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Virginia Disability Commission

SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

Vocational Rehabilitation: Services, Outcomes, and Employment Opportunities for Virginians with Disabilities

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Presenters

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 Google Shape;45;p2

Before talking specifically about VR services, I want to briefly put the Division of Rehabilitative Services into the larger DARS structure.

DARS includes several divisions serving Virginians across their lifespan. These include Disability Determination Services, the Division for Aging Services, Adult Protective Services, the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, the Division of Community Living, and the Division of Rehabilitative Services.

Our focus today is primarily on the Division of Rehabilitative Services, or DRS, and particularly the vocational rehabilitation and employment programs within that division.

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Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Disability Determination Services

Division of Aging Services

Long Term Care Ombudsman

Division of Rehabilitative Services

Division of Community Living

Adult Protective Services Division

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Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS)

Virginia's general vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency assists people with disabilities to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

Committed to ensuring individuals with disabilities have opportunities to compete for and enjoy high-quality employment.

Services include assistance to students with disabilities.

DRS is Virginia's general vocational rehabilitation agency.

At its core, vocational rehabilitation is an employment program. We assist individuals with disabilities to prepare for, secure, retain, or regain employment.

That mission is broader than simply helping someone find a job. Our goal is to help individuals identify employment that matches their interests, strengths, abilities, and support needs and to provide the services necessary for them to succeed.

This includes services for adults as well as students with disabilities who are beginning the transition from school into postsecondary education, training, and employment.

Our overall objective is to ensure that individuals with disabilities have the opportunity to compete for and enjoy high-quality employment in their communities.

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What services does DRS provide?

Pre-Employment Transition Services

Earliest set of services for students with disabilities. Services include job exploration, work-based learning, postsecondary counseling, workplace readiness, and self-advocacy

Pre-Employment Transition Services

VR Counseling & Planning

Eligibility, vocational assessment, Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) development, counseling, and coordination

VR Counseling & Planning

Employment Supports

Job placement, supported employment, customized employment, and follow-along

Employment Supports

Training & Technology

Postsecondary/vocational training, Wilson Workforce Rehabilitation Center, assistive technology, and accommodations

Training & Technology

Benefits & Supportive Services

Benefits counseling, transportation, therapies, and goods/services needed for IPE goals

Benefits & Supportive Services

DRS provides a continuum of services, and not every person needs every service.

For students with disabilities, our earliest intervention is through Pre-Employment Transition Services, or Pre-ETS. Those services focus on five areas: job exploration, work-based learning, counseling on postsecondary education and training, workplace readiness, and self-advocacy.

Once an individual enters the vocational rehabilitation program, a VR counselor works with that person to determine eligibility, assess vocational needs, and develop an Individualized Plan for Employment, or IPE.

Depending upon the person's needs, DARS may then provide employment supports such as job development and placement, supported employment, customized employment, and follow-along services.

We can also support postsecondary and vocational training, services through Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center, assistive technology, and workplace accommodations.

Finally, we recognize that employment success can depend upon needs outside the immediate workplace. Benefits counseling, transportation, therapies, and other supportive services may therefore be included when they are necessary for the individual to achieve the employment goal.

The important point is that these services are individualized. The combination of services should reflect what that particular person needs to move toward employment successfully.

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Pre Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

- Federal regulations require schools and DARS to work together to deliver Pre-ETS.
- Pre-ETS can be provided within the educational setting and outside the school.
- Pre-ETS are intended to supplement, not supplant, the school's existing transition services.

- . Based on the student's individual need.

SCHOOLS AND DARS WORK TOGETHER

- . Earliest start at developing employability skills and to assist students with identifying career interests.
- . Only for students with disabilities.
- . Do not have to be a DARS client.
- . DARS collaborates with students, families, schools, and community service providers.

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Vocational Rehabilitation Services

GUIDANCE AND COUNSELING

VOCATIONAL EVALUATION/CAREER EXPLORATION

VOCATIONAL/JOB TRAINING

JOB PLACEMENT ASSISTANCE

SITUATIONAL ASSESSMENT

JOB DEVELOPMENT/JOB COACHING

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

WILSON WORKFORCE AND REHABILITATION CENTER

Wilson Workforce & Rehabilitation Center

 Google Shape;179;p8

The campus located in Fishersville
PERT program for high school
youth

Workplace Readiness Program

Vocational Evaluations

Therapeutic Evaluations

Vocational Training Programs

Driver Evaluation and Training

WILSON WORKFORCE AND REHABILITATION CENTER • PERFORMANCE SINCE SFY2022

 Google Shape;211;p9

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, sheets Served Cases, Successful Closures, and Median Hourly Earnings. Percent changes compare SFY 2022 with SFY 2026. Reported cases served reflects the workbook's VR + PE measure.

 Google Shape;221;p10

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, sheets Served Cases, Successful Closures, and Median Hourly Earnings. Percent changes compare SFY 2022 with SFY 2026. Reported cases served reflects the workbook's VR + PE measure.

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How are Employment Services Funded in Virginia?

Federal Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) funds: The federal government generally pays **78.7% of allowable VR program costs**, while Virginia must provide the remaining **21.3% nonfederal match**.

Pre-ETS reserve: At least 15% of the federal award approximately \$12.47 million based on the current projected award must be reserved for students with disabilities and the provision of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS).

Virginia General Funds: Support the VR match, specialized programs, staffing and services not fully covered by federal funds.

Long Term Employment Supports Services/Extended Employment Services: Approximately \$8.95 million in SFY 2026 General Funds supports employment services after VR Services end.

Medicaid Waiver: DD Waivers may fund continuing supported employment, workplace assistance, behavioral

supports, transportation, and related services for eligible waiver members after VR services have ended or if VR services are not available.

Vocational rehabilitation uses several funding streams.

The largest source is federal vocational rehabilitation funding. Generally, the federal government pays approximately 78.7% of allowable VR program costs, while Virginia provides the remaining 21.3% nonfederal match.

Within the federal VR award, at least 15 percent must be reserved for Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities. Based on the FFY 26 award, that represents approximately \$12.47 million.

Virginia General Funds are also critical. They help provide the required federal match and support specialized programs, staffing, and services that may not be fully covered through federal VR funds.

Another important resource is Long-Term Employment Support Services and Extended Employment Services - LTESS and EES. Approximately \$8.95 million in state General Funds was appropriated in State Fiscal Year 2027 to support employment services after VR services ended.

For individuals who are eligible, Medicaid DD Waivers may also support continuing employment services, workplace assistance, behavioral supports, transportation, and other services after VR ends or when VR services are not otherwise available. If asked - Every \$1 of qualifying state match can access approximately \$3.69 in federal VR funds.

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Five-Year Progression in Virginia Vocational Rehabilitation

SFY 2022–SFY 2026

+34%

reported cases served

24,635 to 32,886

+76%

Pre-ETS service volume

4,810 to 8,465

+16%

successful closures

2,393 to 2,787

+25%

median hourly earnings

\$12.00 to \$15.00

By SFY 2026, service volume and employment outcomes remained well above the SFY 2022 baseline, even as several measures eased from their SFY 2025 peak.

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, sheets Served Cases, Successful Closures, and Median Hourly Earnings. Percent changes compare SFY 2022 with SFY 2026. Reported cases served reflects the workbook's VR + PE measure.

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Number Served Increased 34% from SFY 22 to SFY 26

Google Shape;267;p13

32,886

reported cases served

in SFY 2026

+23%

VR

+76%

Pre-ETS

Growth reflects both broader VR reach and a substantial expansion in services for students with disabilities.

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, Served Cases!A1:D6. The workbook reports VR cases served, PE cases served, and their combined total for each state fiscal year.

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Employment Outcomes and Earnings Improved

Successful closures

 Google Shape;285;p14

Median hourly earnings

 Google Shape;287;p14

+16% successful closures since SFY 2022

+25% in median hourly earnings

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, Successful Closures!A1:B6 and Median Hourly Earnings!A1:I6. The median wage shown is the total for all age groups.

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The Population Served Remains Consistent

Primary impairment profile

 Google Shape;300;p15

Age profile within VR

 Google Shape;302;p15

Psychosocial impairments increased by 1.8 percentage points. Adults aged 23 and older represent a larger share of the VR population than five years

ago.

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, Demographics - Impairments!A22:F26 and Demographics - Age!A18:D23. Age shares cover VR cases; all PE cases are age 22 or under, as noted in the workbook.

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Race and Gender Profile

Race and Ethnicity

 Google Shape;314;p16

Gender

 Google Shape;316;p16

185% Increase in responses of Non-binary or undisclosed

0.4% to 1.0%.

+25% - The number of Hispanic individuals served increased from 5.9% to 7.4%.

+16% - Increase in number of individual who identify as Asian.

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, Demographics - Race&Gender!A1:F9. Percentages represent the distribution of people served in each state fiscal year.

The number of Hispanic individuals served increased from 5.9% to 7.4%. The Black or African American share remained near one-third of the population served.

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Geographic Distribution Remained Stable

Percent of people served by DARS district

 Google Shape;330;p17

+1.1

Percentage points

in Southwest

+0.9

Percentage points

in Capitol

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, Demographics - Location!A1:F7. The chart compares each DARS district's share of people served in SFY 2022 and SFY 2026.

New River decreased 1.4 percentage points. Other district shares changed by less than one percentage point.

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Employment Outcomes Span Virginia's Economy

Selected industries with notable five-year growth

Google Shape;346;p18

+87%

Education

+71%

Construction

+34%

Accommodation and food

+12%

Retail Trade

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, Industry!A1:F22. The chart shows selected industries and does not represent every industry in the workbook.

Retail and health care remained major sources of employment while education and construction gained ground.

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Credentials and Skill Gains Remained Strong

Credentials earned

 Google Shape;366;p19

Measurable skill gains

 Google Shape;368;p19

+13% total credentials

+27% vocational and technical credentials

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, Credentials-MSG!A4:F9 and A27:B32. The workbook notes that the measure excludes older credentials no longer accepted by RSA.

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Investment Grew Alongside Service Volume

Combined VR and Pre-ETS expenditures

 Google Shape;381;p20

+84%

combined expenditures

since SFY 2022

\$1,009

**average expenditure per
reported case in SFY 2026**

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx, Cost!A17:C21. Expenditures combine the workbook's VR and PE sums. Average expenditure per reported case uses the workbook's combined mean.

SFY 2026 expenditures declined from the SFY 2025 peak while remaining substantially above SFY 2022.

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Five-Year Progress at a Glance

Reach

32,886 reported cases served

+34%

Students

8,465 Pre-ETS cases served

+76%

Employment

2,787 successful closures

+16%

Earnings

\$15.00 median hourly wage

+25%

Credentials

2,794 credentials earned

+13%

Source: Disability Commission Data.xlsx. Percent changes compare SFY 2022 with SFY 2026 and use unrounded values from the workbook.

The five-year trend shows broader reach, higher earnings, and sustained employment outcomes. The next opportunity is to convert greater access into continued growth in high-quality employment, credentials, and career advancement

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Thank You!

For additional information on DARS,
please visit

www.dars.virginia.gov

Pre-Employment Transition Services

www.dars.virginia.gov/employment-services/for-students/

Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation
Center

www.wwrc.virginia.gov