stewardship role and meet the Council's responsibilities in a timely manner.

It was satisfying that the waiting list for services was eliminated during the year; that competitive employment outcomes increased by 18 percent, reversing a negative trend of a few years; and that the state system responded to a situation of limited resources with changes that improved results and built future capacity. Overall, performance against strategic goals was very favorable.

The Council, together with Rehabilitation Services, conducted two public forums that included considerable time for public comment. Additionally, two sessions in WorkForce Centers provided the SRC the opportunity to interact with field staff. Input from recipients of services, Vocational Rehabilitation staff, and other stakeholders was enlightening and extremely valuable to the Council.

Finally, the Council spent considerable time participating in a strategic planning process that resulted in a revised "Mission, Vision, and Values" statement, and the development of five new strategic goals to measure our achievements in the future. We'll develop and adopt new strategies in the first half of 2007, and these will become part of a plan covering the period July 1, 2007 through June 30, 2010. The process was transparent and inclusive, and it allowed for full participation by the Council.

The statement in the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) of 1998 that "disability is a natural part of the human experience" helps me put our work in perspective. The need for services will not diminish in the future when you consider that there are reportedly 20 million people with disabilities in our country with VR funding to serve approximately 1 million. Factor in a projected skilled workforce shortage and it is clear we have significant work ahead of us. We need to strategically align our efforts and deliver services in the most effective and efficient manner possible. The SRC is ready and willing to do our part to ensure success in the future.

I was honored to serve as chair of the State Rehabilitation Council in 2006. It is a privilege to work with a Council that gives their skills, knowledge, ability, and experience to provide services that deliver meaningful employment outcomes for people with disabilities in Minnesota.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Steven Ditschler". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Steven Ditschler
Chair

2006—A Rigorous and Rewarding Year

A Letter from the Director of Rehabilitation Services



Kimberley Peck

2006 was a rigorous yet rewarding year for Rehabilitation Services. During the year, over 20,000 Minnesotans with disabilities statewide made contact with the Vocational Rehabilitation program of Rehabilitation Service (RS/VR) and were in various stages of the VR service delivery system. When Federal Fiscal Year 2006 began, 767 persons were on the waiting list for VR services; by September 30, those numbers had been reduced to zero. By year's end, 2,523 Minnesotans had been successfully placed into employment. Individuals placed in jobs without supports were

earning an average of \$11.15 per hour and working on average 32 hours per week. The number of successful rehabilitations in 2006 exceeded the 2005 total, reversing what had been a discouraging five-year trend of declining employment outcomes.

2006 also brought about significant redesign of RS/VR data management systems, program policies, and placement vendor contracts. An electronic case management system was launched in April, replacing conventional paper files and, as a result, substantially changing how RS/VR staff document their daily work. In May, major revisions to the VR Rule were implemented, necessitating the updating of policies and procedures related to post-secondary education and consumer financial participation. Also, beginning January 1, 2006, all placement vendor contracts were transformed into performance-based agreements, reimbursing providers for placement milestones achieved rather than hours of service provided.

In 2006, I accomplished my goal to personally meet all of the Rehabilitation Services field staff. From April through October, I traveled throughout the state, meeting and talking directly with RS/VR staff about their successes, challenges, and vision for Rehabilitation Services. These discussions were nothing less than inspiring and provided rich content for the updated RS mission, vision, values, and strategic goals featured in this annual report.

A great deal was accomplished in 2006 and throughout this time, the State Rehabilitation Council consistently embraced its important consultative role to Minnesota's vocational rehabilitation program. The members of the SRC are to be commended for their dedication and commitment to RS/VR, and the 325 Rehabilitation Services staff working throughout Minnesota deserve significant praise and accolades for their outstanding efforts on behalf of Minnesotans with disabilities.

A handwritten signature in dark ink that reads "Kimberley T. Peck". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Kimberley Peck
Director of Rehabilitation Services

Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance — 2006

Who We Are

- There were 145 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, 38 Placement Coordinators, and 49 VR Technicians.
- The Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's average caseload was 97.

Who We Serve

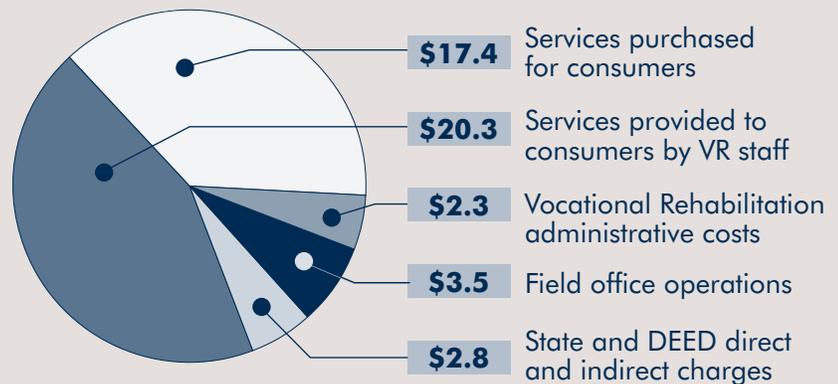
- Vocational Rehabilitation served 20,649 Minnesotans, compared to 19,460 in 2005.
- There were 7,158 new applicants, compared to 7,723 applicants in 2005 and 9,309 in 2004.
- 82% of VR participants had three or more serious functional limitations, compared to 89% in 2005.
- 30% of Vocational Rehabilitation's participants are transition-age, between 16 and 21.
- 32% of VR participants report a serious mental illness as their primary disability.
- 37% of VR participants receive either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

VR's Outcomes

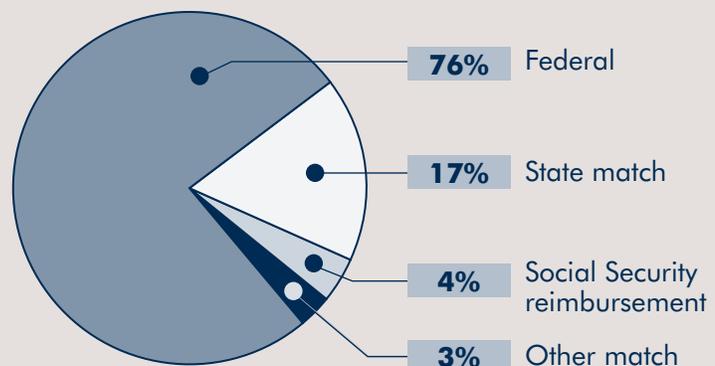
- 2,523 Vocational Rehabilitation participants obtained employment. The majority, 2,290, found employment above minimum wage. The remaining 233 found employment in settings with potential for a competitive wage.
- Of all obtaining employment, 502 (20%) utilized formal supports.
- The average wage of those earning above minimum wage, without formal supports, was \$11.15. The average wage for all job vacancies listed for the fourth quarter of 2006 was \$13.06.



Vocational Rehabilitation Expenditures 2006 (in millions)



Vocational Funding Sources 2006



Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance

12 Largest Disability Groups Served by Vocational Rehabilitation 2006

Primary Disability Group	2004		2005		2006		2006 % of Placements
	Participants	% of Caseload	Participants	% of Caseload	Participants	% of Caseload	
Serious Mental Illnesses	6,277	33.0%	6,306	32.5%	6,567	32.0%	28.5%
Learning Disability	2,843	15.0	3,026	15.5	3,249	16.0	16.5
Mental Retardation	1,859	10.0	1,936	10.0	1,848	9.0	12.0
Other Orthopedic & Neurological Impairments	1,675	9.0	1,539	8.0	1,747	8.5	8.5
Respiratory & Other Physical Impairments	443	2.0	504	2.5	1,219	6.0	5.5
Traumatic Brain Injury/Stroke	1,018	5.0	1,073	5.5	1,114	5.5	5.5
Deaf/Hard of Hearing	929	5.0	964	5.0	984	5.0	5.5
Chemical Dependency	765	4.0	606	3.0	639	3.0	2.5
Autism	324	2.0	478	2.5	577	3.0	2.0
Cerebral Palsy	374	2.0	405	2.0	409	2.0	2.5
Arthritis & Rheumatism	300	1.5	316	1.5	362	2.0	1.5
Spinal Cord Injury	303	1.5	288	1.5	306	1.5	1.5

Top Six 2006 Vocational Rehabilitation Referral Sources

Educational Institutions	31.5%
Self Referral	18.5
State or Local Government	9.0
Health Care	7.5
Community Rehabilitation Program	6.5
WorkForce Centers	6.5

Vocational Rehabilitation Participants Receiving SSI/SSDI at Application

Social Security Benefits at Application	Number Served	Percent
SSI	3,157	15.3%
SSDI	3,678	17.8
SSI & SSDI	836	4.0
Total	7,671	37.1



8 Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance



Competitive Employment Placements 2006— Without Supports

Occupation	Number of Consumers	Percent of Total	Average Hourly Wage	Average Hours/Week
Professional/Technical/Managerial	361	18.5%	\$15.72	33
Clerical/Sales	462	24.0	\$9.87	31
Service	514	26.0	\$8.89	28
Farming/Fishing/Forestry	63	3.0	\$11.71	33
Industrial Trades	349	18.0	\$11.36	36
Misc. Occupations	204	10.5	\$11.18	32
Total	1,953	100.0	\$11.15	32

Consumers Served by Cultural/Ethnic Group

Percent of Total MN Population ¹	Cultural/Ethnic Group	Percent of Caseload	Percent of Total Employment Outcomes
1.0%	American Indian	2.0%	2.0%
3.5	Asian	2.5	2.0
4.0	Black or African American	11.0	7.0
88.0	Caucasian	81.5	86.0
3.5 ²	Hispanic/Latino	1.5	1.5
1.5	Multiple Race/Ethnicity	2.0	1.5
0.0	Pacific Islander	0.0	0.0
	Total	100.0	100.0

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey, Data Profile Highlight. www.factfinder.census.gov

² Duplicate Count.

Competitive Employment Placements 2006— With Supports*

Occupation	Number of Consumers	Percent of Total	Average Hourly Wage	Average Hours/Week
Professional/Technical/Managerial	19	5.5%	\$15.64	30
Clerical/Sales	74	22.0	\$8.93	24
Service	137	40.5	\$7.77	21
Farming/Fishing/Forestry	6	2.0	\$8.12	24
Industrial Trades	61	18.0	\$7.42	25
Misc. Occupations	40	12.0	\$8.22	29
Total	337	100.0	\$8.46	24

* 233 people have employment outcomes below minimum wage and are using employment supports to work towards competitive employment.

Placements by Type of Employment

	2004	2005	2006	Percent of 2006 Placements
Competitive Employment	2,236	1,787	1,978	78.5%
Self-employment	62	45	43	1.5
Employment With Supports	521	385	502	20.0
Unpaid Family Worker	1	2	0	0.0
Total	2,820	2,219	2,523	100.0

Of those who found employment this year, 45 percent received Medical Assistance, Medicare and/or Minnesota Care health insurance. Sixteen percent carried private health insurance, and 27 percent obtained insurance through their employer.

State Rehabilitation Council Hosts Vocational Rehabilitation Staff Forum



To better understand the experiences of VR participants and the work of VR staff, the SRC met with VR Workforce Center staff in February and September.

The February SRC meeting was held at the West Saint Paul WorkForce Center. A panel of VR staff gave an overview of orientation, eligibility determination, vocational assessment, employment plan development, and job placement.

The Dakota County staff spoke of how VR contributes to the success of the WorkForce Center. They spoke of changes such as:

VR staff serving as WorkForce Center Business Service Specialists; VR staff rotating into the resource room to serve 'universal customers'; and the designation of some general WorkForce Center staff to work with people with disabilities, whether or not they are VR customers.

In September, the SRC met with a panel of Vocational Rehabilitation staff from northeast Minnesota. The discussion centered on the differences and similarities of urban and rural service areas.

Resource Update

Many years of flat funding and the ever increasing costs of providing services caused a financial crunch for Vocational Rehabilitation. On January 15, 2004, Vocational Rehabilitation found it necessary to place all new applicants on a wait list.

The wait list grew to a significant size. By September 30, 2004, there were 6,125 applicants waiting. Applicants were gradually moved off the list and into services, always giving priority to those with the most significant disabilities. By September 2006, the wait list was gone.

“Rural and urban services are extremely different. Choice is a wonderful concept, but that depends on there being choices to make. In a rural area, if there are any choices at all, those choices are distant and require transportation. Every problem you encounter in a rural area is going to boil down to transportation issues.”

Many small town businesses have closed in the last fifteen years. The ones that remain tend to be family operations. It is very difficult to find jobs other than grocery stores and restaurants.”

10 Public Forums

Two public forums, one in June and the other in September, were jointly hosted by Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council.

The first, held at the Paul and Sheila Wellstone Center for Community in Saint Paul, convened a panel of community experts in the morning and hosted an open mike in the afternoon.

Public Forums are an invaluable opportunity for Rehabilitation Services to hear from the community. The fact that Public Forums are held jointly by Rehabilitation Services and State Rehabilitation Council powerfully states the value of the SRC and our need as an organization to hear from the public.

Kim Peck,
Rehabilitation Services Director

Our openness to public comment, whether it is favorable or critical, is absolutely crucial to our success in developing programs that meet the needs of our customers.

Steven Ditschler,
SRC Chair

Many thanks to the panelists:

- Roberta Cordano, Director of Disability Services,
University of Minnesota;
- David Hancox, Executive Director,
Metropolitan Center for Independent Living;
- Deborah Leuchovius, ... Project Coordinator,
Technical Assistance on Transition and the
Rehabilitation Act, PACER Center Inc.;
- Maureen Marin, Executive Director,
Mental Health Consumer Survivor Network;
- Glen Peterson, Professor of Rehabilitation Counseling,
Minnesota State University, Mankato.



*P*anelists spoke of systemic barriers:

“The largest obstacles often weren’t the symptoms of my illness. It was often the system that didn’t give me the opportunity to go beyond my symptoms. For example, if you don’t have a house, you probably don’t have a car or a phone. These types of things get left out of the equation sometimes – the obvious and practical things.”

*O*thers spoke of the role of the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor:

“The central element that is of tremendous importance is the counselor and consumer relationship. All staff should be constantly encouraged and supported to continue to build skills.”

“I would encourage special educators to get training in the transition of school to work, and I would also encourage vocational rehabilitation counselors to specialize in the area of transition. It would be great if there were VR counselors in every school.”

*T*here was recognition that the tangles created may not be of any one agency, but rather a lack of real collaboration among them to remove systemic barriers:

“Increasingly, our role is to facilitate conversations among stakeholders to assure that services are seamless. It is more about negotiating and mediating systems and needs and less about diagnostic pieces of information. Is this type of training being offered?”

*T*he afternoon’s open mike brought much discussion about VR rule changes, particularly for the deaf and hard-of-hearing community. Other testimony centered on the unmet needs of students with disabilities in secondary-education settings and the challenges of hidden disabilities such as traumatic brain injury:

“I really think that VR does need to support our students and letting them make choices to go to Gallaudet University or colleges that would incorporate the culture that would satisfy the needs of a deaf student . . . like, if you were to go into a classroom, and you were the only deaf person there, and you saw all of the other students talking and chatting and interacting, . . . you just sit there.”

12 Meeting Needs through Core Services

at Minnesota WorkForce Centers

Consumer Satisfaction Survey

Many Minnesotans with disabilities who seek vocational assistance don't require Vocational Rehabilitation's more intensive services to achieve their employment goals. Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation Program still plays a leading role serving these individuals and building the WorkForce Center System's capacity to serve all Minnesotans with disabilities. Thus, VR offers many WorkForce Center customers information and referral to core services readily available at WorkForce Centers, and to other services in the community.

The Rehabilitation Act requires that the State Rehabilitation Council assess vocational rehabilitation services for effectiveness and consumer satisfaction. This year, SRC members worked with Vocational Rehabilitation staff to measure transition-age youth's satisfaction with services. Watch for a report in next year's annual report summary.

Core services include job clubs, internet access, word processing, printers, telephones and vocational reference materials. Employment-related classes such as creative job search, resume writing, job interviewing, and effective networking techniques are core services available at many WorkForce Centers. Whether an individual chooses core services or VR's more intensive services, WorkForce Center customers with disabilities are provided with the information they need to make the most informed choice about their services.

Estimates of Minnesotans with Disabilities

Minnesotans (16-64) with any disability ^{1,2}	321,120
Percent of Minnesotans with any disability who are employed ²	46.9%
Percent of Minnesotans without a disability who are employed ²	80.5%
Students (16-21) in special education services ³	22,914
Minnesotans on Social Security Disability Income ⁴	89,801
Minnesotans (18-64) on Supplemental Security Income ⁴	45,943
Minnesotans (20-64) unemployed with Serious Mental Illnesses ^{2,5,6}	152,795
Minnesotans (16-64) living with a disability resulting from a traumatic brain injury ⁷	66,577
Minnesotans (16-64) who are deaf or hard of hearing ⁸	319,900
Minnesotan (16-64) who are deaf or hard of hearing seeking employment ⁸	14,920

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey defines disability as a long-lasting sensory, physical, mental, or emotional condition that can make it difficult to do activities such as walking, climbing stairs, dressing, bathing, learning, or remembering.

² U.S. Census Bureau, 2005 American Community Survey, S1801, Disability Characteristics

³ Minnesota Department of Education

⁴ Social Security Administration, Duplicate Count. In December 2005, 23,327 Minnesotans received both SSDI and SSI

⁵ Jans, L. Stoddard, S. & Kraus, L. (2004). Chartbook on Mental Health and Disability in the United States.

⁶ Anthon, W.A., Cohen, Farkas, M., & Gagne, C. (2002). Psychiatric Rehabilitation (2nd Ed.).

⁷ Based on census data and National Center for Disease Control prevailing estimates

⁸ University of Arkansas Rehabilitation Research and Training Center for Persons who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing

Coordination With the Governor's Workforce Development Council

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SRC members, Rod Haworth and Steve Ditschler, served on Creating Connections, a subcommittee of the Governor's Workforce Development Council. The Creating Connections subcommittee's charge was to advise Governor Tim Pawlenty on how to capitalize on the untapped employment potential of people with disabilities. The SRC endorsed the following Creating Connections recommendations:

- **Partner with business** to create and fund additional internship, mentorship, work-based learning, and apprenticeship opportunities for youth and adults with disabilities. To accomplish this, partner with employers to establish an ongoing effort to ensure people with disabilities have the opportunity to connect with other individuals who have the knowledge, skills, and abilities required for employment in various fields.
- **Become a champion** of employing and supporting people with disabilities by implementing policies and practices across state government, so state government, as an employer, becomes a role model for other employers and labor organizations for hiring people with disabilities.
- **Host an annual summit** that focuses on education, employment, and the transition between education and employment for people with disabilities to bring together the agencies, councils, and other entities that focus on the employment of people with disabilities.

To avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served, the SRC shall coordinate activities with the activities of other Councils within the state.

Section 105 (c) (6)
of the Rehabilitation Act

The population of people with disabilities provides a wealth of untapped resources for meeting future labor force demands. According to the U.S. Census American Community Survey, 254,321 working-age Minnesotans have a disability. Of these people, over 50 percent are unemployed.

GWDC 2006 Policy Advisory

Action has been taken on these recommendations. At the time of this report, a VR Specialist has been assigned to the Minnesota Department of Employee Relations to assist with the employment of people with disabilities.

14 The State Rehabilitation Council

Meets With Federal Leadership



Letter to SRC Chairs

“Rehabilitation Services Administration acknowledges the vital role of SRCs in shaping the vocational rehabilitation program and services to support the employment goals of individuals with disabilities.”

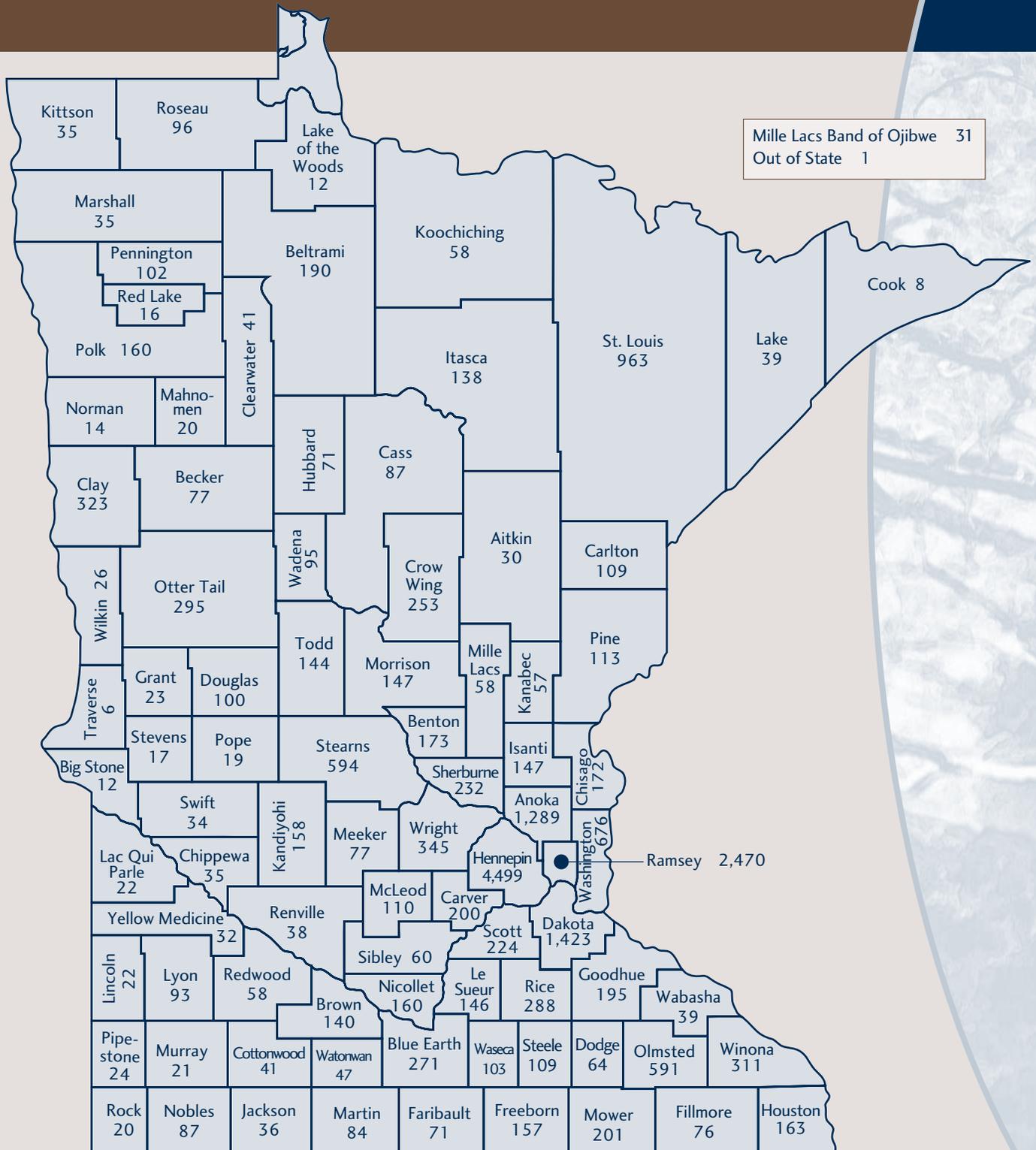
*Quoted from a letter to SRC Chairs,
Ed Anthony, acting Deputy Commissioner,
Rehabilitation Services Administration*

Ed Anthony's letter set the stage for an August week long visit from representatives of the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). During this visit, David Esquith, RSA Director of State Monitoring and Program Improvement, met with the SRC. He spoke of the central role that the SRC plays in:

- Developing a State Plan for vocational rehabilitation services;
- Conducting needs assessments;
- Developing measurable goals and effective strategies.

If you have passion for the topic of employment for people with disabilities, consider serving on the State Rehabilitation Council. For more information or an application form, call 651-296-5629 (TTY 651-296-3900 or 1-800-657-3973). Applications are available on the internet at www.sos.state.mn.us/openapp

Number of Vocational Rehabilitation Participants by County



The Council Seeks Public Input



There are many ways to let the Council know your thoughts.

You can call:

Voice— 651-296-5629 or
1-800-328-9095

TTY— 651-296-3900 or
1-800-657-3973

Speech-to-speech
telephone re-voice—
1-877-627-3848

Minnesota Relay—
1-800-627-3529

You can write:

Chair, State Rehabilitation Council
MN Department of Employment
and Economic Development
Rehabilitation Services
332 Minnesota Street, Suite E200
Saint Paul, MN 55101-1351

You can fax:

651-297-5159

You can attend a meeting or a public forum:

All State Rehabilitation Council meetings and forums are public. Meetings are the fourth Wednesday of every month with the exception of July and a combined meeting in November and December. Forums are typically scheduled during meeting times.

Locations and time are in the Minnesota state register at a public library or on the Internet:
www.comm.media.state.mn.us/bookstore/stateregister.asp

www.deed.state.mn.us/rehab/index.htm

The State Rehabilitation Council invites you to become a member:

If you are interested in becoming a member of the State Rehabilitation Council, an application form can be obtained by calling 651-296-5629 (TTY 651-296-3900 or 1-800-657-3973) or on the Internet: www.sos.state.mn.us/openapp/forms.html

This report can be made available in braille, high contrast, large print, diskette, audiotape, or other format upon request by calling 651-296-5629, 1-800-328-9095, or TTY 1-800-657-3973.

Speech-to-speech telephone re-voice: 1-877-627-3848.