

# READY. SET. WORK!



## VIRGINIA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL ANNUAL REPORT 2017



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING  
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

## ABOUT THE COVER

In October 2017, the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) was invited to appear on the home page of the Commonwealth's website, [Virginia.gov](http://Virginia.gov), to celebrate Disability Employment Awareness Month. A special banner, seen on the cover of this report, was designed to highlight achievements of employed individuals with disabilities. The website encouraged viewers to visit the agency's business services website, [www.vdars.org](http://www.vdars.org), to learn more.

During the period that the DARS banner was featured (Oct. 10-31), the [Virginia.gov](http://Virginia.gov) home page received 455,828 page views, of which 303,844 were "unique," according to the website's program manager.

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## MESSAGE FROM SRC CHAIRPERSON

It is my honor to share with you the 2017 Annual Report of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), which provides information on the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program of the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, including the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center. This year's report theme is "Ready. Set. Work!" to illustrate the path taken by Virginians with significant disabilities receiving VR services towards competitive employment in the community. The VR services received by these consumers are varied and tailored to their individual vocational needs and goals. Featured are a few of the 4,037 outstanding VR consumers who achieved successful employment as an outcome of their VR experience and highlights the services that they received.

I have witnessed the commitment of my fellow SRC members and the DARS staff to improving the lives and livelihood of VR consumers seeking the skills, training and other services required to enter Virginia's workforce.

I encourage you to review this report and share with others.

Bruce Phipps, SRC Chairperson



## MESSAGE FROM COMMISSIONER

The "Ready. Set. Work!" theme for this year's State Rehabilitation Council annual report embodies the journey of our 30,000 VR consumers as they enter and participate in Virginia's workforce. They come eager to begin their VR experience and DARS gets them ready with education, training, work experience and other services needed to reach their employment goal. "Ready" also encompasses preparing students for the world of work, focusing on career planning, work readiness and self-advocacy.

"Set" draws on the expertise of our business development staff, VR counselors, placement counselors and community partners to help consumers locate jobs consistent with their abilities and that fulfill their employment goals.

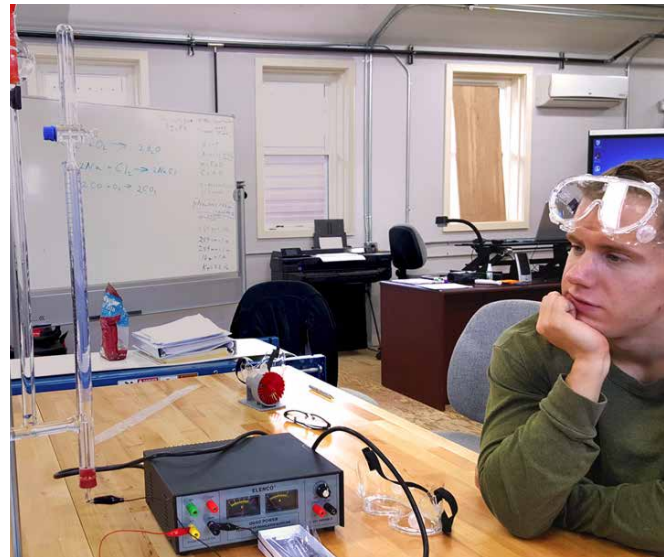
"Work" is the objective. Our 100 percent competitive employment rate means that all the more than 4,000 VR consumers last year became employed in the community at or above minimum wage.

We hope you read this report to learn of our consumers' successes, our VR service performance and the incredible work at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) to prepare consumers for manufacturing jobs in Virginia.

Jim Rothrock, Commissioner,  
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

## CONSUMER SUCCESS STORIES

### JOSEPH HUGHES



Thanks to a “village” of DARS staff, Joseph Hughes now has a potential career with Provides US Inc., a manufacturer of heat exchangers, and the independence to live on his own.

In 2011, Joseph began working with VR counselor Beth Phillips in Farmville, who provided his transition services. She recommended him for the Postsecondary Education Rehabilitation Transition program at Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC) in 2015.

Joseph completed the 20-week Manufacturing Technology Training program at WWRC and earned his Manufacturing Technician Level 1 certificate. Meanwhile, Business Development Manager Nate Mahanes referred Joseph for a job as an assembly worker at Provides US in Verona.

After being hired at \$14 an hour with full benefits, WWRC found temporary housing for Joseph and the WWRC Foundation provided a car so he could transition from his home about 90 miles away to living independently. Joseph’s job coach was instrumental in boosting Joseph’s confidence, helping him find an apartment and acclimating him to a new community.

“I am so happy. I have a dream job,” Joseph says.

### REGINA ROOT

Regina Root, a professor of Hispanic Studies at the College of William & Mary, faced an uncertain future in academia in 2014 following a brain tumor diagnosis and surgery.

Regina had to learn how to walk, talk and complete basic tasks again. Though her primary surgery recovery was successful, she had to overcome some lingering health challenges.

“I didn’t know how I was going to return to work with my new normal,” she said. “DARS helped me imagine how to work and live with purpose and thrive once more.”

After requesting DARS’ assistance, Regina worked with Lead Assistive Technology Specialist John Allen, who assessed her abilities and helped identify various devices and trainings she needed to help her in the workplace. A DARS VR counselor and the VR personal assistance services coordinator guided her through the process of returning to work with accommodations.

Regina, an international expert on Hispanic fashion and textiles and Latin American cultural production, returned to her teaching position in Williamsburg for the Spring 2017 semester. She earns \$90,804 a year.



## SRC MEMBERS, ACTIVITIES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 2016-2017 SRC MEMBERS

Dack Axelle, Henrico  
Shaquwanda Baker, Manassas  
Robbin Blankenship, Henrico  
Linda Garris-Bright, Virginia Beach  
Garrett Brumfield, Roanoke  
Pamela Cobler, Martinsville  
Nichole Drummond, Springfield  
Brian Evans, Richmond  
David Head, Moseley  
Daniel Irvin, Mechanicsville  
Deloris Johnson, Harrisonburg  
Tonya Milling, Danville  
Bruce Phipps, Roanoke  
Jim Rothrock, Richmond  
Petrina Thomas, Culpeper  
Sally Thompson, Hampton  
Julie Triplett, Richmond



### ATTEND A MEETING

The quarterly SRC meetings are open to the public. Meeting locations, dates and times are posted at [www.va-src.org](http://www.va-src.org), [www.vadars.org/  
NewCalendarEvent.html](http://www.vadars.org/NewCalendarEvent.html) and <https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov>.

### SRC ACTIVITIES FOR 2017

The SRC held four meetings plus its annual planning retreat in November 2016, when the SRC reviewed the effectiveness of the VR program during 2016 and developed its recommendations for the program. The August meeting was held at WWRC.

The SRC reached out to members of the Virginia General Assembly and other policy makers to provide information on the value of the VR program through the distribution of its 2016 Annual Report.

Shaquwanda Baker represented the SRC at the National Consortium of State Rehabilitation Councils Training Conference in Bethesda.

The SRC renewed its Memorandum of Understanding with DARS on the administration of the VR consumer satisfaction survey and reviewed and approved the annual report on the survey results. The SRC assisted with the design of this survey and the utilization of the results for program quality improvement.

Shaquwanda Baker represented the SRC on the VR Return on Investment Advisory Committee

and the SRC supported the agency in its ROI grant submission.

Bruce Phipps and Brian Evans represented the SRC at the Division of Rehabilitative Services Employee Recognition Event and presented award certificates to LaPearl Smith and Stephanie Nelson for their outstanding achievements as DRS employees.

The Council recommended the renewal of the contracts for two hearing officers and served on the committee to select a third hearing officer.

Bruce Phipps presented Pamela Cobler with the 2017 Chairperson Award for her outstanding contribution to the SRC.

The SRC website, [www.va-src.org](http://www.va-src.org), was redesigned to meet new accessibility standards and make it more compact.

### SRC RECOMMENDATIONS ON VR PROGRAM IMPROVEMENT FOR 2018

- Continue to be advised on a quarterly basis about the status of Order of Selection and establish a more consultative role with DARS on its implementation, especially plans for the opening and closing of priority categories.
- Receive reports on DARS activities to build and increase partnerships, particularly with the business community, and how DARS works to address workforce needs.
- Fully realize new services for students with disabilities, including as appropriate authorized services that would help educate educators and others, under Pre-Employment Transition Services, and report to the SRC regularly over the next year regarding DRS and WWRC implementation and performance.
- DARS will provide services in line with career pathways – work experiences, internships, stable credentials – that will keep individuals employed and successful, while building stronger partnerships with key stakeholders to advance competitive placement.

### CHAIRPERSON'S AWARD

At the SRC quarterly meeting in August, SRC Chair Bruce Phipps gave Pamela Cobler the chairperson's award for her dedicated service on the council. Pam was appointed to the council in 2014.



### STEVE/JIM/BRUCE

Steve Wooderson (left), CEO of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) presented to the DARS Skills for Leadership participants and the SRC on the four principles of "Vision 2020." Also pictured (l to r), Commissioner Jim Rothrock and Bruce Phipps.

- DARS will continue to work on improving wages earned by consumers, with a special focus on increasing the number of hours of work.
- DARS should explore and perform data analysis to determine the cause in the increase in supported employment and job coach training services costs. Results of this analysis should be presented to the SRC and explained.

### WWRC PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

WWRC, located in Fishersville, is a key resource for DARS, providing comprehensive medical and vocational rehabilitation services to assist Virginians with disabilities to obtain employment. The following are a small sample of WWRC's recent achievements:

The Manufacturing Technology Training Program, recently approved by the Accrediting Commission of the Council on Occupational Education, allows students to learn skills and competencies required for the Occupational Safety and Health Act workforce credential and to sit for the Manufacturing Specialist and Manufacturing

Technician Level I exams leading to industry-recognized workforce credentials.

WWRC's partnership with CVS Health continues to expand, with plans to begin a pharmacy tech training program in 2018.

WWRC's Business and Information Technology Training Program has recently signed an agreement with disABLEDperson Inc. to provide access to the Microsoft Imagine Academy, an online platform for IT training on Microsoft products to be provided in educational settings.

WWRC successfully launched a new corporate partnership with AmeriCare Plus, a Virginia-based health care business that operates in-home care and satellite home health and assisted living facilities. AmeriCare interviewed and hired five WWRC consumers with personal care aide qualifications for hard to fill positions on the weekend, providing valuable experience for these students while they completed their certified nurse aide training.

VR Workforce Studio, sponsored by the WWRC Foundation, highlights successful VR stories that result in employment for individuals with disabilities. The website and podcasts also celebrate the businesses who hire individuals



### LEADERSHIP AWARD

The SRC honored two DRS employees with Employee Leadership Awards. Stephanie Nelson (left), employment services specialist in the Farmville office, and LaPearl Smith, business development manager for the Northern district, were recognized for their performance and their efforts to find employment for individuals with disabilities, cultivating teamwork and inspiring others.

with disabilities.

The 2017-2018 Investing in America report, sponsored by the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, features two success stories that also highlight WWRC's Vision for Business Engagement in Action.

## VR 2017 PERFORMANCE OUTCOMES AND HIGHLIGHTS

The VR program empowers Virginians with disabilities to receive the training and skills they need to enter the workforce or to retain employment. During Federal Fiscal Year 2017:

- 4,037 consumers became employed, the fourth consecutive year that DARS has reached or surpassed its 4,000 goal
- 99.7 percent of these individuals were competitively employed
- Median hourly wage was \$9.50, a 50 cent increase over 2016; for adult clients, the hourly wage was \$10
- Average hours worked per week was 28.6, up from 2016
- 28,892 clients received services
- 88.3 percent of clients were considered most significantly disabled
- The number of clients with autism increased 12.2 percent to 3,883
- 50.6 percent of clients served were students in transition
- \$23.4 million was spent on client services, of that:
  - 71 percent, or \$15.7 million, was for supported employment and job coach training services (a 3.9 percent increase over 2016)
  - The second highest category in expenditures was training, including college tuition, at \$1.4 million

## ORDER OF SELECTION

DARS remained in Order of Selection with efforts continuing throughout the year to serve those on the waiting list. However, the agency was not able to consistently serve all individuals determined eligible for services. All newly eligible individuals are placed on the wait list.

## PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

With recent amendments to the federal Rehabilitation Act, DARS is implementing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). These services are available to students 14 years of age through their exit from high school, whether or not they are VR clients. DARS must reserve and expend 15 percent of its VR funding on Pre-ETS. The change is significant because the agency's model of service is based on serving individuals through an Employment Plan, thus requiring DARS to convert staff to provide 32 Pre-ETS counselors who work in the school systems to deliver these services.

## PROJECT SEARCH

In Virginia, 137 high school students with developmental and intellectual disabilities participated in internships at 20 host sites during the 2016-17 school year to gain valuable work experience and skill development leading to competitive employment. In Spring 2017, 125 students graduated from Project SEARCH. Of those who participated in the 2016-17 academic year, 82 students gained employment. Other participants continue to work with their counselors and job coaches to find employment. Project SEARCH measures employment outcomes 11 months after the end of each school year. At the 2017 annual conference, 11 of the 15 programs that operated in the 2015-16 school year received awards for exceptional employment outcomes for their participants.

## CONSUMER SATISFACTION

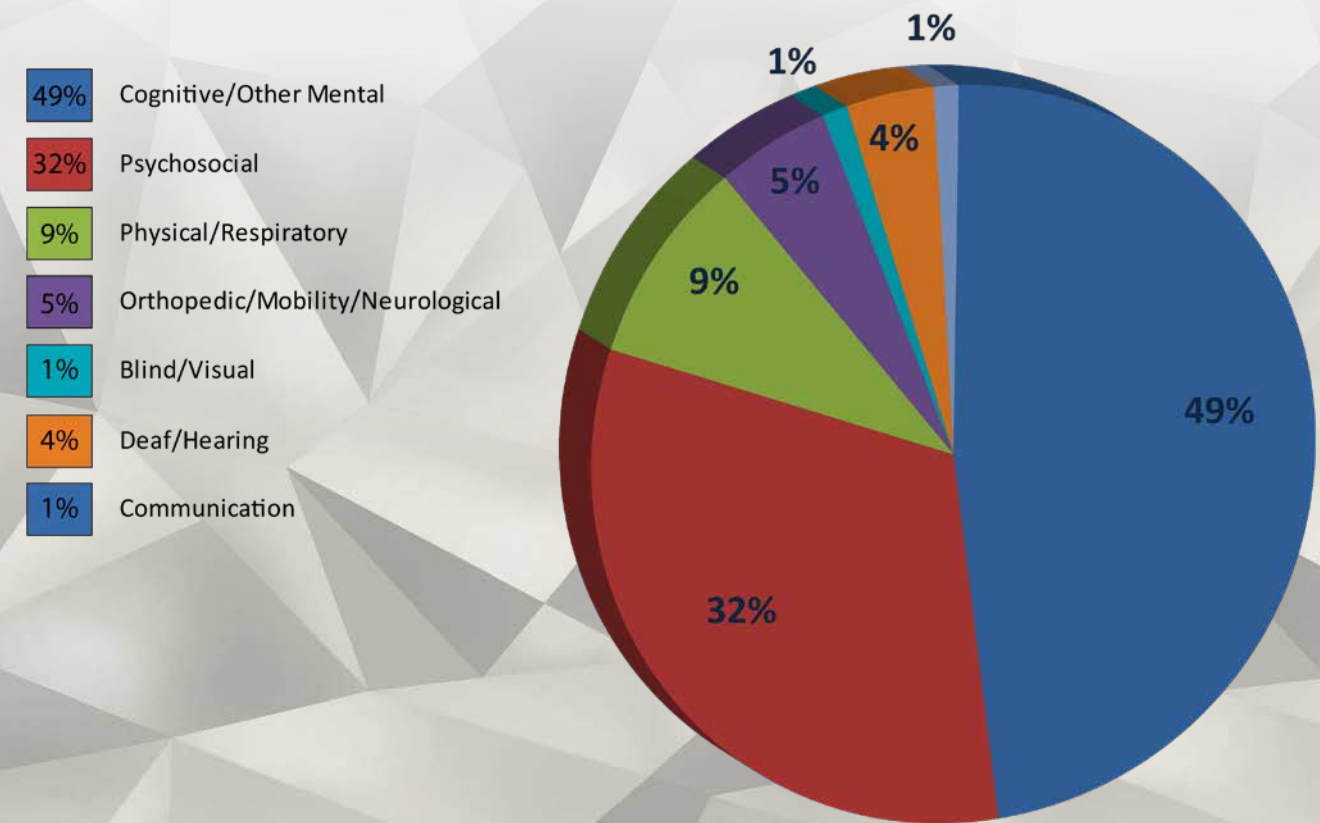
The SRC works in partnership with DARS to assess consumers' perceptions of their VR

services. A sample of consumers is surveyed during service delivery (following development of the Individualized Plan for Employment, but prior to employment). This allows for more real time assessment of services, allows issues to be addressed prior to case closure and encourages more consumer engagement while allowing consumers to contact survey staff with updates or specific requests.

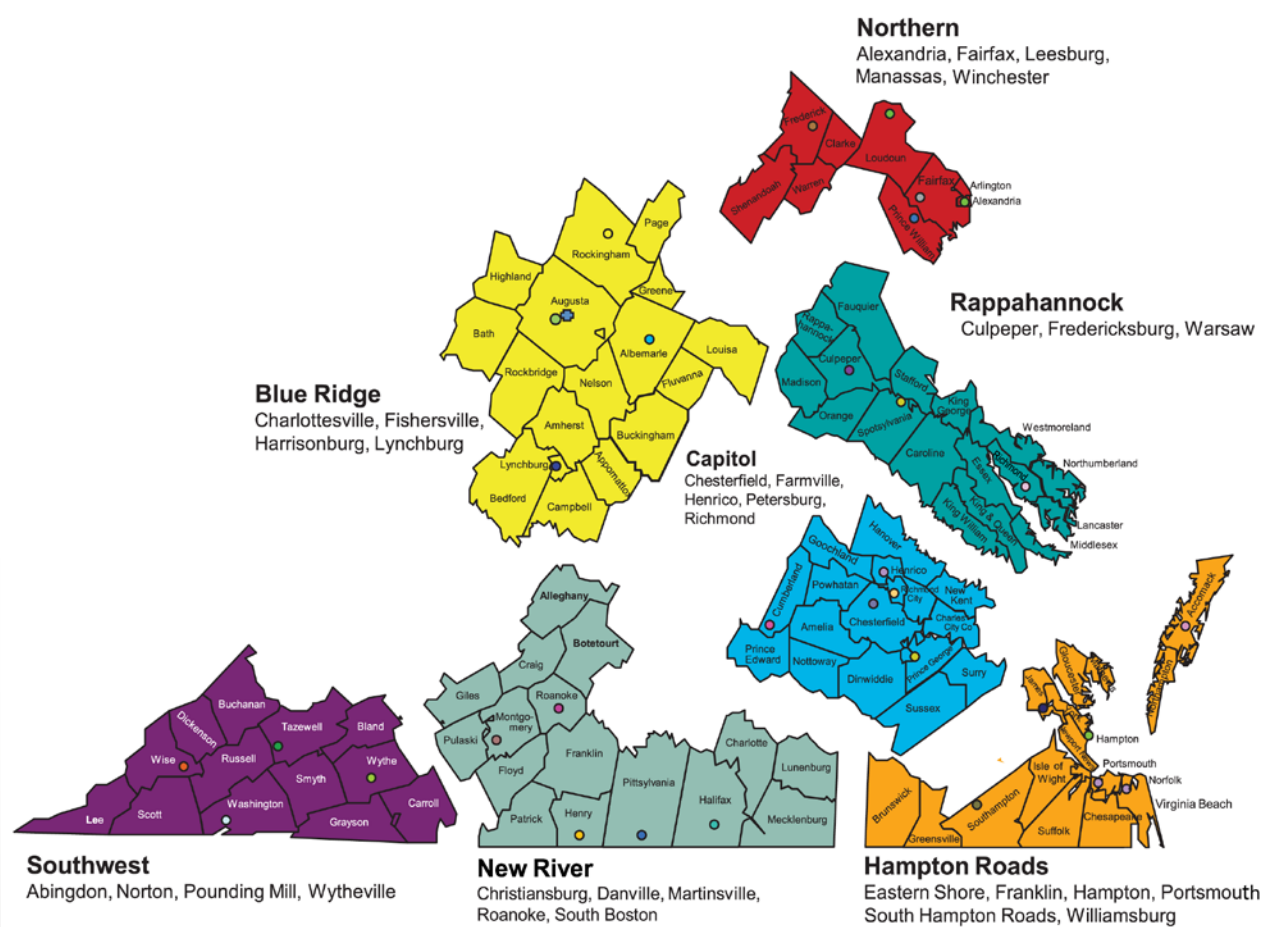
Highlights from the FFY 2016 survey are provided below. Percentages are similar to the previous two-year average (FFY 2014, 2015) and indicative of real time assessment (what was happening at the time of survey completion).

SURVEY ITEM	Percentage of "Yes" Responses
Have agreed with counselors on a plan for reaching their job goal	75%
Counselors were helpful in making connections	73%
Counselors kept in contact	71%
Counselors were meeting timetables	64%
Counselors were doing what they said they would do	74%
Consumers believed everyone was working together to help	74%

## IMPAIRMENTS OF NEW APPLICANTS IN 2017 (TOTAL 9,581)



## DIVISION OF REHABILITATIVE SERVICES DISTRICTS AND FIELD OFFICES



## WWRC 2017 PERFORMANCE OUTCOME DATA

### FFY 2017 WWRC VOCATIONAL TRAINING OUTCOME DATA

	Number of Successful Vocational Closures	% of Successful Vocational Closures (Rehabilitation Rate)	Average Hourly Wage
Auto Mechanics	5	83.3%	\$9.25
Building Trades	10	76.9%	\$9.64
External Training Option	57	89.1%	\$10.31
Food Service	22	88.0%	\$9.68
Health Occupations	17	94.4%	\$9.95
Materials Handling	43	87.8%	\$9.39
Business & Information Technology	29	69.0%	\$10.95
Manufacturing Technology	4	80.0%	\$13.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>187</b>	<b>84.2%</b>	<b>\$10.08</b>

### Number of DARS Vocational Rehabilitation Consumers Served by WWRC Service Area FFY17

Vocational Evaluation (VE) Total	1,116
VE (Non-PERT)	606
PERT	475
PERT Transition Academy	35
Vocational Training - Fully Enrolled	453
Pre-employment Readiness & Education Program (PREP)	474
Medical Rehab Services	1,192
Primary Medical Rehab Services	579

### Workforce Credentials Obtained, FFY 2017

STEM-H	
Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA)	9
CompTIA A+	8
Manufacturing Specialist (MS)	18
Manufacturing Technician 1 (MT1)	18
CPR and First Aid	38
OSHA-10	36
<b>STEM-H SubTotal</b>	<b>127</b>

### Other Industry Recognized

Career Readiness Certificate (CRC)	178
ServSafe	48
Customer Service Certificate (CSC)	258
VDOT Flagger	16
<b>Other Industry SubTotal</b>	<b>500</b>

## STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

### OUR MISSION

The mission of the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council, in partnership with the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, and in collaboration with advocacy groups, consumers and their families, is to ensure that Virginians with disabilities receive quality services while seeking to achieve meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.

### OUR VISION

All Virginians with disabilities will have access to quality services leading to meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.

### CONTACT US

#### CALL:

Voice: (800) 552-5019 | (804) 662-7000  
TTY: (800) 464-9950 | (804) 662-9040; Fax: (804) 662-7663

#### WRITE:

Chair, State Rehabilitation Council  
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

8004 Franklin Farms Drive  
Henrico, VA 23229

Email: [Jennifer.Woodward@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Woodward@dars.virginia.gov) | Online: [www.va-src.org](http://www.va-src.org)

Upon request, this report may be made available in Spanish or another language.  
Please contact: [Jennifer.Woodward@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Woodward@dars.virginia.gov) | 804-662-7663 (fax)

Jennifer Woodward  
DARS/State Rehabilitation Council  
8004 Franklin Farms Drive Henrico, VA 23229

## STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

If you are interested in a gubernatorial appointment to the Council, you may begin the application process with this form by indicating your:

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Please email, fax or mail this form to the SRC administrative assistant at:

[Jennifer.Woodward@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:Jennifer.Woodward@dars.virginia.gov) | 804-662-7663 (fax)

**Jennifer Woodward**  
**DARS/State Rehabilitation Council**  
**8004 Franklin Farms Drive**  
**Henrico, VA 23229**

Upon receipt, someone from the SRC will contact you to discuss your interest. However, to officially apply for this appointment, you must contact the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Office. You may obtain information about the formal application process by calling the Secretary's office at (804) 786-2441 or you may apply online at <https://commonwealth.virginia.gov>.

Thank you for your interest in the SRC.