



Minnesota

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

2008 ANNUAL REPORT
OCTOBER 1, 2007 – SEPTEMBER 30, 2008



REHABILITATION SERVICES

THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL SHALL PREPARE AND SUBMIT AN ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR AND THE COMMISSIONER ON THE STATUS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAMS OPERATED WITHIN THE STATE, AND MAKE THE REPORT AVAILABLE TO THE PUBLIC.

—Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) assists in making decisions about the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program administered by the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development's Rehabilitation Services (RS) branch. Council members share a commitment to empowering Minnesotans with significant disabilities to achieve their goals for employment, independent living and community integration.

The council is appointed by the governor as both adviser and partner to Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation Services program. Its 19 members are selected to ensure geographical and stakeholder diversity and to represent Minnesota's many disability advocacy organizations, businesses, Vocational Rehabilitation participants, community rehabilitation providers, vocational rehabilitation counselors and state policy makers.

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

Jeff Bangsberg
New Hope
Advocate

Steven Ditschler
Eagan
Community
Rehabilitation Provider

Anne Dykstra
Golden Valley
Business

Rod Haworth*
Apple Valley
Governor's Workforce
Development Council

Mickey Kyler
Crookston
Business

Gloria LaFriniere
White Earth
Reservation
American Indian
VR Project

Stephanie Morris
Vadnais Heights
Advocate

William Negaard
Vernon Center
Business

Justin Page*
Minneapolis
Client Assistance
Project

Kimberley Peck
Rehabilitation
Services Director

Christina Persons
St. Paul
Advocate

Wendy Rea
Foley
Former VR Participant

Anne Robertson
Minneapolis
Client Assistance
Project

Sean Roy
Minneapolis
Parent Training &
Information Center

Ardis Sandstrom
Motley
Former VR Participant

Terance Smith
Forest Lake
Governor's Workforce
Development Council

Rebecca Sunder
Burnsville
Rehabilitation
Counselor

Greg Toutges
Moorhead
Former VR Participant

Cindy Ulven
Hawley
Business

Robyn Widley
Roseville
Special Education

Ann Zick
Osage
Statewide Independent
Living Council
Representative

**The council wishes to take this opportunity to offer thanks and appreciation for the commitment and hard work of Rod Haworth and Justin Page, both of whom reached the end of their service on the council during the past year.*

REHABILITATION SERVICES MISSION

EMPOWER MINNESOTANS WITH DISABILITIES TO ACHIEVE THEIR GOALS FOR EMPLOYMENT, INDEPENDENT LIVING AND COMMUNITY INTEGRATION.

MAMED “DAQARE” MOHAMUD

A long scar runs across Mamed Mohamud’s head, visible evidence of a bad car accident several years ago in Somalia. It’s the source of Mamed’s nickname: “Daqare,” which means “the scar” in Somali.

It’s also the name of a car repair business. The story of Daqare Auto Repair begins in Somalia, travels to the United States, and ends with an entrepreneurial startup business that serves the Twin Cities’ large East African immigrant community from a unique Minneapolis automotive strip mall.

The accident that gave Daqare his scar also resulted in traumatic brain injury and an array of cognitive and psychological challenges. When he emigrated from Somalia and arrived in Minnesota a little more than five years ago, he knew no English and lacked literacy skills even in Somali. He had never received any formal education or training, but he had taught himself the basics of auto repair and managed to earn a meager and irregular income by fixing cars for other East African immigrants. He was an itinerant mechanic; he carried a few tools and worked in the street, even during the harsh Minnesota winters.

In early 2007 Daqare learned of the New Americans Project, funded by Rehabilitation Services as a way to provide services to recent immigrants with disabilities, primarily from East African nations. He met Musse Salah, a counselor with the project, who recognized that Daqare had an unquenchable entrepreneurial spirit.

Aways Mohammed, a New Americans Project staff member who has business management training from the University of Minnesota’s Carlson School of Management, was instrumental in developing a creative business plan that addressed not just the disability, but also the cultural and linguistic barriers that Daqare faced. Rehabilitation Services also assisted in purchasing tools, equipment and supplies.

“Daqare would never have achieved this type of employment without the development and support of Aways Mohammed in writing the small business plan,” Musse Salah says. “But make no mistake. This is Daqare’s plan, his own profession.”



LETTER FROM THE CHAIR



The State Rehabilitation Council had a very productive year. We conducted our business with a clear and strong commitment to the mission. Individually and collectively, we brought skill and experience to the work of the council, and the results were impressive. Perhaps most significantly, we aligned our activities with the five major goals we had developed through a previous strategic planning process. The organization of this annual report is a tangible expression of that alignment.

Here's a sampling of what the council accomplished during the past year:

- The Committee on Small Business Development formed a joint work group on Entrepreneurship and Self-Employment for Minnesotans with Disabilities. Their work will expand and enhance future opportunities for entrepreneurs with disabilities.
- Our Comprehensive System of Personnel Development continued to focus on the recruitment, development and retention of quality staff to deliver services.
- We instituted processes for expressing our opinions about substantive policy changes earlier than in the past. These new processes also enable us to review responses to our recommendations and to provide a systematic means of responding to public comment.
- The council convened two structured public forums, each with ample time for public comment. The main topic for the metro area forum was Disability, Employment and Human Rights. In Greater Minnesota we convened a joint forum with the Statewide Independent Living Council. We also held a regular SRC meeting at the South Minneapolis Workforce Center. The information we obtained through these activities will prove to be extremely valuable for the work that lies ahead.

Our economic climate changed significantly in the final months of our program year, and it is likely that we will face increased challenges in the coming year. I believe that our continued collaboration with all community partners will be more important than ever. I also believe that we will be up to the challenge and make the most out of the situations we encounter. Minnesotans with disabilities deserve no less.

It was an honor and a privilege to serve as chair in 2008, and a pleasure to serve with the other members of the council and the state support staff. I admire the talent they all bring to the council and their dedication to our mission.

Steve Ditschler, Chair



GREETINGS,

As this report shows, Rehabilitation Services made substantive progress on all five strategic priorities in 2008, and for that we can all be very proud. Thanks to the dedication and passion of our staff and community partners, more than 2,600 Minnesotans with disabilities achieved their employment goals and another 4,250 began working toward getting a job and living independently in their communities. It's certainly worth noting (page 9) that our consumers' weekly earnings upon application averaged \$40 and, upon leaving, were \$330. These numbers provide compelling evidence of the public value of vocational rehabilitation services.

Public value takes on added significance during fiscally challenging times, and today's budget forecasts are nothing less than foreboding. Now more than ever we need strong partnerships across our entire service delivery system. The spirit of collaboration is the foundation for breaking new ground and serving our customers in different ways. It is imperative that at a leadership level we create the expectation that one program alone — whether it is VR, a Center for Independent Living, or a Community Rehabilitation provider — cannot do everything that is needed to assist our customers in accomplishing their vocational goals. When the pie is only so big, there is an inclination to hunker down and try to protect your resources. We will get a whole lot more out of that pie if we link arms and work together to accomplish a common goal.

Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council are making plans to assertively “link arms” with our community partners in the upcoming year. We will conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that will identify the vocational rehabilitation services needs of individuals with the most significant disabilities, particularly those who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program. We'll also identify capacity challenges in the state's community rehabilitation programs. Our assessment will start with the premise that we must “seek first to understand.” Our findings will then inform the articulation of strategic priorities and investment decisions for the next state plan cycle.

I am very proud of the work that has been done over the past year and look forward to continued progress on our journey from “good to great.” It is a privilege to serve the RS staff, the State Rehabilitation Council and Minnesotans with disabilities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kimberley T. Peck". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Kim Peck
Rehabilitation Services Director

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AT A GLANCE

TOP SIX 2008 VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION REFERRAL SOURCES

Educational Institutions	28%
Self Referral	23%
WorkForce Centers	8%
State or Local Government	9%
Health Care	5%
Community Rehabilitation Program	8%

VR PARTICIPANTS RECEIVING SSI/SSDI AT APPLICATION

Social Security Benefits at Application	Number Served	Percent
SSI	2,613	12%
SSDI	4,242	19%
SSI & SSDI	1,066	5%
Total	7,921	36%

VR OUTCOMES:

- 2,620 Vocational Rehabilitation participants obtained employment. The majority (2,554) found employment at or above minimum wage. The remaining 66 persons found employment with potential for a competitive wage.
- 22,391 people with disabilities received services from RS/VR this year.
- Of all obtaining employment, 19 percent utilized formal supports.
- The RS/VR average wage of persons earning above minimum wage, without formal supports, was \$11.31, a 3 percent increase from last year. This figure compares well to the average wage for all Minnesota job openings, \$13.38. Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) obtains Minnesota's average wage through an employer survey.

WHO VR SERVES:

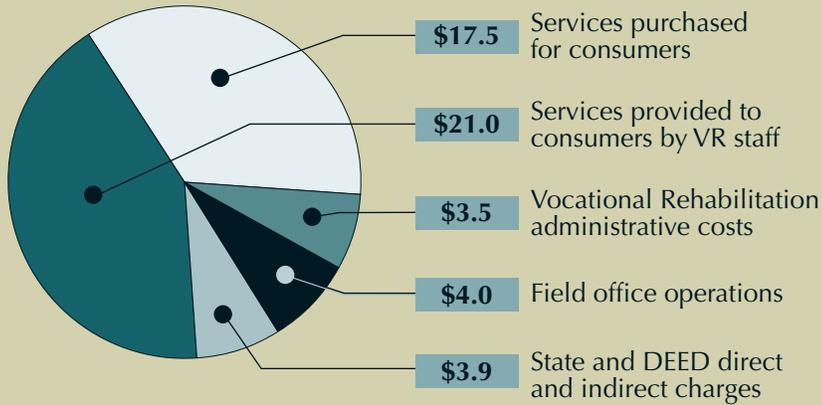
- There were 9,864 new applicants, compared to 8,285 in 2007, and 7,158 in 2006.
- 69 percent of VR participants had three or more serious functional limitations, compared to 75 percent in 2007.
- 33 percent of VR participants report a serious mental illness as their primary disability.
- 36 percent of VR participants receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or a combination of both.

VR STAFF:

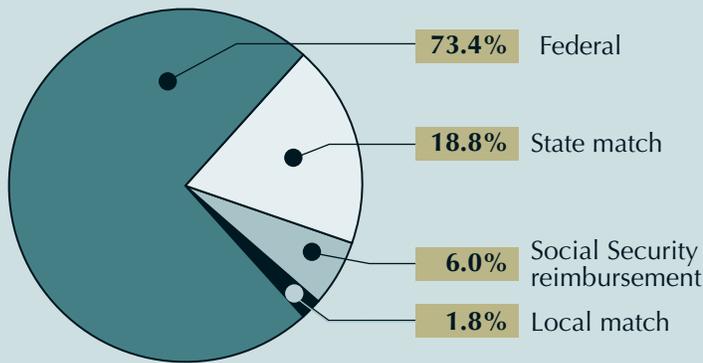
- There were 148 Vocational Rehabilitation counselors, 40 placement coordinators and 76 vocational rehabilitation technicians.
- The Vocational Rehabilitation counselor's average caseload was 85 participants.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AT A GLANCE

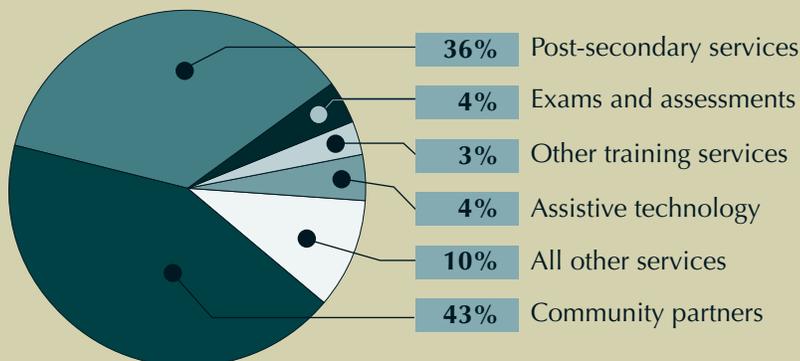
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION EXPENDITURES 2008
(IN MILLIONS)



VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FUNDING SOURCES 2008



SERVICES PURCHASED FOR CONSUMERS 2008
(17.5 MILLION)



Rehabilitation Services administrative staff

support the work of field staff through service support and innovation, council support, data management, staff development and training, small business consultation, disability and case consultation, sustaining community partnerships, research and evaluation, fiscal services, equipment procurement, and state and federal communication.

GOAL 1

Through *purposeful innovation*, build our capacity to deliver increased quality and number of **employment outcomes**, creating **public value** for the people of Minnesota.

PURPOSEFUL INNOVATION

■ INCREASED SERVICES TO TRANSITION-AGE YOUTH

Public perception that services to transition-age youth (16-21) were inconsistent across the state prompted VR to set an ambitious goal:

Increase the percentage of special-education students being served by VR from 11 percent in 2006 to 20 percent by 2010.

VR served 21 percent of Minnesota's special-education students in 2008 — two years ahead of the goal.

■ SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

Historically, only about 2 percent of Minnesota's vocational rehabilitation employment outcomes involve self-employment or small business. The SRC established a long-term goal to increase these self-employment outcomes:

Minnesota VR participants will achieve self-employment at the same rate as workers in the overall Minnesota workforce: 10.5 percent.

The SRC Committee on Small Business developed a two-year plan of milestones, activities and strategies designed to support VR small business development. In response to the committee's recommendations, VR increased its financial assistance for small business plans, hired a small business development specialist to advise VR participants on developing business plans, and is researching methods to increase the financial resources for small business development.

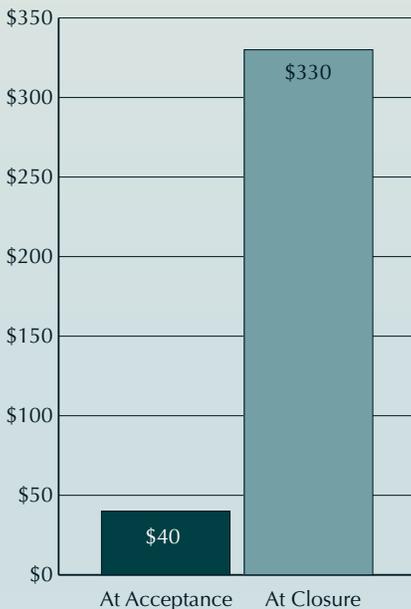
VR SERVED 21 PERCENT OF MINNESOTA'S SPECIAL-EDUCATION STUDENTS IN 2008, TWO YEARS AHEAD OF THE GOAL.

GOAL 1 — EMPLOYMENT OUTCOMES

PUBLIC VALUE

Of those who found employment this year, 27 percent received health insurance through their employer, 13 percent carried private insurance, and 49 percent accessed Medical Assistance, Medicare or MinnesotaCare.

AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS: AT ACCEPTANCE AND SUCCESSFUL CLOSURE



Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned a combined total of \$866,000 per week.

PLACEMENTS BY TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

	2006	2007	2008	Percent of 2008 Placements
Competitive Employment	1,978	1,964	2,077	79%
Self-employment	43	42	49	2%
Employment With Supports	502	496	494	19%
Total	2,523	2,502	2,620	100%

COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENTS 2008 — WITHOUT SUPPORTS*

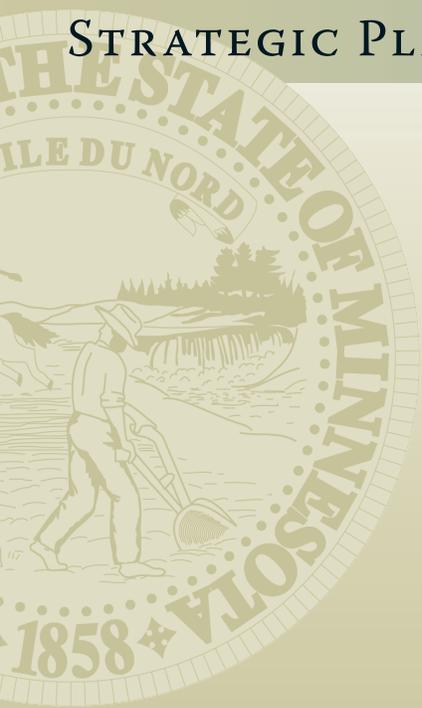
Occupation	Number of Consumers	Percent of Total	Average Hourly Wage	Average Hours/ Week
Clerical/Sales	566	26.8%	\$10.00	29
Healthcare: Support and Service	232	11.0%	\$10.55	28
Industrial Trades	306	14.5%	\$11.96	36
Misc. Occupations	182	8.7%	\$11.47	33
Professional/Technical/ Managerial	391	18.5%	\$16.15	32
Service	433	20.5%	\$8.59	26
Total	2,110	100.0%	\$11.31	30

* Competitive employment is defined as work typically found in the community with wages and benefits commensurate to other employees.

COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENTS 2008 — WITH SUPPORTS*

Occupation	Number of Consumers	Percent of Total	Average Hourly Wage	Average Hours/ Week
Clerical/Sales	114	25.6%	\$8.72	24
Healthcare: Support and Service	31	7.0%	\$9.87	27
Industrial Trades	47	10.6%	\$8.60	29
Misc. Occupations	27	6.1%	\$9.17	27
Professional/Technical/ Managerial	22	4.9%	\$15.49	26
Service	203	45.8%	\$7.65	22
Total	444	100.0%	\$8.66	24

* Sixty-six people found employment outcomes below minimum wage, but are working toward competitive employment. Forty-nine of these employees are utilizing employment supports.



GOAL 2

Improve our **organizational vitality** as a customer-centered, mission-driven organization through individual professional development, continuous learning, best practices, **adaptation to change** and critical thinking.

ORGANIZATIONAL VITALITY

The SRC met with a panel of vocational rehabilitation staff at the South Minneapolis WorkForce Center to discuss their professional roles, staff development, caseload size, urban service challenges, staffing innovations, and the value of experienced staff mentoring new staff. The SRC thanks South Minneapolis staff members for sharing their wisdom and commends them for a job well done.

ADAPTATION TO CHANGE

The SRC sought advice on how to better serve Minnesota's increasing cultural and ethnic populations. At a June 2006 public forum, Sirad Osman, an East African immigrant, offered the following advice:

"How do you make a vocational rehabilitation office welcoming to those of different cultures? I think about who is providing the services. I come from a culture of relationships. It matters more if I know the person than the job title of the person. I want to see people of my own ethnic background."

Comments such as this influenced VR's decision to develop the New Americans Project, which employs three staff members of East African/Somali descent who collectively speak six languages and have strong ties to that community. The project has experienced rapid growth and success. In its first six months 38 participants were enrolled and seven have found jobs (18 percent).

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	3.0%	2.3%
3.4%	Asian	2.3%	2.0%
4.3%	Black or African American	12.1%	9.4%
3.8% ²	Hispanic/Latino	2.6%	2.0%
0.0%	Pacific Islander	.03%	0.1%

¹U.S. Census Bureau, 2005-2007 American Community Survey, Data Profile Highlight. www.factfinder.census.gov
²Duplicate Count

JOHN HEDLUND

John was pursuing a mechanical engineering degree when he experienced severe traumatic brain injury in a rock climbing accident.

A vocational assessment completed at Courage Center in 2007 offered few options in his preferred field. Working with his vocational rehabilitation counselor, Becky Sunder, John completed two work assessments through WorkSource, a Monticello service provider. Both assessments identified vocational aptitudes and abilities that were strengths in manufacturing.

After completing an on-the-job assessment with Aroplax, a precision molding company in Monticello, Aroplax managers were so impressed by John's outlook and motivation that they made him a job offer with the accommodations he needed to work at the facility. John is especially pleased that he's now working where he can use the engineering skills and interests that he pursued before his injury.



12 LARGEST DISABILITY GROUPS SERVED BY VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION 2008

Primary Disability Group	2006		2007		2008		2008
	Participants	% of Caseload	Participants	% of Caseload	Participants	% of Caseload	% of Total Placements
Serious Mental Illnesses	6,566	32.0%	6,585	32.0%	7,380	33.0%	29.0%
Learning Disability	3,249	16.0%	3,461	17.0%	3,912	17.5%	18.0%
Developmental Disabilities	2,581	12.5%	2,497	12.0%	2,756	12.0%	13.0%
Other Orthopedic & Neurological Impairments	1,836	9.0%	1,774	8.5%	1,806	8.0%	8.0%
Deaf / Hard of Hearing	984	5.0%	960	5.0%	1,019	4.5%	6.0%
Traumatic Brain Injury / Stroke	1,114	5.5%	992	5.0%	1,007	4.5%	4.5%
Chemical Dependency	642	3.0%	567	3.0%	575	2.5%	2.5%
Arthritis & Rheumatism	362	2.0%	374	2.0%	407	2.0%	1.5%
Cerebral Palsy	409	2.0%	378	2.0%	370	1.5%	1.5%
Cardiac / Circulatory System / Blood Disorders	199	1.0%	241	1.0%	264	1.0%	1.0%
Spinal Cord Injury	306	1.5%	280	1.5%	248	1.0%	1.5%
Diabetes	207	1.0%	226	1.0%	226	1.0%	1.0%

STRATEGIC PLANNING — GOAL 3

GOAL 3

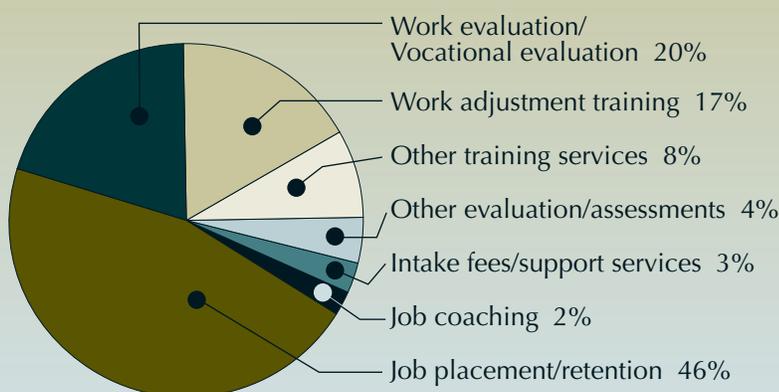
Identify and publicly communicate strategic aims for our **collaborations with community partners** statewide, for advancing the mission and interests that we share with them and the state's employers.

COLLABORATIONS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Rehabilitation Services carries out its mission through public/private partnerships with about 110 community organizations throughout Minnesota. Vocational Rehabilitation Program counselors refer participants to these programs for necessary services. Career development, independent living skills training, job coaching, job search support and job stabilization are among many services that are more widely available because of these purposeful collaborations.

The Extended Employment Program is another public/private partnership through which 29 community rehabilitation organizations ensure ongoing work and independence for Minnesotans with significant disabilities, many of whom have historically been unsuccessful at maintaining employment. Rehabilitation Services administers a state appropriation of approximately \$12.5 million annually for this purpose. More than 6,000 Minnesotans with significant disabilities achieve the dignity of paid work in supported and center-based settings as a result. An additional state appropriation of \$1.65 million provide extended supports for about 600 persons with serious mental illness, an underserved population that has historically experienced extraordinary rates of unemployment.¹

SERVICES PURCHASED FROM COMMUNITY PARTNERS
(\$7.2 MILLION)



Minnesota's supported employment capacity cannot meet the current demand for these services. In 2010-2011 the council and Rehabilitation Services are undertaking a statewide capacity study and planning effort to assess the barriers facing individuals who require supported employment services; examine gaps in supported employment services; study the development needs of community rehabilitation organizations; and identify the supported employment needs of transition-age youths and individuals in historically underserved populations.

¹National estimates are as high as 85 percent. See: Achieving the Promise: Transforming Mental Health Care in America. Final Report. New Freedom Commission on Mental Health. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Publication No. SMA-03-38.

PATHWAYS TO EMPLOYMENT

The Department of Employment and Economic Development, the Department of Human Services and the Minnesota State Council on Disability collaborate in Minnesota's Pathways to Employment (PTE) project. This federal grant initiative, funded by the Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services, aims to increase competitive employment of Minnesotans with disabilities and to help Minnesota businesses meet their growing workforce needs. For more information go to: www.PositivelyMinnesota.com/pte

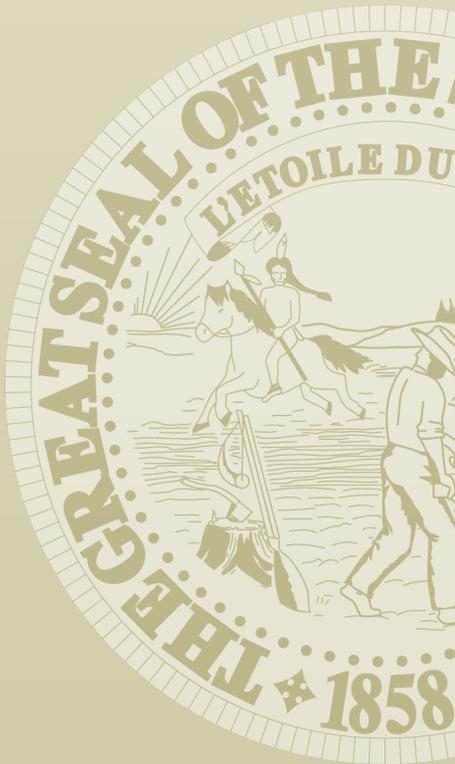
One PTE initiative, the State as a Model Employer, is sponsored jointly by Pathways to Employment, the RS/VR branch of the Department of Employment and Economic Development, and Minnesota Management and Budget. The partnership seeks to make Minnesota state government a model employer of persons with disabilities by highlighting the skills and abilities of this traditionally underutilized labor pool.

In its first year, the initiative funded 34 internships at the Department of Employment and Economic Development's WorkForce Centers. Many of the interns have gone on to find work in the public or private sectors. The initiative also funded internships, temporary positions and unclassified positions in partnership with the Department of Transportation's Seeds program; DEED's Unemployment Insurance branch; and the Department of Public Safety's Bureau of Criminal Apprehension.

THE SUCCESS OF THIS INITIATIVE
DEMONSTRATES THAT PEOPLE WITH
DISABILITIES ARE BETTER EQUIPPED TO
FIND EMPLOYMENT WHEN THEY HAVE
THE OPPORTUNITY AND SUPPORT TO
SHOWCASE THEIR ABILITIES IN A REAL
WORK ENVIRONMENT.

*Rod Haworth, Pathways to Employment
project manager*

THE COUNCIL AND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION RECOGNIZE THAT VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PARTICIPANTS ARE SERVED BY MANY COMMUNITY PARTNERS, AS WELL AS VR. WITHOUT BROAD COMMUNITY SUPPORT, MANY VR PARTICIPANTS WOULD NOT BE ABLE TO FIND OR MAINTAIN EMPLOYMENT.



INDEPENDENT LIVING/VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION COLLABORATIVES

The executive directors of Minnesota's eight Centers for Independent Living (CIL) and RS/VR management launched eight collaborative projects to expand independent living services to WorkForce Center customers with disabilities. Each project is unique to the needs of the region it serves. The State Rehabilitation Council and Statewide Independent Living Council convened a joint public forum on these collaborative projects at which the following comments were shared:

REHABILITATION SERVICES STAFF ARE REALLY SEEING THE VALUE OF HAVING IL STAFF AT THE WORKFORCE CENTER. SO MUCH OF OUR TIME IS TAKEN UP WITH ASSISTING OUR CONSUMERS WITH JOB SEARCH ACTIVITIES. HAVING ADDITIONAL RESOURCES AVAILABLE FOR OUR CONSUMERS STRUGGLING WITH BASIC NEEDS IS SIMPLY WONDERFUL.

—VR manager

THE INDEPENDENT LIVING CENTERS ARE DEVELOPING A GREATER UNDERSTANDING OF WHAT IT MEANS TO HELP A PERSON GO BACK TO WORK. WE BRING THE STRENGTH OF UNDERSTANDING THE IL PHILOSOPHY, CONSUMER CHOICE AND CONSUMER DIRECTION. MARRYING THOSE CORE SERVICES TO HELPING PEOPLE FIND AND KEEP EMPLOYMENT IS REALLY AN EXCITING THING.

—IL center staff

THE SPIRIT OF COLLABORATION HAS TO BE THE FOUNDATION FOR SERVING THE CUSTOMER IN A DIFFERENT WAY. IT IS IMPERATIVE AT A LEADERSHIP LEVEL WE CREATE THE EXPECTATION THAT ONE PROGRAM, WHETHER IT IS VR OR IL, CANNOT ALONE SUPPORT OUR CUSTOMERS IN ACCOMPLISHING THEIR GOALS. WE CAN GET A WHOLE LOT MORE OUT OF OUR RESOURCES IF WE LINK ARMS AND WORK TOGETHER TO ACCOMPLISH A COMMON GOAL.

*—Kim Peck,
Rehabilitation Services director and SRC member*

DR. JAMES FITZSIMONS

*B*ody surfing can be exhilarating, with the surf of the ocean crashing and pounding and propelling a body through the water. But it's also dangerous, as Dr. James Fitzsimons discovered one day when the ocean exerted its awesome power. The spinal cord injury he received that day resulted in quadriplegia.

Until that day in the ocean, he had thought his medical career was well-established. Then suddenly he believed it was all over. Dr. Fitzsimons did gradually return to work, but it took six years to get there.

Vocational rehabilitation counselor Nelson Otto and placement coordinator Maureen McAvoy started working with Dr. Fitzsimons in 2000. With a combination of work experience, part-time employment at a Minneapolis community health clinic and volunteer work at a St. Paul clinic, Dr. Fitzsimons made his way back to medical practice. To assist him, a laptop computer, voice activated software, a printer, and other assistive technologies and supports were purchased by VR. Dr. Fitzsimons eventually obtained a post at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs Medical Center, where he works in the spinal cord injury center that provides acute rehabilitation and primary care for veterans with spinal cord injuries. VR purchased assistive technology such as a stand-up chair and van modifications increase his independence and have helped his work week increase from 16 hours to full-time employment.

Through his own courage and the encouragement of Vocational Rehabilitation services, a physician who doubted he could practice medicine again is back in practice.



MINNESOTA IS ONE OF THREE STATES PARTICIPATING IN THE STATE LEADERS INNOVATION INSTITUTE SPONSORED BY THE JOHN J. HELDRICH CENTER FOR WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT AT RUTGERS UNIVERSITY.

GOAL 4

Provide statewide leadership for continued development of the Minnesota WorkForce Center System's *capacity to serve Minnesotans with disabilities.*

WORKFORCE CENTER SYSTEM

The Minnesota WorkForce Center system serves about 10,000 people with disabilities each year who do not seek VR services. Rehabilitation Services offers leadership to the WorkForce Center partnership in the following ways:

BUSINESS SERVICE SPECIALISTS

DEED assists employers through the services of 37 business services specialists. Six business services specialists have particular expertise in disability employment and are funded by Rehabilitation Services.

TICKET TO WORK

Last year Rehabilitation Services recommended that WorkForce Centers participate in the revised Ticket to Work program, which offers cost reimbursement when a Social Security benefit recipient is placed on a job. Two WorkForce Centers are enrolled in the Ticket to Work program, and others plan to implement the program soon.

NATIONAL TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE AND RESEARCH CENTER STATE LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Minnesota is one of three states participating in the State Leaders Innovation Institute sponsored by the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University. The institute is designed to help states improve economic and employment opportunities for adults with disabilities. With DEED as the lead agency, Minnesota will expand and adapt a successful transition-age manufacturing camp model to serve adults with disabilities. Council members Peck, Ditschler and Bangsberg participated in the three-day institute that initiated this intensive 15-month process.



CAROL HUNTSBERGER

Carol Huntsberger and her husband had worked for 20-plus years as housekeepers at Northtown Mall in Blaine. They enjoyed the work so much that they even got married at the mall. But as time passed, Carol felt she needed a change and began to look for new work.

Reading and writing are difficult for Carol, so Jenni Smith, her VR placement coordinator at the Anoka County WorkForce Center, helped her build a fact sheet to assist in completing applications, helped with her resume and cover letter, prepared her for job interviews, and sat in on some of her interviews.

Carol's enthusiasm and growing confidence were genuine. "I hope to hear from you soon because I am a big fish and someone soon is going to catch me," she told one prospective employer.

Carol worked hard and never gave up, and on her birthday in 2007 she got a job offer to work as a day porter at Cummins Power Co. in Fridley, less than a mile from her home. After Carol got the job, her placement coordinator helped with developing a daily work routine. She also helped Carol learn bus routes and provided job coaching for the first few days. In addition, Jenni helped the employer access the Work Opportunity Tax Credit, a federal tax benefit for hiring VR participants.

Carol embraced her new job and was in turn embraced by her co-workers. "After hearing Carol's story I was deeply moved at how the people we work with can become such an important part of our communities," Jenni said. "Carol's personality and attitude to life is infectious, which is evident in how she is treated by her employer and the people in her life."



GOAL 5

Facilitate *robust and effective participation* of the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council in the achievement of our mission, consistent with the letter and spirit of the statutory roles.

Goal 5 has kept the council energized and focused on its statutory responsibilities.

NATIONAL INVOLVEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

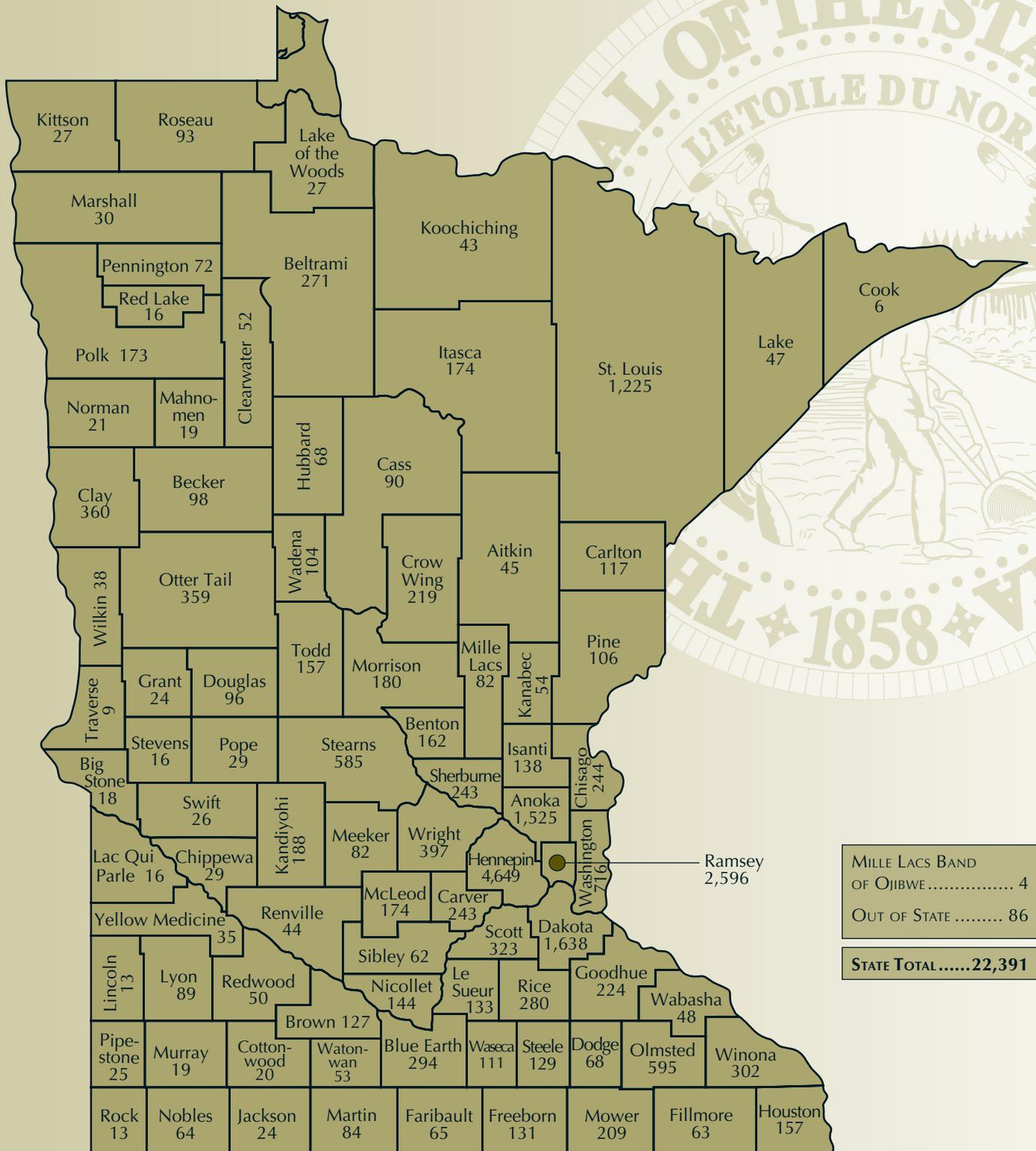
Minnesota's State Rehabilitation Council members are leaders in national councils, conferences and initiatives:

- Steve Ditschler, council chair, attended the National State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation spring and fall conferences.
- The SRC endorsed Steve Ditschler's participation in the creation of the national Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (CSRC). Ditschler was elected as CSRC's first chair and has worked to increase both its membership and member services.
- Members Jeff Bangsberg and Kim Peck attended the Ticket Partners Summit, a kickoff to the new Ticket to Work program.
- Council members Steve Ditschler, Jeff Bangsberg, Rod Haworth and Kim Peck attended the National Technical Assistance and Research Center State Leadership Institute at the John J. Heldrich Center for Workforce Development at Rutgers University.
- Steve Ditschler attended a three-day SRC training session in St. Louis hosted by U.S. Department of Education staff.

PUBLIC COMMENT

The council hosted two day-long public forums. The June forum, at the Golden Valley City Hall, featured a panel discussing *Human Rights, Employment and Disability*. The September public forum in St. Cloud was co-hosted with the Statewide Independent Living Council and focused on the Vocational Rehabilitation/Independent Living Collaboratives.

NUMBER OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTY



Go to www.mnwfc.org/field/ to find the WorkForce Center nearest you.

THE COUNCIL SEEKS PUBLIC INPUT

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO LET THE COUNCIL KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS.

YOU CAN CALL:

Voice 651.259.7364 or
1.800.328.9095

TTY 651.296.3900 or
1.800.657.3973

Minnesota Relay 711

Speech-to-speech telephone
re-voice 1.877.627.3848

YOU CAN WRITE:

Chair, State Rehabilitation Council
DEED – Rehabilitation Services
332 Minnesota St., Suite E200
St. 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 open to the public. Meetings are the fourth Wednesday of every month with the exception of July and a combined meeting in November and December. Time is scheduled during all meetings for the public to address the council. Twice a year, the council hosts public forums.

Locations and time can be found online:

www.PositivelyMinnesota.com/rehab/councils.htm

THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL INVITES YOU TO APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP:

If you care about issues pertaining to disability and employment, the SRC encourages you to apply for council membership.

For more information call:

- 651.259.7364
- TTY 651.296.3900
- TTY 1.800.657.3973

An application form can be obtained on the Internet at:

www.sos.state.mn.us

This report can be made available in Braille, high contrast, large print, diskette, audiotape, or other formats upon request by calling 651.259.7364, 1.800.328.9095, or TTY 711. Speech-to-speech telephone re-voice: 1.877.627.3848.