

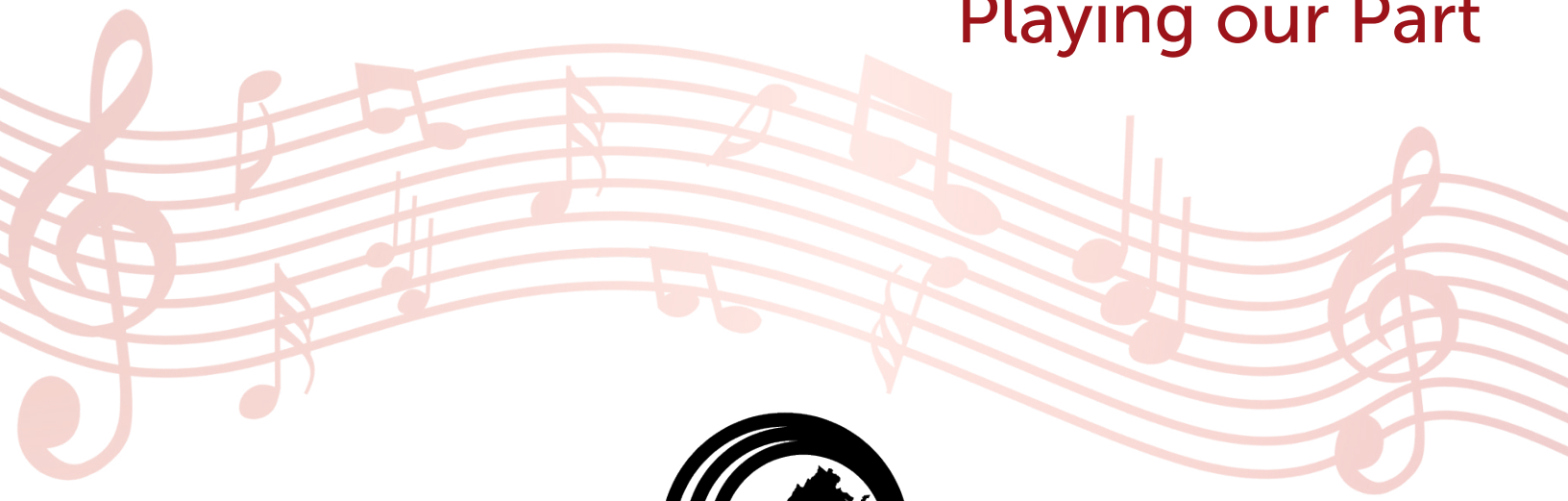
# State Rehabilitation Council

## 2025 Annual Report



# *A Symphony of Success*

## Playing our Part



VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING  
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES

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# Message from the SRC Chairperson and DARS Commissioner

It is my privilege to serve as chairperson of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services' (DARS) State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and to present this year's annual report. I am excited to chair the SRC and to be a part of such a talented group of individuals dedicated to working together to improve the employment opportunities and outcomes for students and adults with disabilities.

Our theme this year, "A Symphony of Success: Playing our Part," illustrates how every individual and organization plays a vital role in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) process. As we work in unison like an orchestra, our harmonious performance can lead to positive employment outcomes for each individual in the VR program. These individuals become an ensemble of those who have found the notes of success through determination, perseverance, and collaboration.

DARS continues to move forward in internal and external performance standards, including Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) measures. The agency's efforts and initiatives, in conjunction with its partners, have led to pay above minimum wage, reduced barriers to program and employment entry, expanded partnerships with school divisions through Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), and continued buildout of registered apprenticeship programs in high demand fields.

Partnerships with businesses across the Commonwealth continue to flourish, leading to focused employment

opportunities that empower individuals with disabilities to pursue job-choice in long-lasting careers.

DARS and the Council continue to prioritize reaching underserved communities and populations to ensure that individuals with disabilities have access to the support they need to succeed. The Council has provided a number of recommendations to DARS for the coming year, including continuing to identify and address barriers to service delivery in rural communities, to underserved populations, and to individuals for whom English is not their primary language. The SRC will also continue to focus on supporting the agency's efforts in increasing Pre-ETS outreach and opportunity. The SRC's recommendations in their entirety can be found on pages 5-6 of the annual report.

I would like to extend my heartfelt thanks to my fellow SRC members, DARS staff, and our community partners for their dedication and hard work. Together, we are making beautiful music on behalf of individuals with disabilities throughout Virginia.

Chris Martin  
SRC Chairperson



I am pleased to reflect on the accomplishments highlighted in this year's SRC Annual Report. I am especially grateful for the opportunity to work closely with the SRC. Their

insight, advocacy, and partnership have been invaluable in strengthening our VR program and ensuring that the voices of participants, families, and stakeholders guide our work.

This year's theme, "A Symphony of Success...Playing Our Part," captures the essence of what makes Virginia's VR program so effective. The success of each individual served by DARS is the result of many contributors – VR counselors, educators, families, employers, workforce

partners, and the individuals themselves – working together toward a shared goal.

As Virginia prepares to pass the baton to a new governor and administration in January 2026, our agency is actively engaged in ensuring a smooth, well-informed handoff. This transition brings an opportunity to reaffirm our mission, strengthen our programs, and continue advocating for the people we serve.

I extend my heartfelt thanks to the SRC for leading the way as DARS has "played its part" in upholding performance measures, outcomes, and satisfaction from our vocational rehabilitation participants. I remain inspired by the work that lies ahead for this agency and for the Commonwealth.

Kathy Hayfield  
DARS Commissioner



# VR Participant Success Stories

## From Homeless Teen to Hometown Leader of the Band



**W**hen you meet Malik Thornton, it's hard to imagine that the confident band director leading young musicians at Tunstall High School and Middle School once faced nights of uncertainty, couch-hopping between friends and relatives.

His journey from homelessness to a leadership role in the same halls where he once studied is a testament to perseverance, self-advocacy and the life-changing impact of vocational rehabilitation.

Everything began to change when Malik's special education teacher, Ms. Buchanan, introduced him to DARS and his future vocational rehabilitation counselor, Cindy Fisher.

Through DARS, Malik received not only financial support for tuition and supplies, but also the practical items he needed to succeed in college – dorm essentials, music books and basic living supplies.

At Longwood University, Malik thrived. He sang in choirs, performed in ensembles, joined a fraternity and served as

a student advocate for minority and disability inclusion. With the security of stable housing and the guidance of DARS, he was able to live fully as a student.

Today, Malik leads grades 6–12 as band director at both his former middle and high schools, overseeing ensembles from marching band to percussion. Walking the same halls he once roamed as a student, he now stands as a role model for the next generation.

"I get to be there for my students like my teachers were for me," Malik said. "My goal is to be a change-maker – helping students see what's possible for their lives, no matter where they're starting from."

**"Because DARS helped take care of those needs, I could focus on learning and being involved on campus," Malik said.**

In 2025, Malik was nominated for the DARS Champions of Disability Employment award, an honor recognizing individuals who embody resilience and achievement. Malik's definition of a champion? "Someone who perseveres, never takes no for an answer and doesn't let others define them. Advocate for yourself. Look for people who can help you. If I hadn't talked to Ms. Buchanan, I wouldn't be where I am today," Malik said.

## Finding Her Rhythm of Determination and Independence

**F**or Caitlyn Carrington Fair, success has been a steady journey of growth and self-discovery.

With guidance from DARS, she transformed her passion for graphic design into a fulfilling career and is turning her goals for independence into reality.

Caitlyn first connected with DARS in high school and continued receiving support while earning her Associate of Applied Science in Graphic Design from Northern Virginia Community College.

**"When my internship ended, they liked me so much that they offered me a full-time position," Caitlyn said.**

Through Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (WWRC), she gained valuable experience in work-based learning, workplace readiness and driving services. DARS also provided training in résumé writing and interview skills – all helping her prepare for life after college.

Her next opportunity came through the Federal Workforce Recruitment Program, which links college students and graduates with disabilities to federal employment. The experience helped Caitlyn gain professional confidence, earn a security clearance and build connections that led to full-time work.



Today, Caitlyn works as a federal contractor for the Defense Threat Reduction Agency, creating designs that support government communications. The role allows her creativity to shine while serving a greater purpose.

Now recognized as a 2025 Champion of Disability Employment, Caitlyn Carrington Fair is proof of how determination, talent and the right team of support can lead to meaningful achievement and lasting independence.

# SRC Recommendations

The SRC supports DARS in its commitment, in partnership with program participants and their informed choice, to provide services that prepare individuals with disabilities through career pathways to enter the workforce in sustainable jobs with livable wages that decrease poverty, improve their economic quality of life and independence, and reduce their reliance on public benefits. The following SRC recommendations will help further these shared goals.

**1** DARS shall continue to provide updates on WIOA performance measures, including the goals and targets established for these measures and DARS' progress towards those goals. DARS should provide detailed analysis of available data to the Council related to outcomes, occupations, and data with the expectation that the median hourly wage increases to \$16.00 per hour (\$17.50 per hour in the Northern district) to best align with increases in the minimum wage and the current economy, with the ultimate goal of a living wage of \$20.00 per hour for individuals who are not students with disabilities.

The Council requests that DARS provide a detailed analysis on data related to employment outcomes as broken down by occupation and industry sector at the first meeting of 2026.

**2** The Council continues to be interested in wage and earnings trends as impacted by clients' access to other benefits and wants individuals who receive DARS services to be empowered to make an informed choice regarding their employment and understand their options. DARS should report on ongoing benefits counseling services and outreach at the second meeting of 2026, including process details, current data, and historical trends. The Council requests that DARS monitor and report the SSI/SSDI status of individuals at application status as compared to closure.

The Council requests that DARS continue to provide and increase parent-focused education and awareness activities, including information about benefits counseling for students with disabilities, in collaboration with partner agencies/organizations, including the Virginia Department of Education (VDOE) and Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC) and report baseline information to the Council, as available.

**3** In order to increase successful closures, DARS should systematically examine barriers to service delivery, paying particular attention to marginalized and underserved populations, including tribal populations, groups experiencing language barriers, rural communities with limited broadband and transportation access, and youth in transition.

Targeted outreach should address language access through delivery of interpretation services and translated materials, technology and transportation support in underserved areas, and increased awareness among families and youth. These efforts, grounded in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) findings, will drive progress toward representative customer demographics, geographic access, and responsive service delivery.

DARS should work to increase accuracy in reporting and directed delivery of services to clients who report a language other than English as their primary language with a goal of a 10% increase in services provided to this population.

DARS should work to establish an enhanced relationship with one Virginia-based tribe for the purpose of sharing information and improving access to VR services.

**4** DARS should increase by 40% the number of VR services, including Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS), provided by Centers for Independent Living across the Commonwealth.

**5** DARS will report on business development efforts including collaboration with Employment Service Organizations (ESOs), workforce development partners, and businesses that support the hiring of individuals with disabilities with an emphasis on the practices and procedures to onboard these partners at the third SRC meeting of 2026.

**6** The Council requests quarterly updates on the winding down of the Pathways grant and efforts to integrate Pathways activities into the VR program.

**7** The SRC would like DARS, including WWRC, to continue to expand virtual programs that deliver VR resources and education to those who can benefit from remote learning and services, while identifying and addressing access challenges (including technological literacy) that may prevent some Virginians from fully utilizing these options. The Council requests quarterly updates on the delivery of these services and the impact on credential and measurable skill gain measures.

**8** DARS should serve more students with disabilities and the Council requests that DARS provides quarterly reports on efforts to serve this population, particularly students with disabilities.

a. DARS should continue to increase outreach to local education agencies, families, and students regarding the availability of and access to transition and Pre-ETS services. Increase collaboration between DARS, the VDOE, other community partners including providers, and local education agencies.

## SRC Recommendations (cont.)

- b. DARS should identify and report on local education agencies in which Pre-ETS is under-utilized and conduct direct outreach in order to increase service availability and delivery. DARS Transition Services should report on any barriers to continued outreach and contemplated or implemented solutions.
- c. Data on types of services utilized, geographic trends, and information on the frequency with which students who receive Pre-ETS services move on to VR services should be evaluated and reported to the SRC.

- d. DARS should continue to expand work-based learning experiences for transition age youth. DARS should increase by 25% the number of transition age youth participating in work-based learning experiences, with deliberate efforts to achieve increases that are geographically and occupationally diverse.

**9** DARS should review and strengthen its internal data collection processes to improve the accuracy and completeness of information reported to the Council, particularly data on client barriers such as foster care involvement, homelessness, and juvenile justice history.

## SRC Activities

The Virginia State Rehabilitation Council held four quarterly business meetings and an Annual Retreat during Federal Fiscal Year 2025 (October 1, 2024 through September 30, 2025). The Council held its physical meetings at DARS Headquarters in Henrico County, a central location for membership and DARS support staff. The Council held its first physical meetings of Federal Fiscal Year 2026 in November at the Headquarters of the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired in Henrico County while the DARS Headquarters was being relocated. The Council looks forward to holding its March 2026 business meeting in the new DARS Headquarters space.

At each meeting, Council members reported on the activities of the constituencies they represent and their advocacy efforts. Members also shared information on successes and obstacles and had the opportunity for robust discourse with DARS leadership.

### 2025 SRC Activity Highlights:

- The SRC held its four quarterly meetings and its annual retreat in-person. Quarterly meetings remain an active and invaluable forum for the Council to provide advice, information, and support for Virginia DARS' vocational rehabilitation and supported employment programs.
- Five SRC committees carried out business outside of full Council meetings— an Executive Committee, Nominations Committee, Annual Report Committee, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment Committee, Hearing Officer Committee, and Consumer Satisfaction Survey Committee. Each of these committees provided updates to the full Council on its areas of focus.
- The DARS Commissioner, an ex officio Council member, provided the Council with routine agency updates and was pleased to report on the agency's progress and completion in relocating DARS Headquarters.
- Pursuant to the Memorandum of Agreement approved in August 2025, DARS will continue to administer the Consumer Satisfaction Survey on the SRC's behalf into FFY 2026.
- The Council welcomed many new gubernatorial appointees, who quickly got to work on Council business.
- Executive Committee elections were held in August 2025, with the new Chair and Vice Chair poised to lead the Committee and Council in these roles for the year.



*Pictured L to R: Frederick Foard, Lillian Garland, Becky Alwood, Travis Staton, Heidi Lawyer, Christopher Martin, Commissioner Kathy Hayfield, Gayl Brunk, Brandy Schantz, Lee Talley, Patricia Morgan, Yohance Goodrich, Ryan Haywood, and Nick Zweerink.*



## SRC Activities (cont.)

- Updates on DARS' Division of Rehabilitative Services performance outcomes, successes, and barriers were provided regularly by the Deputy Commissioner of DRS and the VR Director of the Wilson Workforce and Rehabilitation Center (or their designees).
- The SRC kept up with significant developments and highlights in DARS' VR Programs, including Field Rehabilitative Services, Workforce Programs, and Employment Services and Special Programs with presentations from Program Directors.
- DARS' Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs provided the Council with updates and sought input on policy and regulatory changes.
- DARS currently has three Fair Hearing Officers under contract to handle requests that may arise. The SRC Hearing Officer Committee reviewed proposals from the three IFBs that were released this past year. This effort netted two new Hearing Officers, with whom DARS now has contracts in place for 2025-2026. In addition, the Council renewed a contract for an existing hearing officer for the same period.

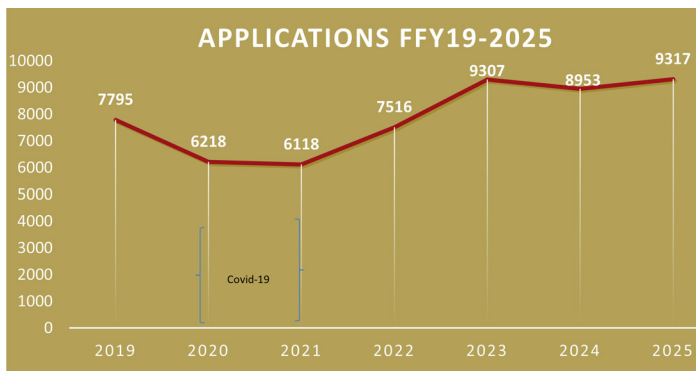
## VR Performance Outcomes

### VR Participants Served:

- 24,400 participants were served in FFY25, an increase of 1.8% from 2024 (23,957)
- FFY 2025 had the highest number of clients open in the past 7 years (see chart to right)

### VR Applications:

- 9,317 applications for VR service were processed, a 4% increase from 2024



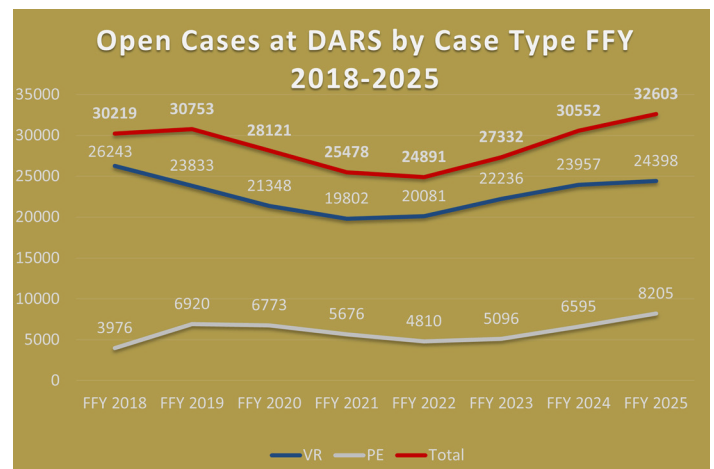
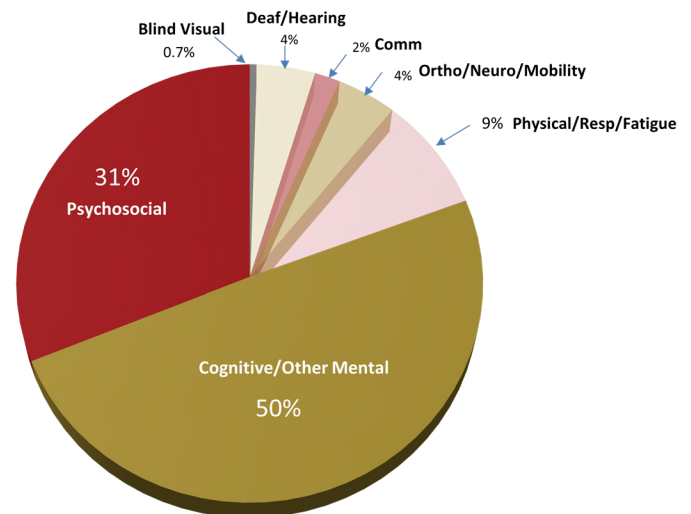
Note: The numbers have recovered to pre-pandemic levels.

- 3,652 Potentially Eligible (PE) applications were received for students with disabilities, an increase of 50 from 2024
- 7,136 Individual Plans for Employment were completed, an increase of 423 from 2024
- 2,871 individuals successfully closed their case with employment, an increase of 314 from 2024

### WIOA Performance measures:

- 2nd quarter employed at 54%
- 4th quarter employed at 54%
- Median earnings 2nd quarter after closure \$4,275
- Credential attainment 31%
- Measurable Skill Gain 76%

### Primary Disabilities of VR Clients in FFY 2025



# VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey

On behalf of the State Rehabilitation Council, DARS administers the annual Consumer Satisfaction Survey. It assesses participants who are currently receiving vocational rehabilitation services through the Division of Rehabilitative Services (DRS). The satisfaction survey captures feedback from participants for five primary questions, as well as optional follow-up questions and demographic information.

For FFY 2025, a total of 447 surveys were completed out of 2,852 sent by email, resulting in a 17.2 percent response rate. The graphs in this section show a general overview of consumer satisfaction for 2025.

**Note:** In previous years, satisfaction in these areas was measured using “Yes,” “No,” or “Do Not Know” responses. In FFY 2025, the survey format was updated where respondents were asked to rate their agreement with a series of statements using a six-point scale: “Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree, or Do Not Know/Not Applicable.”

## Overall Consumer Satisfaction

An overall satisfaction score was calculated by adding up the scores of the five primary questions and organized into the following:

- Very Satisfied (score greater than 17.5 out of 20)
- Satisfied (score between 12.5 and 17.5 out of 20)
- Neutral (score between 7.5 and 12.5 out of 20)
- Dissatisfied (score between 2.5 and 7.5 out of 20)
- Very Dissatisfied (score less than 2.5 out of 20)

Based on their responses, nearly 61% of clients were satisfied or very satisfied with the services they received through DARS. Meanwhile, about 20% were neutral or had a mixed experience, and about 20% were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied.

The following chart displays the relative rates of satisfaction, both statewide and by district.

## Net Promoter Score

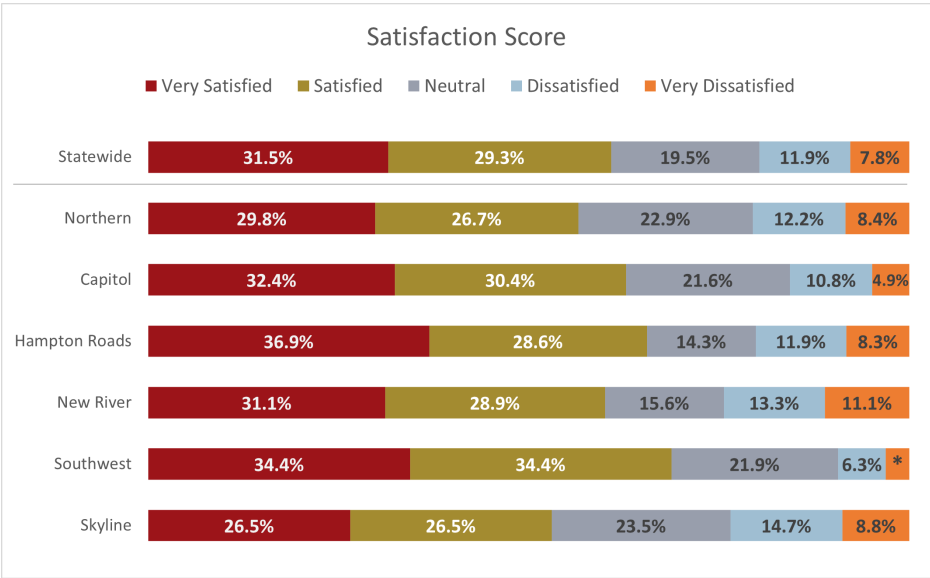
The Net Promoter Score is a single question that asks clients to rate how likely they would be to recommend DARS to someone in their situation on a scale of 1 to 10. :

Responses are sorted into three categories:

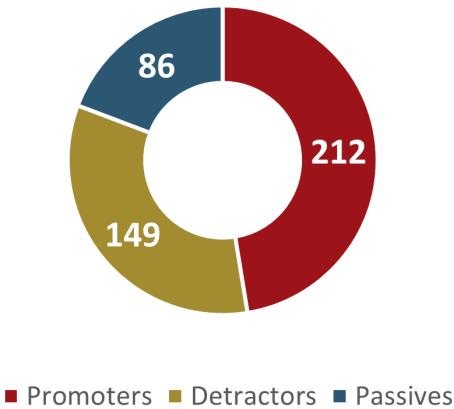
- Promoters (those who rate a 9 or 10)
- Passives (those who rate a 7 or 8)
- Detractors (those who rate less than 6)

The final Net Promoter Score is calculated by subtracting the percentage of Detractors from the percentage of Promoters. A score above 0 is considered good, +20 is considered favorable, and +50 is considered excellent<sup>1</sup>.

For FFY 2025, 212 respondents were categorized as Promoters, 86 were Passives, and 149 were Detractors, resulting in a moderately positive Net Promoter Score of +14.1.



## Net Promoter Score



<sup>1</sup><https://www.qualtrics.com/experience-management/customer/net-promoter-score>

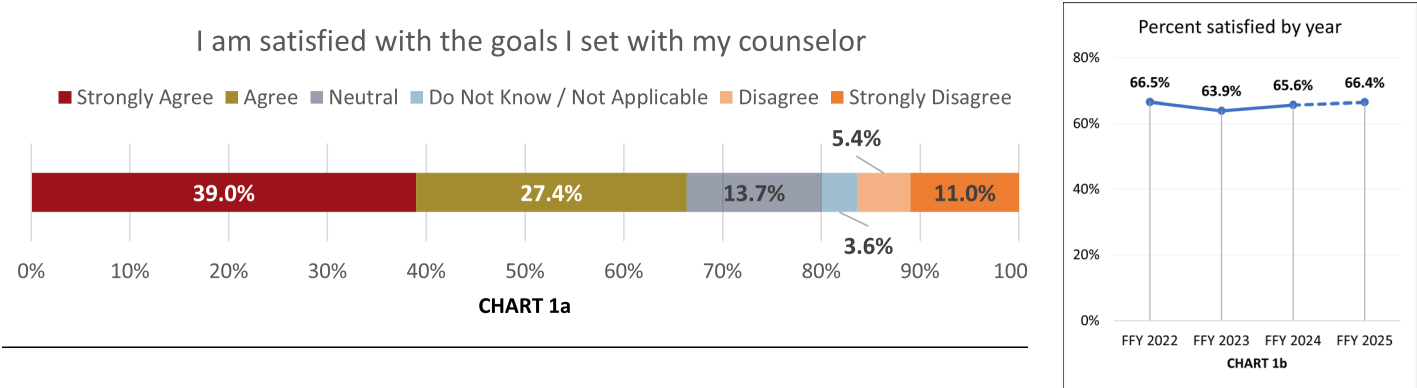


# VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey (cont.)

## Q1: I am satisfied with the goals I set with my counselor.

Nearly two-thirds of respondents either strongly agreed (39%) or agreed (27%) that they were satisfied with the goals set with their counselor (Chart 1a). Meanwhile, 16% either strongly disagreed, or disagreed, with an additional 17% being neutral, unsure, or believing the question did not apply.

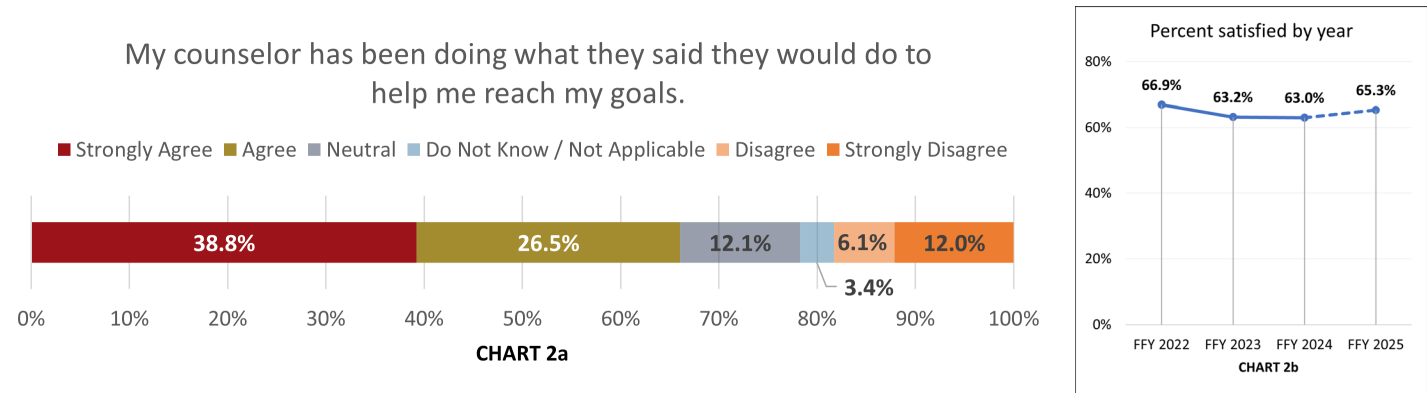
Chart 1b shows the rate at which respondents were satisfied with their plan goals over the past four years. For 2025, 66% of clients indicated satisfaction with their goals, almost 1% higher than in 2024. Note that the dotted line indicates the switch from the old survey format to the new survey format, which may have affected consumer responses.



## Q2: My counselor has been doing what they said they would do to help me reach my goals.

Overall, 38.8% of respondents strongly agreed that their counselor had been doing what they had agreed upon to help the client reach their goals (Chart 2a). An additional 26.5% also agreed with this sentiment. In comparison, 12% strongly disagreed and 6% disagreed with this item and an additional 15.5% were neutral or unsure.

The total percentage of satisfied responses increased 2% compared to 2024, approaching the previous high of nearly 67% in 2022 (Chart 2b).



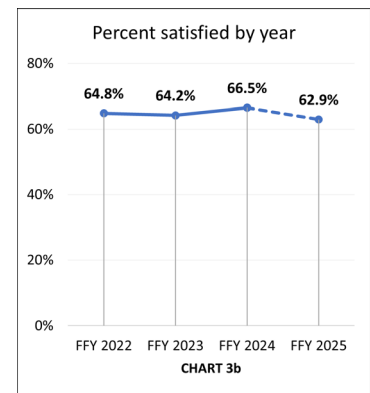
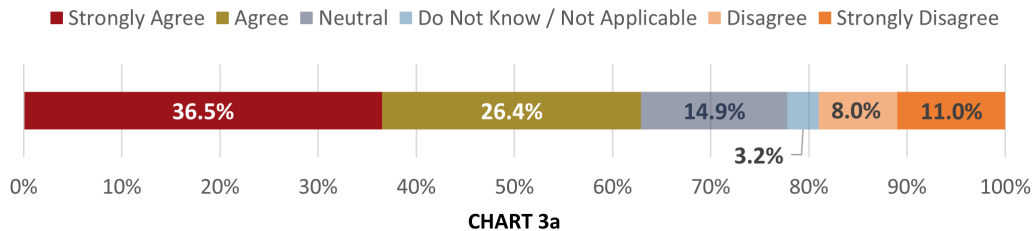
## Q3: My DARS office has been helpful in connecting me with the people and services I need to reach my job goal.

In all, 36.5% of respondents strongly agreed and 26.4% agreed that their DARS office had connected them to people and services that they needed to reach their goals. Meanwhile, 11.0% strongly disagreed and 8% disagreed. The remaining 18% responded with neutral or were unsure (Chart 3a).

Overall, this represents a satisfaction rate 3.6% lower than in 2024, and the lowest rate since 2020 (Chart 3b).

# VR Consumer Satisfaction Survey (cont.)

My DARS office has been helpful in connecting me with the people and services I need to reach my job goal.

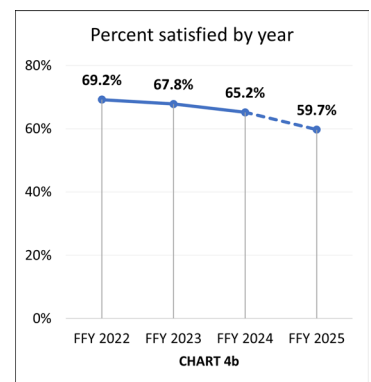
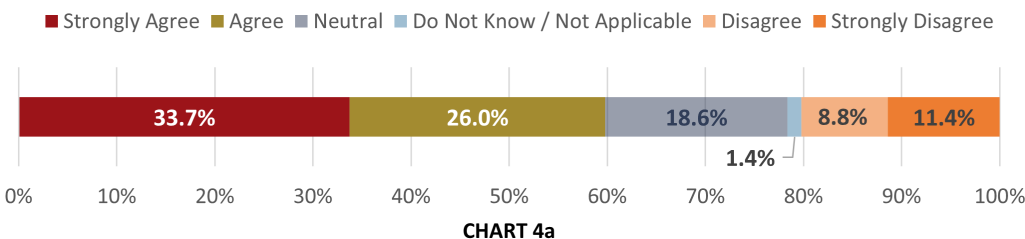


## Q4: I am satisfied with how my DARS office has kept in contact with me.

Just over half of all respondents indicated that they strongly agreed (33.7%) or agreed (26.0%) that their DARS office had been keeping in regular contact. On the other hand, 11.4% strongly disagreed and 8.8% disagreed (Chart 4a).

When comparing these numbers to previous years, we see that overall satisfaction with counselor contact has continued to decline. In fact, if we look back even further in time, we see that this metric has consistently declined each year from 2022 (Chart 4b).

I am satisfied with how my DARS office has kept in contact

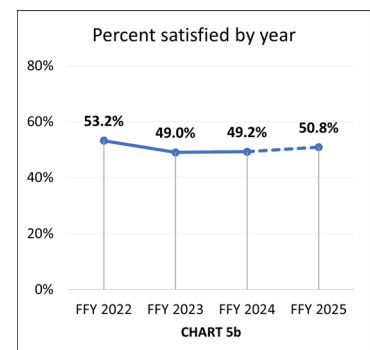
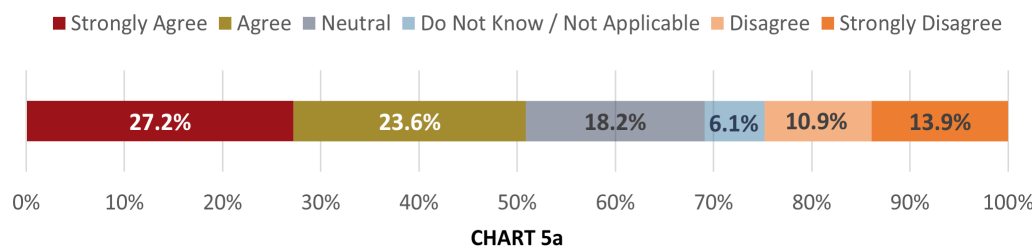


## Q5: I feel like I am moving toward employment in a timely manner.

This question has historically received the lowest ratings in the survey. The chances of finding employment often depend on a number of factors that are difficult to predict and outside of DARS' control. That being said, 27.2% of respondents strongly agreed that they were moving toward employment in a timely matter, with another 23.6% agreeing (Chart 5a).

On the other hand, 13.9% and 10.9% strongly disagreed and disagreed, respectively. Out of all the questions, this item also had the highest percentage of respondents who were neutral or unsure at 24.3%. Compared to previous years, overall satisfaction in this area remains relatively steady, with a slight 1.6% increase since 2024 (Chart 5b).

I feel like I am moving toward employment in a timely manner



# VR Program Highlights

## We are VR – FRS Year in Review

The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS), Field Services Department (FRS), ensures statewide vocational rehabilitation (VR) service availability through 30 DARS/DRS field offices.

The 2025 program year brought continued expansion of DARS' presence throughout local communities that has positively impacted the provision of vocational rehabilitation and Pre-Employment and Transition Services (Pre-ETS) across the Commonwealth.

### Strategic Framework Process

FRS began its program years with a comprehensive internal review building upon the findings of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The strategic process initiated reviewed internal practices to better align with technology and practice advances and streamlined workflow to increase performance outcomes and consumer and employee satisfaction.

This initiative, currently underway, called the FRS Strategic Framework, will lead to comprehensive strategic planning efforts scheduled to begin January 2026.

Practice enhancements this year included e-signature to better facilitate consumer experience, pilot initiatives for dedicated Intake Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors as well as better leveraging internal programs to meet the needs of consumers across the Commonwealth.

FRS launched the 'Growth Compass' leadership development program which is dedicated to enhancing opportunities for staff across DRS to increase their personal and professional leadership goals.

FRS continued to focus efforts on successful onboarding and training of new VR counselors. The New Counselor Skills Training redesign is in its third year of implementation.

VR counselors report better functional skill and policy understanding as well as ability to facilitate caseload management, which that allows more time for client interaction and positively impacts staff morale.

Providing comprehensive and thorough training for all VR staff will remain a key priority for addressing staff recruitment and retention.

## Windmills Training

In FFY 2025, the DARS Workforce Programs team presented 49 Windmills Employment Disability Inclusion

training sessions to 2,030 individuals with public agencies, businesses and community partners.

DARS offers monthly and customized sessions, including an "IGREET" training for ESO staff on the dual customer approach to business development. Facilitated by DARS' Business Development Managers, 76 Employment Service Organizations (ESOs) staff have registered to complete the four sessions.

### Food City promotes Windmills training

DARS partnered with Food City to continue to offer Windmills training throughout 2025. The business has a goal of training all Food City management staff in Windmills. Food City is the top employer of DARS consumers in Southwest Virginia.

In addition, DARS and Food City are working on a customer service module for DARS participants to promote customer service and career pathways within retail environments and to earn a credential such as the National Retail Federation certification.

### Good Life Cafe Financial Empowerment

The GoodLife CAFÉ (Community Access, Financial Empowerment) project—funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living and Rehabilitation Research (NIDILRR)—has completed its multi-year study on how financial coaching and ABLE accounts support transition-age youth who receive Social Security benefits.

As part of the project, DARS also released results from the Survey Exploring My Life and Future (SELF). More than 1,000 DARS participants age 18 and older voluntarily responded. The survey explored participants' goals, supports, decision-making, and community involvement.

### Key Findings:

- Financial coaching and ABLE accounts are linked to stronger self-efficacy, self-determination, and goal-directed behavior
- Participants with ABLE accounts reported even higher gains, including increased life satisfaction

### New E-learning Course

A major project outcome is a new four-module e-learning course designed to help counselors integrate financial empowerment into services. After final approval, the National Disability Institute will professionally produce the training. It will be available to all DARS staff and Work Incentive Specialists to help promote higher earnings and greater financial independence for participants.

# VR Program Highlights (cont.)

## Expanded Outreach and Education

DARS has strengthened financial literacy outreach through:

- Bi-monthly lunch-and-learns open to participants, families, staff, partners, and the public
- Financial boot camps in field offices, incorporating ABLE and financial literacy content
- Collaboration with the Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired (DBVI), which has requested additional guidance from the Financial Empowerment Project Manager

## Work Incentives and SSA Beneficiaries

At the request of our Work Incentives Specialist Advocates (WISAs), DARS focused training opportunities on the impact of self-employment on SSI and SSDI in FFY 2025.

This year's topics included:

- How SSA calculates net income from self-employment
- Work incentives specific to self-employment, such as unpaid help, unincurred business expenses, and IRWEs
- Reporting self-employment income to SSA and the Department of Social Services for Medicaid purposes

DARS hosts regular program and training updates with its WISAs and Partnership Plus partners. DARS presented at the Spring 2025 VaACCSES Provider Conference on SSA policy updates, and a training on Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts for the Staunton Community Services Board. An estimated 115 individuals attended these events.

For the same reporting period, there were 1,832 total WISA service authorizations, totaling approximately \$655,000. Across the state, DARS works with 135 WISA providers.

## Alternate Hiring Process (AHP)

In FFY 2025, 1,282 Alternate Hiring Process letters (formerly Certificate of Disability) were requested and 684 issued from DARS/DBVI to non-VR participants; 71 new VR cases were opened from referrals stemming from AHP requests.

Starting in February 2025, DARS began offering a 2-hour Zoom session to non-DARS AHP letter recipients on the Alternative Hiring Process, DARS services, how to navigate the Virginia Jobs website, and guidance on job seeking strategies.

## Community Partner Engagement

The Virginia Adult Learning Resource Center (VALRC) supports Title II Adult Education programs across the state by providing professional development and instructional design for adult learners, including English language learners.

## Supporting English Learners Through Job Club

VALRC's ESOL Specialist adapted DARS' stand-alone Job Club modules into a five-week, instructor-led online course designed for English learners building their employability skills. The course included:

- Lesson plans tailored for virtual learning
- Weekly live sessions and office hours
- Customized assistance with resumes, interviewing, job search strategies, and goal-setting

Learners can access the Job Club modules on the VALRC website at <https://valrc.org/job-club-modules>.

## PACE Certification Prep for DARS Participants

Pathways partnered with VALRC's Workforce Education Specialist and Director to adapt the Professional Administrator Certification in Excellence (PACE) curriculum into a four-month virtual program for individuals seeking PACE certification. Highlights included:

- Weekly 90-minute afternoon and evening sessions
- A custom study guide to reinforce the course modules
- Ten participants enrolled, all preparing for their certification exam in early November

## On-the-Job Tutoring for Workplace Success

To support a candidate experiencing workplace learning challenges, VALRC and DARS partnered to provide targeted, on-the-job tutoring. The support model included:

- Weekly in-person sessions focused on writing, grammar, and workflow tools
- A weekly virtual check-in to review progress and identify new support needs
- Three hours of weekly onsite coaching to reinforce job duties in real time

Sessions covered phone message skills, document editing, email writing, and professional communication.

## Connecting With Families and Communities

Pathways Latinx/ESOL Specialist Martha Caraballo presented in Spanish at the Virtual Special Education Summit, introducing 38 families and caregivers to DARS and Pathways to Careers services. She explained the stages of Pre-Employment Transition Services and how they help students move toward post-secondary goals.



## VR Program Highlights (cont.)

Martha also presented DARS and Pathways services to Liberty University staff who work with culturally diverse individuals with disabilities.

### Strengthening Apprenticeship Pathways

Pathways and Virginia Works continue to build shared knowledge and resources to expand Registered Apprenticeship (RA) opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Recent work included:

- Training new Virginia Works consultants on Pathways and DARS services
- Joint meetings on braided funding and shared employer connections
- Collaboration to provide the RA Liaison access to the national RAPIDS apprenticeship software
- A new Memorandum of Understanding, now fully signed by both agencies

### Assistive Technology Services

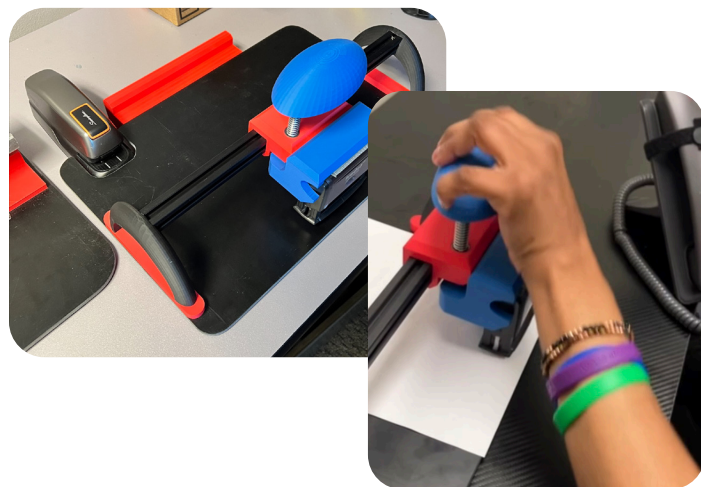
DARS' Assistive Technology (AT) programs, delivered through field VR services and the Virginia Assistive Technology System (VATS), continue to provide life-changing supports to individuals with disabilities. AT professionals offer assessments, training, custom fabrication, equipment demonstrations, and device loans to help individuals work, communicate, learn, move, and live more independently.

### Rehab Engineering: Innovation Through 3D Printing

DARS Rehab Engineering staff used 3D printing to create customized solutions tailored to individual work goals.

This year's projects included:

- Signature Stamping Device – fabricated by the DARS rehab engineering team to help a client maintain their position and work more efficiently completing critical office tasks -signing and stapling.



- Wheelchair Grab Handles with Swing-Clear Lever Extension – This device combines the stability of front-mounted grab bars with the functionality of a swing-clear lever extension. The client is using 3D printed grab handles to support safe transfers at work.



- One-Handed Clothes Hanger Clip Opener – This adaptive tool helps a client to open clothes hanger clips of various sizes using only one hand at a retail store.



These tools demonstrate the team's creativity in removing barriers to employment.

### New OT staff

To meet rising demand for customized AT services in the VR program, DARS added a fifth full-time occupational therapist/AT specialist to the statewide team. Based in Hampton Roads, this position ensures faster, more responsive services for clients, staff, and employers.

### Trainings

Field VR staff delivered a wide array of AT trainings—both in-person and virtual—to clients, counselors, employers, and service partners. Topics included Windmills, Time Management, College Prep, Sensory Processing, and AT service overviews. These cutting-edge trainings often spark new initiatives modeled by other state VR programs.

## VR Program Highlights (cont.)

### VATS: Statewide Impact and Growing Demand

In FY24, VATS served 7,352 Virginians – an 11% increase from FY23 – through AT demonstrations, short-term device loans, durable medical equipment (DME) reuse, training, and information services.

VATS continued to build AT awareness statewide:

- 566 AT training participants served
- 701 AT demonstrations
- 441 short-term device loans
- 611 individuals assisted through Information and Assistance

VATS and its contracted DME reuse partners:

- Served 5,142 Virginians with limited resources – up 13% from FY23.

- Distributed 7,506 pieces of gently used DME valued at \$3.9 million.
- Since 2006, provided 58,284 devices to more than 41,974 individuals, saving Virginians an estimated \$25 million.
- Served 83 DARS clients this year; more than 1,210 DARS clients have benefited since 2010.

### Improved DME Shelter Kits for Disaster Response

Following lessons learned from Hurricane Helene, VATS updated DME Shelter Kits used by the Virginia Department of Emergency Management.

Kits now include expanded mobility equipment, bathroom safety items, and limited hygiene supplies—enhancing safety, comfort, and dignity for Virginians with functional needs during emergencies.

## WWRC Program Highlights

### WWRC Launches First Pre-ETS Academy

WWRC successfully completed its first Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Academy, offering students a week of training across all five required Pre-ETS areas. A highlight of the academy was visits to local employers that enriched the experience. Family feedback reflected exceptional student engagement and growth.

The Academy helped support school Individualized Education Program (IEP) case managers in creating age-appropriate transition goals for their students enrolled in secondary education.

Lastly, the academy advanced the SRC Recommendation to expand outreach and work-based learning to improve employment outcomes at graduation.

### Building Trades Program Achieves Full NCCER Integration

In response to new WIOA requirements, the Building Trades program implemented the NCCER Core credential into its 18-week curriculum. Instructors completed certification, restructured coursework, and successfully prepared students for credentialing.

The first cohort achieved the following results:

- 8 out of 8 students obtained the NCCER Core Card (passing 2 out of 8 modules) for a 100% pass rate.
- 5 out of 8 students obtained the Basic Safety

- Certificate (Construction Site Safety Orientation) for a 63% pass rate.
- 5 out of 8 students obtained the NCCER Core (Industry Recognized Credential) for a 63% pass rate.

### Job Shadow Month Connects Students to Local Employers

For Job Shadow Month, the DRS Fishersville office, WWRC, and local employers partnered to host a job shadow and tour event at the center, engaging 27 students and staff from Augusta County, Waynesboro and Staunton City local school divisions.

This job shadow event strengthened regional school partnerships and supported statewide goals to expand Pre-ETS outreach.





# WWRC Program Highlights

## VDOE Leadership Explores WWRC Programs

WWRC welcomed the Virginia Department of Education's Office of Career and Technical Education to tour campus and explore options for a specialized VDOE teaching license for WWRC staff because of its status as a State Operated Program (SOP). This visit deepened collaboration with state and local education agencies and aligned with statewide efforts to expand access to transition services.



## Outreach Spotlights Transition Opportunities

WWRC leadership and DARS Transition Specialists presented at the VCU Partnership for People with Disabilities TBI Summer Institute, highlighting WWRC's postsecondary programs and DARS' Pre-ETS services. This training broadened awareness among educators and professionals serving students with disabilities.



This staff also presented at the PEATC Parent and Youth Empowerment Summit, equipping families with tools to improve postsecondary outcomes and empower youth as self-advocates. The event helped broaden outreach to parents and community networks.

## JMU SPED Students Gain Firsthand Insight

Students enrolled in the Special Education (SPED) Teacher Education program at James Madison University toured WWRC as part of their transition curriculum, gaining firsthand exposure to programs and services they will reference throughout their careers. This strengthens long-term collaboration with future educators statewide.



## Canvas Course Development Expands Digital Learning

Significant progress was made in expanding WWRC's digital learning environment through Canvas. New or enhanced courses were developed across Automotive, Building Trades, Business, Work Readiness, JSS, PERT, and Driver's Education.

Additional achievements include:

- A new SharePoint registration system for future external courses
- Ongoing technical support for instructors
- Plans for quarterly Canvas training sessions

These efforts ensure students have flexible access to coursework whether in class, remote, or self-paced.

## WIOA Program Review Strengthens Alignment for 2025

The Vocational Training Department completed a comprehensive review to ensure all training programs align with WIOA standards for 2025. This effort aligned each program's O\*Net codes, career pathways, credentials, assessments, and benchmarks. The work involved collaboration across Vocational Evaluation, PERT, OT, Counseling, Admissions, ESS, and WRP.

# WWRC Performance Outcomes

FFY 2025 Consumers Served by Service Area	
Postsecondary Rehabilitation Transition (PERT) Program	641
Driving Services	579
Vocational Evaluation	514
Vocational Training served**	413
Workplace Readiness (WRP) Program*	353
Vocational Training Graduates	204
Exploration Academies (high school)***	14
Other Academies (adult)***	9
<i>*Program began in April 2023</i> <i>** Represents all individuals served and will include individuals still being served in FFY2025</i> <i>*** Measure started in 2025</i>	

FFY 2025 WIOA Credentials Obtained	Number
Manufacturing Skills Institute (MSI)	37
Manufacturing Technician 1	23
Manufacturing Specialist	19
PERT NRF Retail Fundamentals	18
NRF Customer Service & Sales	15
ASE Maintenance & Light Repair	11
Pre-Service Training for Child Care	10
NCCER Core	10
FAA Drone Pilot	4
NRF Supply Chain, Inventory, Logistics	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>150</b>

Vocational Training Graduates	Number
External Training Option (ETO)	54
Materials Handling	46
Manufacturing Technology Training	31
Food Service	30
Auto Mechanics	13
Building Trades	11
Materials Handling - Forklift Operator	11
Business	8
<b>Total</b>	<b>204</b>

FFY 2025 Other Credentials/ Certifications Obtained	Number
Clorox Pro Health Clean	264
OSHA10	93
Drivers License	46
Forklift Operator	40
Drivers Learners Permit	39
ServSafe Food Handler	39
Microsoft Office Specialist	15
NCCER Basic Safety Certificate	13
CPR & First Aid	11
NCCER Core Card	11
Child Abuse & Neglect	10
Microsoft Office Suite (passed 3 exams)	9
Microsoft Office Expert	2
<b>Total</b>	<b>592</b>



# SRC Information

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## 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.

## Attend a Meeting

The quarterly SRC meetings are open to the public. Meeting locations, dates and times are posted at these websites:

[www.va-src.virginia.gov](http://www.va-src.virginia.gov)

<https://commonwealthcalendar.virginia.gov>

## Call

Voice: (800) 552-5019 | (804) 662-7000

Videophone: (804) 325-1316

Fax: (804) 662-7663

## Write

Chair, State Rehabilitation Council  
Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services  
5620 Cox Rd.  
Glen Allen, VA 23060

To request this report in Spanish or another language contact:

Meghan Cox  
DARS/State Rehabilitation Council  
5620 Cox Rd.  
Glen Allen, VA 23060  
[Meghan.Cox@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:Meghan.Cox@dars.virginia.gov)

# SRC 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: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Please email, fax or mail this form to the SRC Administrator:

Meghan Cox  
DARS/State Rehabilitation Council  
5620 Cox Rd.  
Glen Allen, VA 23060

Questions? Contact [Meghan.Cox@dars.virginia.gov](mailto:Meghan.Cox@dars.virginia.gov)

Point your phone camera  
at this image and click to  
visit the SRC website.



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 applying online at <https://www.commonwealth.virginia.gov/va-government/boards-and-commissions>.

**Thank you for your interest in the Virginia State Rehabilitation Council.**

Click on link or map below to view directory of DRS field offices: <https://www.dars.virginia.gov/drs>





VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT FOR AGING  
AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES



[www.dars.virginia.gov/drs](http://www.dars.virginia.gov/drs)