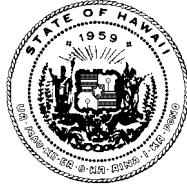


JOSH GREEN, M.D.
GOVERNOR
KE KIA'ĀINA



CATHY BETTS
DIRECTOR
KA LUNA HO'ŌKELE

JOSEPH CAMPOS II
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

STATE OF HAWAII
KA MOKU'ĀINA O HAWAI'I
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
KA 'OIHANA MĀLAMA LAWELAWE KANAKA
Office of the Director
P. O. Box 339
Honolulu, Hawaii 96809-0339

TRISTA SPEER
DEPUTY DIRECTOR
KA HOPE LUNA HO'ŌKELE

Dir 23.88

December 26, 2023

The Honorable Ronald D. Kouchi, President
and Members of the Senate
Thirty-Second State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 409
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

The Honorable Scott K. Saiki, Speaker
and Members of the House of
Representatives
Thirty-Second State Legislature
State Capitol, Room 431
Honolulu, Hawaii 96813

Dear President Kouchi, Speaker Saiki, and Members of the Legislature:

Enclosed is the following report submitted to the Governor in accordance with section 348-8(c), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), Related to the Annual Report of the State Rehabilitation Council.

In accordance with section 93-16, HRS, the report is available to review electronically at the Department's website, at <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/reports/legislative-reports/>.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Cathy Betts".

Cathy Betts
Director

Enclosure

REPORT TO THE GOVERNOR

IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE PROVISIONS OF SECTION 348-8(c),
HAWAII REVISED STATUTES
THE ANNUAL REPORT OF THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

**DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
December 2023**

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Section 348-8(c), Hawaii Revised Statutes (HRS), requires the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to submit an annual report to the Governor on the status of vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs within the State and make the report available to the public. We are pleased to present this Annual Report, highlighting the Council's activities and accomplishments during the past fiscal year.

Council Purpose

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) was established by the Federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998. It was implemented in section 348-8, HRS, by the Hawaii State Legislature to support individuals with disabilities throughout the state. The SRC works with the Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) staff to carry out its responsibilities.

The primary duties of the SRC are as follows:

- Review and analyze the performance of the VR agency regarding its responsibilities that affect the ability of consumers to achieve employment outcomes.
- Develop, agree to, and review state goals and priorities of the VR program.
- Assist VR in preparing the VR State Plan, amendments to the plan, and needs assessment.
- Review and analyze the effectiveness of the VR Program and consumer satisfaction.
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration.
- Coordinate SRC activities with other disability-related councils within the state.

The council convenes four times per year with the following objectives:

- To get an understanding of the programs, activities, and requirements of each island in the state.
- To establish and reinforce partnerships with public and private entities involved in Hawaii's vocational rehabilitation and employment.
- To conduct all council-related matters transparently in a public setting.

State Rehabilitation Council Members October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023

	Composition	Member Name	Term	Term Ends
1	Statewide Independent Living Center Representative	Judy Guajardo	First	6/30/2025
2	At least one Representative of a Parent Training & Information Center [§348-8(a)(1)]	Rosie Rowe	Second	6/30/2025
3	At least one Representative of the Client Assistance Program [§348-8(a)(2)]	Howard Lesser	Exempt	6/30/2025
4	Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor [§348-8(a)(3)]	Sandi Jakob	First	6/30/2026
5	Representative of Community Rehabilitation Program Service Providers [§348-8(a)(4)]	Tira Kamaka	First	6/30/2024
6	Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor [§348-8(a)(5)]	Scott Hedrick	First	6/30/2024
7	Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor [§348-8(a)(5)]	Stan Young	Second	6/30/2025
8	Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor [§348-8(a)(5)]	Scott Hedrick	First	6/30/2024
9	Representative of Business, Industry, and Labor [§348-8(a)(5)]	Ramon Ruiz	First	6/30/2026
10	Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group [§348-8(a)(6)]	Vickie Kennedy	Second	6/30/2025
11	Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group [§348-8(a)(6)]	Annette Tashiro	Second	6/30/2025
12	Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group [§348-8(a)(6)]	Noelani "Nani" Watanabe	Second	6/30/2025
13	Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group [§348-8(a)(6)]	Catherine Taylor	Second	6/30/2025
14	Representative of a Disability Advocacy Group [§348-8(a)(6)]	Vickie Kennedy	First	6/30/2023
15	Current or Former Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services [§348-8(a)(7)]	Meriah Nichols	First	6/30/2024

	Composition	Member Name	Term	Term Ends
16	At least one Representative of the State Educational Agency Responsible for the Public Education of Students with Disabilities [§348-8(a)(8)]	Dr. Heather Chapman	First	6/30/2025
17	One Representative of the State Workforce Development Council [§348-8(a)(9)]	Sean Knox	First	6/30/2025
18	Administrator of the Vocational Rehabilitation Division of the Department of Human Services [§348-8(a)(10)] - ex-officio/non-voting member.	Lea Dias	Exempt	Exempt

Section 348-8, HRS, mandates that the SRC comprise at least one member from each county and that a majority of the council members shall be persons with disabilities and not employed by DVR. Council members shall serve without compensation (voluntary) but shall be reimbursed for reasonable expenses, including travel expenses, necessary for performing their duties. The SRC consists of a diverse membership representing advocates for disabled individuals.

Anyone interested in becoming a member of the State Rehabilitation Council may apply by completing the following steps:

1. Go to Boards & Commissions Application website:
<https://forms.ehawaii.gov/pages/board-survey/>
2. Scroll down to the Department of Health and Human Services (DHS) and click on dropdown menu
3. Check box: REHABILITATION Council, State
4. Scroll down to the bottom and click SUBMIT
5. Complete application
6. Attach Resume and Letter of Interest
7. Click SUBMIT: Applicants will need a resume and a Letter of Interest stating why they would like to be a member of the State Rehabilitation Council. The members are appointed by the Governor and serve a three-year term but cannot serve more than two consecutive terms (except the Client Assistance Program).

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) performs various duties as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act. One of their primary functions is monitoring the Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's (DVR) performance. DVR is a

state agency dedicated to helping individuals with disabilities obtain, maintain, and advance in employment. The SRC holds quarterly meetings with DVR to discuss and provide recommendations to improve the effectiveness of the services provided by the agency. The mission of DVR is to work collaboratively with its consumers to help them achieve their goals and ambitions for meaningful employment through personalized and timely services.

SRC meeting dates for FFY 2024 and agendas and minutes from previous meetings are posted on the Hawaii SRC website: <https://humanservices.hawaii.gov/vr/state-rehabilitation-council-src/>.

SRC Accomplishments for FFY 2023 (October 1, 2022 – September 30, 2023)

- 1. County and VR Partner Representation:** Beginning in July 2022, representatives from the State Workforce Development Council (WDC) and the Department of Education (DOE) were welcomed by the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The WDC and DOE are mandated partners of DVR, and their participation ensures that key stakeholders have input and contribute to the community's needs.
- 2. Advocacy for the Needs of People with Disabilities Throughout Hawaii:** During FFY2023, the SRC represented three Hawaii counties and provided quarterly reports from the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Community Rehabilitation Programs, and the Client Assistance Program (CAP). However, there is a need for an SRC representative from Kauai County.
- 3. Convened four meetings during Federal Fiscal Year 2023:** The SRC convened four meetings during Federal Fiscal Year 2023 to advise DVR on issues concerning serving individuals with disabilities. At each meeting, DVR provided quarterly reports on the status of the Order of Selection, agency priorities, data regarding new DVR applicants, eligibility determinations, Individualized Plans for Employment completion, case closures, and employment outcomes for each county. The SRC reviewed, analyzed, and advised DVR regarding its performance and made recommendations to support the effectiveness of its services.
- 4. Legislation:** On April 19, 2023, Governor Josh Green, MD, signed Senate Bill 313 into law, which amended the Hawaii Revised Statutes to establish the State Rehabilitation Council, which consists of fifteen members instead of the previous 21. The Governor now appoints the members without regard to section 78-4, HRS. Most of the members present are now enough to establish a quorum, and the council has all the necessary powers to function effectively. Senate Bill 313 also stated that the Council member representing the Client Assistance Program

(CAP) shall not be subject to term limits, which comply with federal guidelines for State Rehabilitation Councils.

- 5. National Conference Participation:** SRC members gained valuable insights by attending the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) and Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Spring conferences held in Bethesda, Maryland, in 2023. Based on the information presented at the conferences, the SRC reviewed the best practices for delivering DVR services in Hawaii and the national advocacy priorities of the public VR system. The council members also had the opportunity to meet with Hawaii Congresswoman Representative Jill Tokuda at her Washington, D.C. office.
- 6. DVR Consumer Satisfaction Survey:** The SRC participated in a review and analysis of the FFY 2022 DVR Consumer Satisfaction Survey. The survey aids DVR in enhancing customer outreach and satisfaction.
- 7. CSNA Community Partner Survey:** The SRC in Hawaii has taken a more active approach in reviewing and analyzing the results of the triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) of individuals with disabilities. The Needs Assessment Committee members raised their concerns to the SRC members and recommended supporting HDVR in providing more timely and responsive services.
- 8. Enhanced State Rehabilitation Council Training:** Members of the SRC expressed their concerns about the online SRC Training Series, which is intended for SRC members from the VR Training Portal of the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University. Previously, the HDVR SRC liaison had connected the SRC members with training on the Sunshine Law and Uniform Information Practices through the State of Hawaii Office of Information Practices. However, the SRC members now request more in-person training from experts based in Hawaii.
- 9. Election of New Officers and Members:** At its August 4, 2023, Quarterly Meeting, the SRC welcomed three new members, the new HDVR Administrator, and a guest from the NCSRC/CSAVR. The members of the SRC also nominated and elected members for the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary. Currently, the SRC has 19 voting members.
- 10. Maui Wildfires:** Members of SRC responded to the aftermath of the Maui Wildfires of August 8, 2023. Several SRC members regularly participated in weekly Maui Community Response Committee meetings. One of the SRC members, Noelani (Nani) Watanabe, provided shelter to several people affected by Lahaina's wildfire. As an experienced communicator with people who are

Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Nani took it upon herself to assist people with limited access to emergency services. Another SRC member, Judy Guajardo, the Chair of the Statewide Independent Living Council and manager of the volunteer program for Senior Citizens at Na Hoaloha, attended those weekly response meetings as well. During these meetings, the SRC members learned that community members have little or no knowledge of the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services. As a result, SRC resolved to network with all the counties in the state to advocate for the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

DVR PERFORMANCE STATISTICS

State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) programs are required by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) to submit an annual statewide performance report called the ETA 9169 Report. The WIOA Section 116(f)(1)(B) and its implementing regulations at 34 CFR §361.185 require States to submit the WIOA Annual Report by October 1 following the end of each Program Year, as stated in the ETA-9169 document.

The report is available to view on the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) website at: <https://rsa.ed.gov/wioa-resources/wioa-annual-reports>

WIOA STATEWIDE AND LOCAL PERFORMANCE REPORT PY2022															
OMB Control Number 1205-0526 Expiration Date: 05-31-2024										ETA-9169					
Statewide Performance Report															
PROGRAM						TITLE (select one):									
STATE: Hawaii		Title I Local Area: N/A				Title I Adult		<input type="checkbox"/>		Title II Adult Education		<input type="checkbox"/>			
REPORTING PERIOD COVERED (Required for current and three preceding years.)						Title I Dislocated Worker		<input type="checkbox"/>		Title III Wagner-Peyser		<input type="checkbox"/>			
From: 7/1/2022		To: 6/30/2023				Title I Youth		<input type="checkbox"/>		Title IV Vocational Rehabilitation		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>			
						Title I and Title III combined		<input type="checkbox"/>							
SUMMARY INFORMATION															
		Participants Served (Cohort Period: 07/01/2022 - 06/30/2023)		Participants Exited (Cohort Period: 07/01/2022 - 06/30/2023)		Funds Expended (Cohort Period: 07/01/2022 - 06/30/2023)		Cost Per Participant Served (Cohort Period: 07/01/2022 - 06/30/2023)							
Career Services		1,998		151		\$643,765		\$322							
Training Services		806		34		\$991,096		\$1,230							
Percent training-related employment ¹ :				Percent enrolled in more than one core program:				Percent Admin Expended:							
N/A				15.0%				N/A							
BY PARTICIPANT CHARACTERISTICS															
		Total Participants Served (Cohort Period: 07/01/2022 - 06/30/2023)		Total Participants Exited (Cohort Period: 07/01/2022 - 06/30/2023)		Employment Rate (Q2) ² (Cohort Period: 07/01/2021 - 06/30/2022)		Employment Rate (Q4) ² (Cohort Period: 01/01/2021 - 12/31/2022)		Median Earnings (Cohort Period: 07/01/2021 - 06/30/2022)		Credential Rate ³ (Cohort Period: 01/01/2021 - 12/31/2022)		Measurable Skill Gains ³ (Cohort Period: 07/01/2022 - 06/30/2023)	
						Num		Rate		Earnings		Num		Rate	
Total Statewide		3,012		208		Negotiated Target		33.0%		\$4,400		20.0%		35.0%	
						Actual		39.8%		\$5,447		41.9%		38.3%	

DVR Data by County Program Year (PY) 2022 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)

County	Applications	Eligibility Determination	Individualized Plan for Employment	Closures	Rehabilitated
Oahu	293	250	282	332	14
Hawaii	98	96	108	116	14
Maui	70	61	64	55	9
Kauai	45	27	38	46	2
Total	512	434	492	549	39

DVR PROGRAM ACHIEVEMENTS

1. DVR staff provided essential services for disabled individuals seeking vocational rehabilitation (VR) services or independent living supports.

2. DVR staff collaborated with community partners and other DHS programs to strengthen employment pipelines. These pipelines included work-based learning experiences, apprenticeships, internships, and job placements in competitive integrated employment settings. They leveraged job retention and advancement opportunities for VR candidates to fulfill their career goals. Partners included, but are not limited to:
 - American Job Center (AJC)
 - Assistive Technology Resource Centers of Hawaii (ATRC)
 - Local Businesses
 - Access to Independence
 - Aloha Independent Living Hawaii
 - Child & Adolescent Mental Health Division (CAMHD)
 - Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)
 - Consumer organizations of persons with disabilities
 - Cooperative Agreement with UH, DOH, DOE, DHS, & DVR
 - Department of Business, Economic Development & Tourism (DBEDT)
 - Department of Education (DOE)
 - Office of Special Supports
 - Department of Health (DOH)
 - Developmental Disability Division (DDD)
 - Department of Human Services Benefit, Employment & Support Services Division (BESSD)
 - First to Work Program
 - Department of Labor and Industrial Relations (DLIR)
 - Workforce Development Division (WDD)

- Veterans Services
 - Department of Transportation
 - Hawaii Clubhouse Coalition
 - Maui Economic Opportunity
 - Pacific Islands Healthcare System Veterans Benefits and Mental Health Programs
 - Partnership Plus Employment Networks
 - Society of Human Resource Managers Hawaii (SHRM)
 - State Public Libraries
 - University of Hawaii Career Counselors
 - University of Hawaii (UH) Center on Disability Studies (CDS)
 - US Military Bases
 - Advocacy Networks/Boards/Councils/Stakeholders
 - Advocacy Groups
 - Hawaii Association of the Blind (HAB)
 - Deaf and Hard of Hearing Advisory Board (DHHAB)
 - Developmental Disability Council (DDC)
 - Hawaii Disability Rights Center (HDRC)
 - Hawaii Legislature: Deaf and Blind Task Force (DBTF)
 - National Federation of the Blind of Hawaii (NFBH)
 - Special Parent Information Network (SPIN)
 - Hawaii State Committee of Blind Vendors (HSCBV)
 - State Council on Mental Health (SCMH)
 - State Education Advisory Council (SEAC)
 - State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
 - Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
 - Workforce Development Council (WDC)
 - Oahu Workforce Development Board (OWDB)
3. DVR successfully eliminated its Order of Selection (“OOS,” a deferred services waitlist). The OOS was implemented on October 1, 2017; by October 3, 2022, all 1,791 individuals were assigned to VR Counselors. As a result, all eligible applicants for VR services across all priority categories can now proceed directly to developing an Individualized Plan for Employment without being put on the OOS deferred services waitlist.
 4. DVR worked with community providers contracted by the Social Security Administration (SSA). These providers were representatives of the Partnership Plus MOU, which aimed to support job retention for SSA Ticket to Work holders. These ticketholders were Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries

and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) who were returning to work. The MOU provided long-term support to individuals with significant disabilities to help them return to work and retain their employment through the statewide SSA Employer Network of providers.

5. DVR has established partnerships and agreements with all counties to provide outreach and access to VR consumers who use AJC resources.
6. DVR aimed to increase successful exits from DVR services by enhancing the quality of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) in career pathways that sustain employment for individuals with disabilities beyond the 4th quarter after exiting from the DVR program.
7. DVR works with various programs to offer VR consumers training, employment services, and benefits via their Individualized Plans for Employment. These partnerships included WIOA Title I, II, and III entities such as Job Corps, Youth Build, Alu Like, the University of Hawaii System, Continuing Education Programs at Community Colleges, DOE Adult Education, DLIR's Workforce Development Division, and the Disabled Veterans Outreach Program.
8. DVR serves as the Designated State Entity (DSE) to work in conjunction with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Centers for Independent Living (CILs), and community service providers. The goal is to secure additional funding to address the independent living needs of our community, specifically in light of high unemployment rates, cost of living, and homelessness.
9. DVR contracts with the University of Hawaii's Comprehensive Services Center (CSC) to support individuals who are hard of hearing, deaf, or deaf-blind across the State. The CSC offers consumers workshops, classes, events, tutoring, and camps, including VR consumers referred for services. Additionally, the CSC provides one-on-one appointment scheduling, assists individuals in understanding the mail they receive, and helps them with follow-up requirements, such as making appointments, providing tech support, and job searches. The CSC has adapted its services to offer one-on-one SSP (Support Service Provider) services that assist Deaf-Blind recipients with their independent living goals.
10. DVR's contracts with the Assistive Technology Resource Center of Hawaii (ATRC) continued to serve individuals statewide during the pandemic. The center utilized technology to provide assistive technology education, device demonstrations, loans, and public training to reinforce and strengthen independent living skills.
11. DVR contracts with San Diego State University (SDSU) to conduct the triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) as required by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended (WIOA). The federal Rehabilitation

Services Administration (RSA) requires DVR to perform this assessment every three years. The CSNA, conducted jointly by each state's vocational rehabilitation agency and State Rehabilitation Council, identifies and addresses the vocational rehabilitation service needs of individuals with disabilities. SDSU completed the CSNA Report in the Fall of 2022, and the results generated from the assessment influenced the development of strategies to meet the community's needs, as noted in Hawaii's Unified State Plan. DVR consulted with and received input from the SRC. The next CSNA Report will be completed by December 31, 2024.

12. DVR contracts with the Pacific Disabilities Center at the University of Hawaii at Manoa, John A. Burns School of Medicine, to conduct the Consumer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) to meet the requirements of 34 CFR § 361.17 (h) (4), ensuring that VR agencies are meeting their programmatic responsibilities to individuals receiving VR services. The survey measures consumer satisfaction with the interactions and services obtained from the DVR and the interactions and services from providers outside of Vocational Rehabilitation to which consumers were referred. The yearly survey results are reviewed with the SRC to provide guidance and recommendations on how DVR should proceed to increase satisfaction with services to individuals with disabilities.
13. DVR has entered into a contract with GuideSoft Inc., dba Knowledge Services, as a Managed Service Provider (MSP) for various VR services. Using this contract, DVR intends to increase vendor opportunities and give VR Consumers informed choices with statewide access to a continuous network of services, education, and service providers. Beginning July 1st, 2023, Supported Employment and Job Coaching were services under the Knowledge Services HIVRS MSP Program. DVR intends to build this over time, adding more VR services, including Trial Work Evaluation services. To the MSP contract.
14. DVR solicited the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center – Quality Management (VR TAC-QM) to assist with streamlining processes, revising policies & procedures, creating mechanisms for internal controls, analyzing data, and conceiving new innovative strategies for rapid engagement and improving quality and timely provision of VR services with successful results as follows to date:
 - a. Eligibility Determination compliance rates of 90% or above
 - b. Streamlining approvals of purchases to reduce work for staff and decrease wait time for services to consumers.
 - c. Case File internal control checklist form ensured every open case record adhered to required timelines and supporting documentation.

- d. Developed instrumentation for conducting State and field-level service record reviews that included updates to the overall system of internal controls and case review policies and procedures.
 - e. Updated written policies governing the provision of services for individuals with disabilities, which ensured that they were relevant, current, and accurate for compliance with federal regulations.
 - f. New Referral and Application forms were created and posted on the DHS DVR website for easier access for all who wish to apply.
 - g. Statewide Quarterly meetings for targeted staff training.
15. Section 116 of WIOA establishes performance accountability indicators and performance reporting requirements to assess the effectiveness of states and local areas in achieving positive outcomes for the individuals served by each of the core WIOA Programs, including Title IV (the Vocational Rehabilitation Services program). As a direct result of the hard work and dedication of all DVR staff, DVR has passed 4 out of 5 performance indicators in PY 22/SFY 23:

WIOA Performance Indicators	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	(+)/(-)
Measurable Skill Gains Rate	13.0%	13.3%	30.2%	30.7%	38.3%	+3.3%
Employment Rate - 2nd Quarter After Exit	39.2%	37.2%	20.3%	34.7%	40%	+6.8%
Median Earnings - 2nd Quarter After Exit	\$4,148	\$4,29-	\$3,646	\$4105	\$5447	\$1,047
Employment Rate - 4th Quarter After Exit	-35.7%	27%	34%	30.2%	37.5%	-7.3%
Credential Attainment Rate	-	0%	0%	25%	41.9%	+21.9%

- 16. DVR reviewed and developed new strategies to improve staff performance and service provision.
- 17. DVR improved the Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) rate by supporting consumers' progression in educational training towards obtaining a nationally recognized credential.
- 18. DVR improved Credential Attainment (CA) rates for completion of educational training to include system data capturing, analysis, and tracking, following up with consumers who have the potential to earn credentials that are proven to lead to higher rates of employment and higher rates of pay.
- 19. DVR monitored consumers exiting DVR in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) to retain employment in the 2nd, 4th, and 6th quarters (18 months due to lag with UI/SWIS unemployment data filings) after exit to meet negotiated

retention rates.

20. DVR worked with Alliance Group to resolve issues with the Akamai-Aware Case Management System for federal reporting and improving data-informed decision-making for process improvements.
21. DVR participated in quarterly Transition meetings and hosted one on February 3, 2023. These Transition meetings are held quarterly with staff from the Department of Education (DOE), the Department of Health (DOH) Developmental Disabilities Division (DDD), the Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC), and the UH Center for Disability Studies (CDS). These meetings focus on exchanging information and sharing opportunities to streamline and collaborate on service delivery. The focus of this quarterly meeting will provide information on community resources related to independent living, employment, and training opportunities through our Community Rehabilitation Programs as students transition from school to work with a priority of raising awareness and participation in job fairs and Summer Youth Employment programs available through DVR.
22. DVR celebrated the 76th Anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). DVR collaborated with the Hawai'i State Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC) Employment Committee and other agencies to create a theme: "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion." DVR is an active Hawaii Employment First Taskforce member and obtained an NDEAM Proclamation from the Governor. DVR recognized partnerships with Employers and Consumers statewide during NDEAM, highlighting the vital role people with disabilities play in making the nation's workforce diverse and inclusive. The annual recognition program was an opportunity to acknowledge the achievements of DVR's consumers who have achieved employment success, the contributions of employers, and the work of Counselors and Employment Specialists to support consumers in attaining their goals. These success stories communicate, personally, how effective the DVR program and staff are in meeting the needs of consumers and employers.
23. DVR sponsored the 30th annual in-person White Cane Walk on Oahu on October 14, 2022. The purpose of this event was to increase the public's awareness of the white cane as a symbol of independence and empowerment for persons who are blind. With the white cane, individuals who are blind can get to and from wherever they need to go, including work, when and where they choose. Over 200 persons participated in the awareness event in downtown Honolulu, which was also highlighted on three local news channels.

24. DVR participated in the Thirty-Second Legislature Regular Sessions of 2023 Committee on Health and Human Services and provided written testimony supporting Senate Bill 313 to amend section 348-8, HRS, relating to the State Rehabilitation Council. The Bill reduces the number of members of the State Rehabilitation Council from twenty-one to fifteen. This enables the State Rehabilitation Council to establish a quorum and conduct business without regard to vacancies.

DVR SUCCESS STORIES

1. A consumer applied for services at the DVR Kona Branch in 2012, seeking assistance with maintaining employment. The consumer was a single mother who had post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and relied on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and SSI. DVR supported the consumer with an initial job goal as a yoga instructor. The consumer completed training but had difficulty securing steady employment. Instead, she changed her job goal to focus on obtaining her Certified Substance Abuse Counselor Certificate (CSAC). She enrolled with Hawaii Community College but encountered issues with her housing situation, which impacted her overall mental health. She took a break from college and looked into submitting a Plan to Achieve Self-Support (PASS) with Social Security that would eventually support her goal of self-sufficiency and mobility. DVR provided benefits planning, and the consumer worked with the benefits planner to achieve this goal. After persevering through life's challenges, she eventually enrolled at a different college to complete her CSAC and obtain her bachelor's degree. She secured a job as a Substance Abuse and Behavioral Disorder Counselor, earned \$17.50 per hour, and her case with DVR was successfully closed. DVR provided vocational counseling and guidance, benefits counseling, support services, transportation, and vocational training. The consumer also achieved her educational goal, and the Measurable Skills Gain (MSG) was recorded.
2. A consumer with visual and intellectual disabilities applied for services at DVR Services for the Blind Branch, Ho`opono. His parents fully supported him in all areas of daily living, never having had employment or been independent. However, he had volunteered with the Hawaii Humane Society, caring for animals, cleaning, and stocking. A DVR Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor guided him through career exploration, examining his skills and preferences, what jobs were available, and what they paid. This allowed the consumer to make an initial career goal to be a stock clerk as it built on his volunteer experience. DVR provided job readiness training in the Vocational Work Adjustment Training Services (VWATS) program, which helped him learn about professional behavior, interview skills, and resume writing. In addition, DVR staff provided mobility training, enabling the consumer to travel independently without needing his

parents to transport him. DVR's employment specialist assisted the consumer in obtaining a transitional job with Blind Vendors Ohana (BVO) as a cashier. This helped him build confidence and get professional references for a stock clerk position aligned with his career goal. DVR provided training to gain the skills to handle money, interact with customers, answer phones, and gain confidence to handle complaints. Through this transitional experience, the consumer requested to change his career goal because he was enjoying these new responsibilities. He learned that he enjoyed working with people more than just stacking boxes and stocking shelves. His Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor and Employment Specialist coordinated with BVO to ensure he completed his probation and had a permanent position; then, with his permission, we closed his case successfully as a cashier and customer service representative. He started two days a week and now works more than 20+ hours. BVO HR Manager Maricen Olipares stated that the consumer is an amiable worker who loves talking with customers and staff. BVO staff say they love working with our consumers.

3. A deaf consumer who communicates in ASL has worked as a teacher assistant at the Hawai'i School for the Deaf and the Blind for 30 years. This year, she had an oral Hard of Hearing (HH) student who did not know sign language and communicated orally. The teacher assistant struggled to understand what the student said and decided to apply for VR services to get hearing aids. She met with a VR counselor who developed a plan to get hearing aids to overcome her communication barriers at work. When she received the hearing aids and showed them to her student, the student was ecstatic, saying, "Same!!!" No one was more excited than the teacher assistant because she could finally understand and fully communicate with her students. Today, the teacher assistant and the student have an excellent staff-student relationship. The teacher assistant can perform her duties to the best of her abilities, and the student is receiving tremendous support from the teacher assistant, all thanks to hearing aids provided through VR.
4. One of our client and Employee of the Year, works as a Guest Merchandise Expert in the Pet section at Target. With the support of DVR, he was hired in October 2022, began training in November 2022, and has been independent since late December. This worker excels in stocking, zoning, customer service, and inventory management, working two days per week. Our client's supervisor is proud of his accomplishments and notes that he is a valuable team member, always punctual, smiling, and eager to start his day. The supervisor added that this worker is always willing to learn and help others, providing an excellent opportunity for the team to practice patience and training while embracing and learning from working with people with disabilities.

This worker participates in various community activities, including the Adult Day Health program at Easter Seals in Waimea four days a week, where he gardens

and exercises. He actively participates in Special Olympics sports such as bocce, bowling, and track and field, winning several awards. He is also an active member of the Kauai Developmental Disabilities Committee (KDDC) and the Self-Advocacy Advisory Committee (SAAC), providing testimony for removing sub-minimum wage during the 2021 Day at the Capitol event and requesting flashing beacons at the Waimea Library crosswalk during the 2022 Kauai County Legislative Forum.

We congratulate Target for being chosen as the Employer of the Year for 2023, showing a solid commitment to providing employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Target has provided a supportive environment for all applicants and employees, and we look forward to continuing our positive relationship with them.

The State Rehabilitation Council is pleased to partner with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to continuously improve services to Hawaii's individuals with disabilities. If there are any questions regarding this report, please contact SRC Chair Annette Tashiro at actashiro@gmail.com.