



COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA

Department Of Human Resource Management

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The Honorable Glenn Youngkin, Governor of Virginia
The Honorable Luke Torian, Chair, House Appropriations Committee
The Honorable L. Louise Lucas, Chair, Senate Finance and Appropriations Committee

Subject: Progress Report on Employment Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

Pursuant to Section 2.2-203.2:3 of the *Code of Virginia*, the attached report documents the Commonwealth's achievement of the legislative mandate to increase disability employment by five percentage points from the 2017 baseline.

Virginia has achieved 5.53% representation of employees with disabilities, exceeding the target. This represents an 806% increase in absolute numbers, from 321 employees (2017) to 2,911 employees (FY25), and reflects a fundamental transformation in state government employment practices.

This report outlines the infrastructure developed to support sustainable inclusive employment, the strategic partnerships that enabled success, and our vision for maintaining and building upon the achievement. Virginia's comprehensive approach, including our legislative mandate structure and Department of Human Resource Management-Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services partnership model, has positioned the Commonwealth to share best practices with other states.

Please contact me if there are any questions.

Sincerely,


Janet L. Lawson
Director

Enclosures

cc: Secretary Lyn McDermid

An Equal Opportunity Employer

Executive Summary

The Commonwealth has achieved a significant milestone in inclusive employment by fulfilling the legislative mandate established in Code of Virginia § 2.2-203.2:3 to increase disability employment by five percentage points from the 2017 baseline. Virginia's achievement of 5.53% representation reflects not merely compliance with state law, but a fundamental transformation in how the Commonwealth approaches talent acquisition, workplace culture, and organizational excellence.

With the 2017 enactment of this legislative mandate, Virginia became one of the first states to establish comprehensive statutory goals for disability employment, distinguishing our approach from states relying solely on executive orders or voluntary commitments. Combined with Virginia's innovative Department of Human Resource Management (DHRM)-Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services (DARS) partnership model and comprehensive infrastructure development, this approach has demonstrated how systematic, sustained effort yields transformational results.

Key Achievement Metrics:

- 5.53% representation achieved, exceeding the 5.51% legislative target
- 806% increase in absolute numbers, from 321 employees (2017) to 2,911 employees (FY25)
- 5.02 percentage point increase from the 2017 baseline of 0.51%
- 54 successful Alternative Hiring Process hires in FY25 (116% increase from FY24)
- 14 career advancement conversions (367% increase from FY24)
- 350 veterans with disabilities employed, demonstrating comprehensive inclusion

This achievement reflects the collaborative commitment of agency leadership, HR professionals, and employees across the Commonwealth. Virginia's success was enabled by systematic infrastructure development during FY22-FY24, including establishment of the DARS liaison position, implementation of voluntary disclosure systems, development of the Alternative Hiring Process, and comprehensive cultural transformation initiatives.

Agency Excellence Recognition:

- Virginia Community College System Office: 12.3% representation
- Virginia Commonwealth University: 10.4% representation
- Science Museum of Virginia: 10.3% representation (dramatic increase from 2.5% in FY24)
- Department for the Blind and Vision Impaired: 9.8% representation

Eight additional agencies achieved representation rates exceeding 6%, demonstrating that the 5% target is both achievable and sustainable across diverse agency types and sizes.

Cultural Transformation Evidence

Virginia Commonwealth University received the 2024 Division on Career Development and Transition (DCDT) Employer of the Year Award from the Council for Exceptional Children for promoting employment opportunities for students with disabilities. VDOT launched a comprehensive employment brand strategy targeting individuals with disabilities. Multiple agencies established employee support systems, mentorship programs, and enhanced accommodation processes.

National Leadership and Sustained Excellence

Virginia has positioned itself as national leader in state government disability employment through pioneering policy approaches. With the 2017 enactment of Code of Virginia § 2.2-203.2:3, Virginia became one of the first states to establish a comprehensive legislative mandate with specific numerical goals and timelines. The Commonwealth's innovative DHRM-DARS partnership model represents a unique collaborative approach that has proven instrumental to our progress. Having now achieved 5.53% representation, exceeding the 5.51% legislative target, our strategic focus evolves from meeting baseline requirements to advancing innovation, expanding opportunities, and establishing replicable best practices.

Strategic Vision for FY26 and Beyond:

- Maintain representation above 5.51%, building on current achievement of 5.53%
- Achieve 100% agency compliance (addressing remaining 23 non-reporting agencies)
- Strengthen national leadership position through best practice sharing and interstate partnerships
- Advance innovation in accessibility technology and inclusive hiring practices
- Strengthen career advancement pathways with enhanced leadership development programs

Detailed Analysis

Historical Context and Performance Trends

Commonwealth-Wide Growth:

2017 Baseline: 321 employees (0.51%)

FY25 Achievement: 2,911 employees (5.53%)

Growth Rate: 806% increase over 8 years

Key inflection point: FY21 infrastructure implementation enabled acceleration from 366 employees (0.63%) to 2,911 (5.53%)

Alternative Hiring Process (AHP) Evolution (FY23-FY25):

Applications: Grew from 238 to 2,245 (843% increase)

Successful Placements: Grew from 13 to 54 hires

Career Conversions: Grew from 18 to 14 conversions

FY25 Performance: 2.4% conversion rate demonstrating quality-focused selection

FY25 Recruitment Analysis

Strategic Partnerships:

The full-time liaison position provided direct technical assistance to agencies, coordinated vocational rehabilitation counselor partnerships, and streamlined AHP Letter verification. Enhanced partnerships with nonprofit disability resource centers, exceptional education programs, and veteran services coordination through Department of Veteran Services.

Innovation and Accessibility:

Virtual interviewing removed transportation barriers. Enhanced job postings emphasized Commonwealth inclusion commitment. Social media campaigns targeted disability community networks.

High-Performing Agency Strategies:

- Mentorship programs pairing new AHP hires with experienced staff
- Job shadowing providing realistic previews for candidates
- Internship programs creating pathways for students with disabilities
- Employee support systems establishing peer networks

FY25 Retention Analysis

Retention Strategies:

Structured six-month provisional periods with enhanced onboarding addressing accommodation needs. Increased internal mobility opportunities, leadership development programs inclusive of disability considerations, and professional development support created clear career pathways.

Cultural Transformation:

Windmills disability awareness training for HR professionals, supervisor education on accommodation processes, and employee feedback systems through stay interviews established supportive workplace culture.

Leadership Representation:

FY25 data shows growing representation of employees with disabilities in leadership positions across agencies, demonstrating successful career advancement pathways.

Comparison with FY24 Strategic Objectives

Virginia achieved or exceeded all FY25 strategic objectives:

- Commonwealth-wide representation: 5.53% (target: 5.0%)
- Agency compliance: 78.7% (improved from 71%)
- AHP successful hires: 54 placements (116% increase)
- Career advancement: 14 conversions (367% increase)
- Veteran integration: 350 veterans with disabilities (strong performance)

Methodology and Data Quality

Data Sources and Validation:

Data drawn from Cardinal Employee Self-Service voluntary disclosure system, Recruitment Management System application tracking, Department of Human Resource Management Employment Opportunity Plan submissions, and Department of Aging and Rehabilitative Services partnership reporting. Quality assured through cross-referencing multiple sources and agency-specific verification processes.

Visual Analytics:

Comprehensive graphical representations of key metrics and trends are provided in the accompanying FY25 EOP Charts document (Appendix A), offering detailed visual analytics of workforce breakdowns, hiring patterns, and performance indicators across all participating agencies.

Limitations:

Voluntary disclosure may underrepresent actual representation. Different metrics apply to classified vs. university/academic professional employees. Economic conditions and competitive job market affected all recruitment efforts.

Key Findings and Insights

Major Successes

- Historic Achievement: First-time achievement and exceeding of 5% Commonwealth target (5.53%)
- AHP Excellence: 116% increase in successful AHP hires
- Career Advancement: 367% increase in wage-to-classified conversions
- Veteran Integration: 350 veterans with disabilities employed
- Compliance Recovery: Improved agency participation from 71% to 78.7%
- Cultural Transformation: Shift from compliance to excellence mindset

Unexpected Positive Outcomes

- AHP improvements enhanced overall agency hiring practices
- Current employees becoming disability employment champions
- Accessibility improvements benefiting entire workforce

Critical Areas for Continued Excellence

- Full Compliance: Achieve 100% reporting (23 agencies outstanding)
- Sustained Growth: Maintain 5.53%+ representation across all agencies
- Performance Consistency: Ensure minimum performance standards
- Innovation Leadership: Position Virginia as national model

Strategic Recommendations for FY26

Priority 1: Full Compliance Achievement

Achieve 100% agency compliance (currently 78.7%) through intensive technical assistance for 23 non-compliant agencies and executive accountability measures.

Priority 2: Sustain Excellence Above 5% Target

Maintain representation at 5.5%+ Commonwealth-wide through enhanced retention programs, continued AHP optimization, and expanded career pathways.

Priority 3: AHP Process Optimization

Improve candidate experience and selection efficiency through streamlined processes, enhanced support, and improved onboarding for higher quality placements.

Priority 4: Professional Development and Data Analytics

Explore feasibility of Commonwealth-wide disability leadership development initiatives. Implement real-time dashboard reporting and conduct feasibility study on longitudinal career progression tracking.

Priority 5: National Leadership and Integration

Establish Virginia as the definitive benchmark for state disability employment through best practice documentation and interstate partnerships. Fully integrate AHP principles into standard HR practices across all agencies.

Resource Considerations and Implementation Support

DHRM provides technical assistance, training resources through DARS partnerships, data collection infrastructure, and best practice sharing platforms. Individual agencies maintain responsibility for budget

allocation, resource prioritization, partnership development, and staff development within existing HR and operational budgets.

Coordinated Commonwealth-wide efforts provide economies of scale in training development, shared learning from agency innovations, standardized processes reducing administrative burden, and enhanced recruitment reach through coordinated outreach.

Risk Assessment and Mitigation

Key Risks and Mitigations:

- Budget Constraints: Mitigate through centralized resources, shared services, and federal grant pursuit
- Compliance Resistance: Mitigate through enhanced technical assistance, simplified processes, and executive accountability
- Market Competition: Mitigate through enhanced total rewards strategy, flexible work arrangements, and mission-driven culture

Contingency measures include alternative funding sources through federal partnerships, phased implementation allowing budget adjustments, and performance-based resource allocation to high-achieving agencies.

Conclusion

Virginia has achieved a remarkable milestone in FY25 by exceeding the legislative mandate established in Code of Virginia § 2.2-203.2:3, reaching 5.53% representation—a 5.02 percentage point increase from the 2017 baseline of 0.51%.

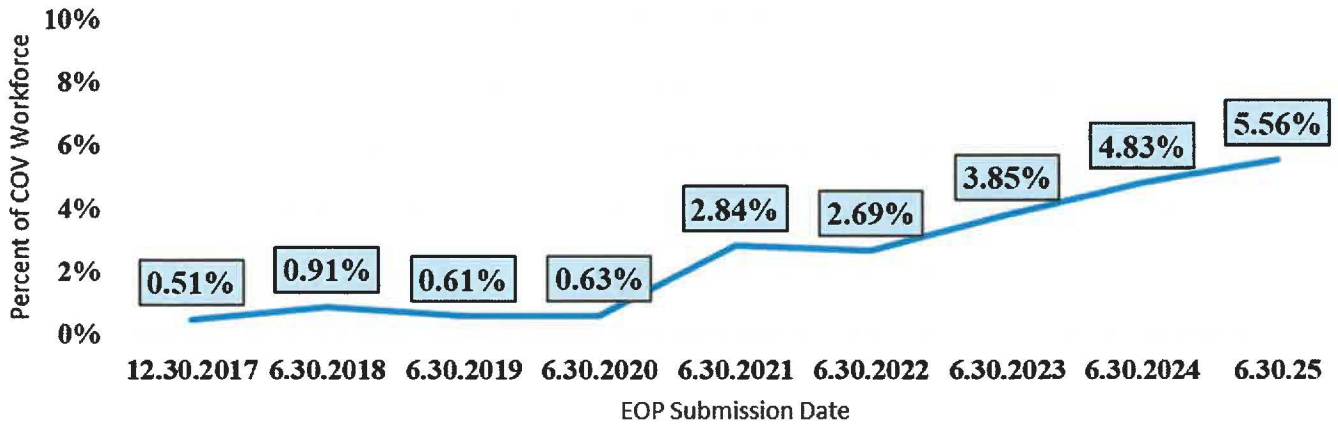
This achievement represents more than compliance; it reflects a fundamental transformation in how Virginia approaches inclusive employment. With 54 AHP hires (more than double the previous year), 14 career advancement conversions, and 350 veterans with disabilities employed, we have demonstrated that inclusive practices strengthen organizational performance.

Having fulfilled the legislative mandate, Virginia now focuses on sustaining excellence, supporting the remaining 23 agencies in achieving compliance, and continuing to innovate in accessibility and career advancement. Through continued collaboration and strategic focus, Virginia will maintain its position as the national leader in state government disability employment.

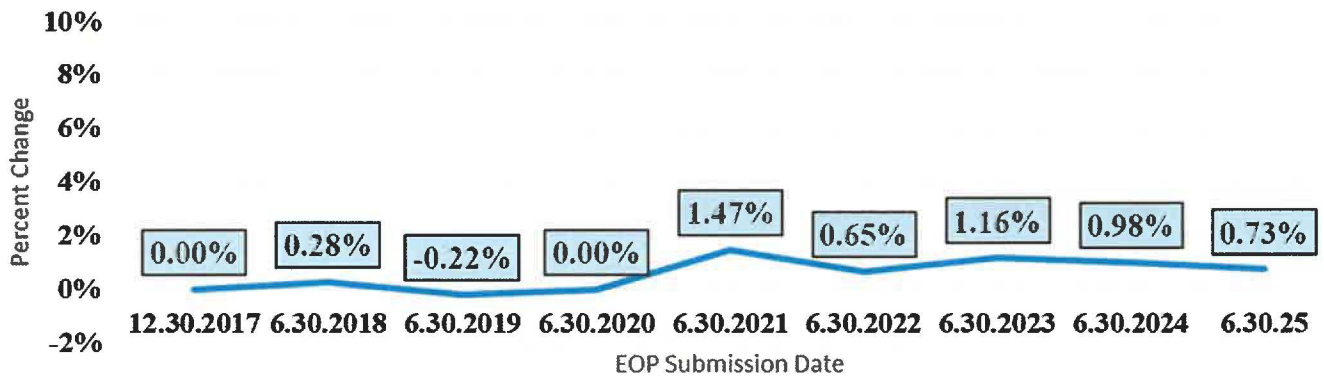
Our commitment extends beyond legislative compliance; we are building careers, transforming communities, and creating greater opportunities for all Virginians.

APPENDIX A

Percent of COV Workforce who are Employees with Disabilities
(as reported in the Agency Employment Opportunities Plan)

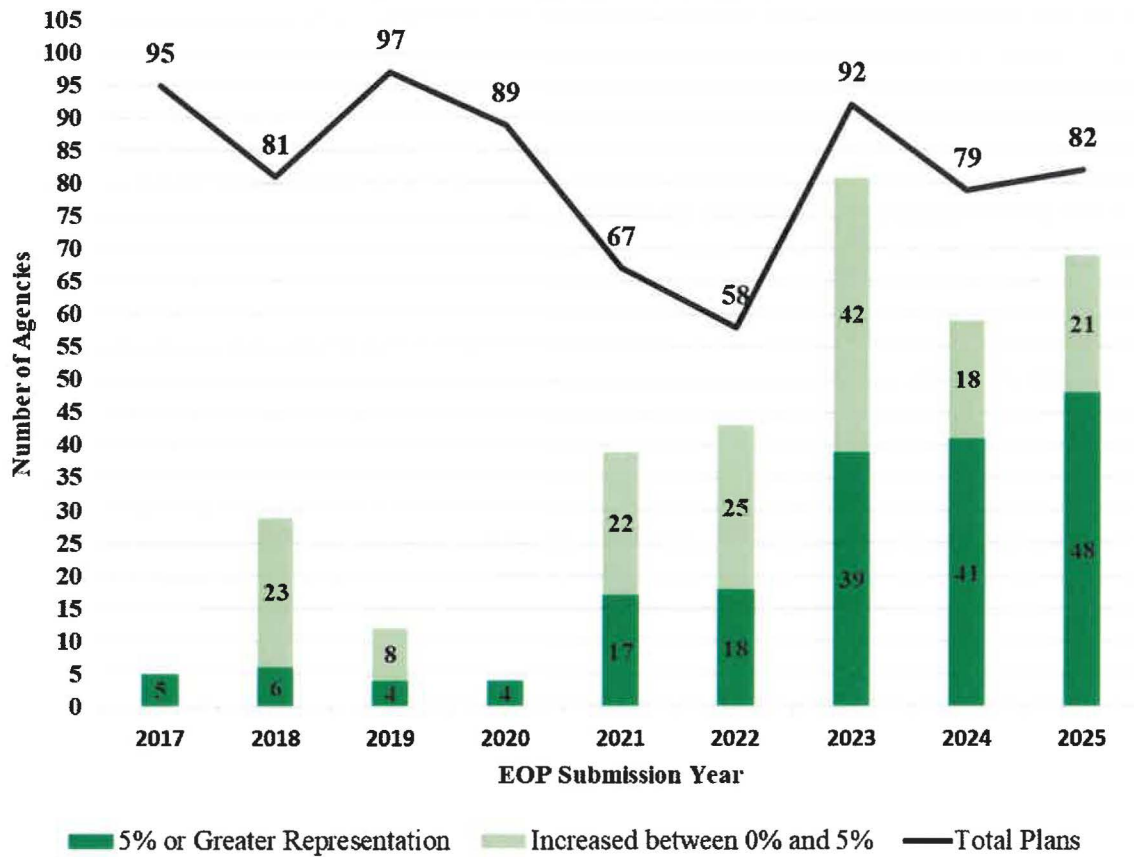


Change to Percentage of COV Workforce who are Employees with Disabilities Year over Year
(as reported in the Agency Employment Opportunities Plan)

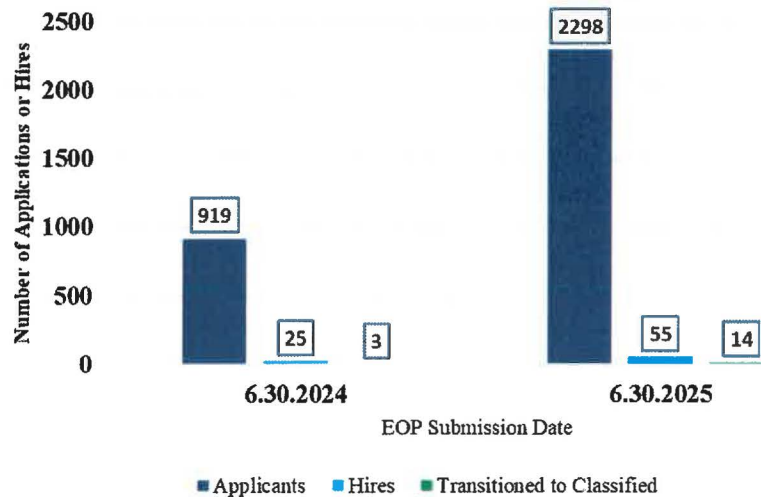


APPENDIX A

Number of Total Submitted Plans and Number of Agencies with Representation of Employees with Disabilities at or above 5% or Increased from the Prior Year

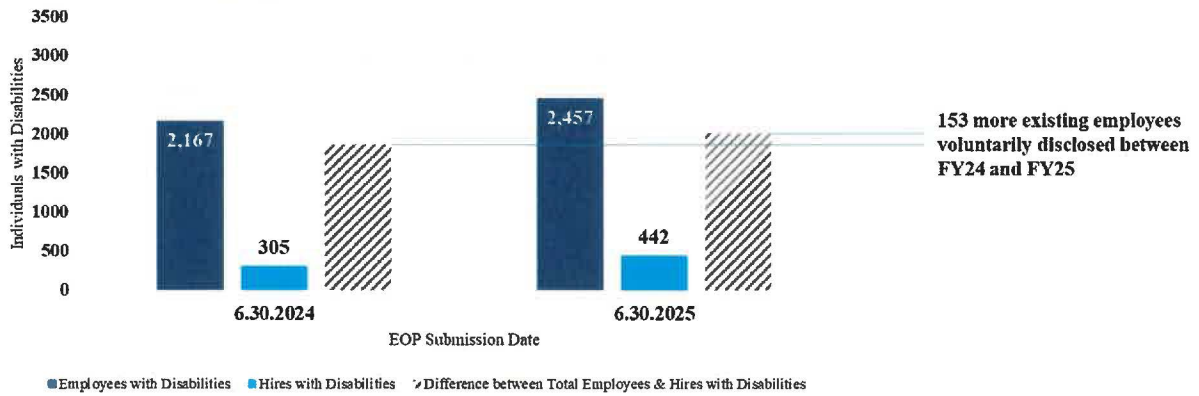


Alternative Hiring Process FY24 to FY25 Comparison



APPENDIX A

Total Employees with Disabilities vs. Total Hires with Disabilities
Only Comparing Agencies who Submitted Plans in Both 2024 and 2025



Total Employees with Disabilities vs. Total Hires with Disabilities

