MINNESOTA

State Rehabilitation Council — General

2012 Annual Report ■ October 1, 2011 — September 30, 2012

Table of Contents

WELCOME 2

WENDY THAYER. 3

JASON TERRY 4

VR OUTCOMES 5

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AT A GLANCE. 6

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION AT A GLANCE. 7

PUBLIC FORUMS 8

VR INNOVATION AND COLLABORATION 9

CONVERSATION WITH CHAIR AND DIRECTOR 10

VR PARTICIPANTS BY COUNTY. 11

COUNCIL INFORMATION 12

As Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council I'm honored to present this report on the performance of the Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Program and the activities of the council over the past year. I hope you'll find the report to be both interesting and informative.

The State Rehabilitation Council provides a public forum for citizens to discuss issues and shape policies that guide the state VR program. Its members are appointed by the governor and represent a broad cross-section of Minnesotans who have a personal and professional stake in providing employment services for people with disabilities.

As described in federal law under the Rehabilitation Act (**http://www.access-board.gov/enforcement/rehab-act-text/intro.htm**), the council's tasks are as follows:

- Through advice given to the VR director, we help shape policy.
- In partnership with VR, we participate in strategic planning and evaluations of VR program effectiveness.
- We spearhead customer satisfaction and effectiveness studies.
- We assist with needs assessments and the development of the state plan.
- We study disability/employment issues and broaden citizen input by hosting public forums (see page 8)

I have the privilege of submitting this report for federal fiscal year 2012 to the Honorable Mark Dayton, Governor of the State of Minnesota; to Edward Anthony, Deputy Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (the federal funding partner for the VR program); and to the citizens of Minnesota.

Thank you.

T. Jeff Bangsberg, Chair
State Rehabilitation Council

Wendy Thayer's work history was sporadic and filled with gaps. Over the years she moved from fast food restaurants to factory work to a grocery store. There were other jobs, too, but none lasted long.

That was the pattern until 2008 when Wendy dropped out of the job market and moved in with her parents. She was a single mom, trying to care for two children. She was receiving help from the Family Life Mental Health Center in Coon Rapids. "I was scared," she said.

Because Wendy needed a job to support herself and her children her therapist referred her to LaNay Koralesky, a VR counselor in the Anoka County office, who connected Wendy to a project called Custom Futures. The Custom Futures partnership includes Vocational Rehabilitation Services, the Family Life Mental Health Center, and Rise, a community rehabilitation program in Spring Lake Park.

When Wendy suggested that she might like to pursue a nontraditional career path for women, LaNay recommended the Newgate Education Center, a Minneapolis nonprofit that uses donated cars to offer free automotive training for low-income adults. In February 2011, Wendy began her training. A year later, with top honors for her exceptional performance, she became the first-ever female graduate of Newgate's auto mechanic program.

With financial assistance from VR for tools, uniforms and mileage, Wendy was ready to start looking for work. She received valuable job-search assistance from Lori Clauson, an employment consultant from Rise, and in April 2012 Wendy landed a 32 hour-a-week job as a technician at Rydell Auto Outlet & Garage in Mounds View. In the months since then she has performed well enough to receive a pay raise and full-time hours and has worked her way off public assistance.

The Custom Futures partners at VRS, Rise and the Family Life Mental Health Center continue to provide counseling and guidance. Wendy continues to receive long-term follow-up services from the Custom Futures partnership.

"My daughter is very proud of me," Wendy said, with a big smile that suggested she's also very proud of herself. She has also earned the respect and loyalty of her manager and co-workers, who all praise Wendy's work and support her plans to advance her career by earning full certification from the National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence.

One evening a young man drove his car through a stop sign and slammed into the motorcycle that Jason Terry was riding to the grocery store. His injuries were severe: broken pelvis, broken femur, broken shoulder, and traumatic brain injury that ended a 15-year career building custom log cabins in Montana.

It was disheartening because Jason had been on the verge of starting his own company. For several years he'd been making custom log furniture. He'd truck several pieces from his home in Montana to his wife's hometown of Owatonna, to sell them at the county fair. In 2004 he left his wife and kids to mind the furniture booth at the Steele County Free Fair and flew back to Montana to build log cabins. That's when the crash happened.

His involvement with the Vocational Rehabilitation program began in Montana. He could no longer manage strenuous work, so he sought training in a less active occupation: health information technology. But five years in college ended with no degree, no certification and no job.

In 2010 Jason and his family moved from Montana to Minnesota. Here there was family support and an opportunity start over. Jason got involved with the VR program in Owatonna, and worked with a counselor named Holly Johnson. His dizziness and fainting spells had gone away, his strength had returned, and he was thinking about going back to building log cabins.

Holly put him in touch with Ed Clayton, the VRS small business specialist, and Doug Johnson at the Owatonna Business Incubator, to develop a viable business plan. VRS also offered financial assistance to buy tools — and a new business was born: Montana Log Art, just off I-35 near the Medford Outlet Mall. The lodge pole pines come from Montana. A couple of employees help Jason assemble the cabins in an industrial building owned by his wife's family.

On a sunny day in November, Jason proudly showed his latest project, a huge two-story log cabin that was custom-built for a family near the Iron Range city of Babbitt. It was the day before the structure would be disassembled and loaded onto a truck to be shipped to its ultimate destination. It's a beautiful building. "I figure one of these every year, or two smaller cabins a year, and I'll pretty much have it," he said.

VR Outcomes

- This year **2,490 Vocational Rehabilitation participants** obtained employment, up slightly from the 2,477 obtaining employment in 2011 and up considerably from the 2010 number of 2143.

- Of all who obtained employment, **18% utilized ongoing supports.**

- The **average hourly wage** for participants earning above minimum wage without long term job supports is **$11.13**. This compares well to the average wage for ALL Minnesota job openings, $13.74.

- **99%** of those who obtained employment earned **above minimum wage**. All participants earning less than minimum wage must show there is the capacity to work towards minimum wage.

Who VR Serves

- **19,314 people** with disabilities received services from the Vocational Rehabilitation program this year.

- There were **8,004 new applicants** this year, compared to 7,398 in 2011 and 8,970 in 2010.

- **91%** of those served had two or more serious functional limitations.

- **33%** of VR participants report a serious mental illness.

- **38%** of those accepted for service on 2012 were transition-age youths, age 16 through 23.

- At application, **33%** of VR participants were receiving Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance or a combination of both.

Return on investment

- Upon acceptance, **VR participants earned** an average of $30 per week. Upon successful closure, VR participants earned an average of $325 per week. **Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned on combined total of $809,000 dollars per week.**

- **For every $1.00 VR spends on services, case management, and administration, $8.89 goes back into Minnesota's economy through wages earned.** The return on investment would be even larger if the resulting reduction in public benefits and increased income tax revenue was factored in.

Placements by Type of Employment

	2010	2011	2012	Percent of 2012 Placements	Average Wage
Competitive Employment	1,728	1,988	2,023	81%	$11.07
Self-employment	31	27	21	1%	$14.32
Employment With Supports	384	462	446	18%	$9.63
Total	2,143	2,477	2,490	100%	

Consumers Served by Cultural/Ethnic Group

Percent of Total MN Population[1]	Cultural/ Ethnic Group	Percent of Caseload	Percent Obtaining Employment
1.1%	American Indian	2.7%	2.1%
4.0%	Asian	2.0%	2.1%
5.2%	Black or African American	13.0%	10.2%
4.8%	Hispanic/Latino[2]	3.2%	3.1%
0.0%	Pacific Islander	0.4%	0.4%

[1]U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey, ACS Demographic and Housing Estimates. **http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/nav/jsf/pages/index.xhtml**

[2]Duplicate Count.

12 Largest Disability Groups served by Vocational Rehabilitation 2012

	2010		2011		2012		
Primary Disability Group	Participants	% of Caseload	Participants	% of Caseload	Participants	% of Caseload	% of Total Placements
Serious Mental Illness	7,054	33%	6,055	33%	6,330	33%	30%
Learning Disabilities	4,295	20%	3,801	20%	3,922	20%	23%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	1,216	6%	1,308	7%	1,480	8%	7%
Orthopedic/Neurological Disorders	1,625	8%	1,324	7%	1,321	7%	6%
Developmental Cognitive Disabilities	1,423	7%	1,208	7%	1,203	6%	8%
Deaf/Hearing Loss	895	4%	755	4%	814	4%	5%
Traumatic Brain Injury/Stroke	900	4%	770	4%	740	4%	4%
Chemical Dependency	534	2%	366	2%	335	2%	2%
Cerebral Palsy	345	2%	299	2%	296	2%	1%
Arthritis & Rheumatism	352	2%	274	1%	284	1%	1%
Spinal Cord Injury	191	1%	155	1%	151	1%	1%
Diabetes	183	1%	112	1%	137	1%	1%

Competitive Employment* Placements 2012

Occupation	Number of Consumers	Percent of Total	Average Hourly Wage	Average Hours/ Week
Clerical/Sales	667	28%	$9.63	$278
Healthcare: support and service	284	26%	$10.68	$281
Industrial Trades	358	35%	$11.49	$416
Misc. Occupations	173	33%	$11.20	$375
Professional/Technical/Managerial	317	32%	$17.01	$546
Service	666	25%	$8.91	$229
Total	**2,465**	**29%**	**$10.89**	**$327**

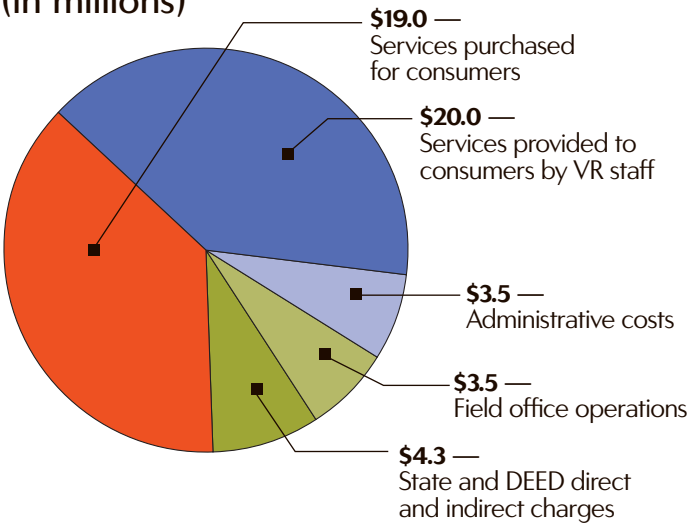
*Competive employment is defined as work typically found in the community with wages and benefits commesurate to other employees.

Twenty-five participants found employment below minimum wage, but are working towards competive employment.

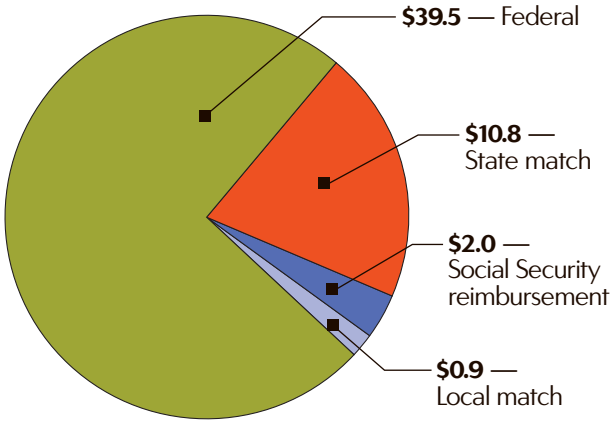
Top Six 2012 Vocational Rehabilitation Referral Sources

Educational Institutions	35%
Self Referral	25%
Community Rehabilitation Program	8%
Workforce Centers	7%
State or Local Government	6%
Health Care	5%

VR Expenditures — (in millions)



VR Funding Sources — (in millions)



The State Rehabilitation Council convenes two public forums each year, fulfilling two of the council's key responsibilities. The forums provide an opportunity to gather grassroots commentary and input regarding Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation program, and they encourage participation in public conversation about matters of interest and importance in the arena of disability employment.

Disability Disclosure

The decision about whether and when to disclose a disability is a dilemma that many people with disabilities must confront when seeking employment. That was the topic of this year's metro region public forum on June 27 in a packed meeting room at the Roseville Public Library. Judging by the very large attendance at the forum there's clearly strong community interest in this topic.

Forum participants reviewed the Americans with Disabilities Act and other state and federal regulations. They described resources for people who grapple with the difficult personal challenges surrounding the disclosure dilemma. Panels consisting of employers, employees, job developers and individuals with disabilities shared their experiences and personal stories. The forum participants suggested that disability disclosure can help in receiving accommodations and in gaining protection from on-the-job harassment or discrimination. Disclosure can give a more accurate picture of the true number of people with disabilities in the workplace. But they also noted that not everyone should disclose disability. For some, no accommodation is necessary and in many cases there are concerns about workplace discrimination. There are often reservations of violation of confidentiality and fears that disclosure could lead to a loss in work hours, loss of wages or demotion.

> WHETHER AND WHEN TO DISCLOSE A DISABILITY IS A DILEMMA THAT MANY PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES MUST CONFRONT.

The forum was co-sponsored by the State Rehabilitation Council – General; Vocational Rehabilitation Services; State Rehabilitation Council – Blind; and the Statewide Independent Living Council.

White Earth Reservation

Members of the State Rehabilitation Council traveled to the White Earth Indian Reservation in northwestern Minnesota for the fall public forum. The forum was hosted by Gloria LaFriniere, a member of the State Rehabilitation Council and the director of the White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation program. She presented an overview of White Earth tribal history and culture, and also offered information about the White Earth VR program. Of particular interest was a presentation by Oscar Oppegard, a VR counselor, on traditional healing techniques and how they are employed successfully in counseling tribal members with disabilities.

The forum occurred at the Shooting Star Conference Center in Mahnomen, which is by far the largest employer on the reservation, and active and collaborative partner with the White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation Program. Melinda Iverson, human resources director at the casino, described the evolution of that partnership and included many examples of the flexible — and somewhat unorthodox — ways that the casino adapts its employment policies for VR clients.

The forum concluded with a discussion about unmet needs in northwestern Minnesota and the collaborative relationships between the state VR program and the White Earth program. Participants were Tom Anderson, VRS Northwest Minnesota Rehabilitation Area Manager; John Johnson, Options Independent Living Center ; Marcia Schutt, DHS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services; and staff members of the White Earth VR program.

Job Development

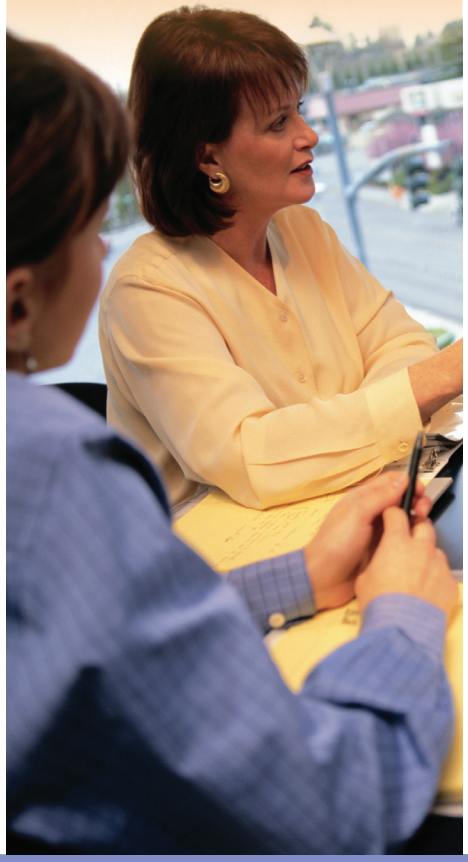
- **Placement 101:** A nationally recognized skills training curriculum for placement professionals. Designed and delivered collaboratively by VR and community rehabilitation programs, the curriculum has been offered to 105 staff from 31 agencies since January 2012.

- **Placement Next Generation:** A new design for delivering placement services developed jointly by VRS and community partner staff. The proposed new approach would place a greater emphasis on coordinating job development services and counselor involvement throughout the job search. The new design will be piloted in three locations in 2013.

Organizational Vitality

- **Created a regional structure** that will result in more efficient and effective organizational management, provide increased management support, focus greater attention on staff skills development, and enhance local partnering opportunities.

- **Convened the entire staff** for a three-day training session with emphasis on the impact of poverty.



Collaboration

- **Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee:** The committee comprises CRP and VRS staff who provide strategic advice to VRS on issues affecting the mutual provision of employment and independent living services to Minnesotans with disabilities.

- **Independent Living — Vocational Rehabilitation Collaboration:** VR clients who receive independent living services get measurably better results — 65% of 1,351 clients have found employment.

- **VRS Community Outreach Team:** A team of VRS and CRP communication professionals working collaboratively to develop strategies for increasing awareness and support for employment and community integration for people with disabilities.

- **Minneapolis Placement Partnership:** A Minneapolis-based collaborative network of public sector and private sector agencies providing services to Minneapolis businesses in recruiting, hiring, supporting, and retaining diverse candidates for employment.

A conversation with the SRC chair and the VRS director

Jeff Bangsberg, SRC Chair, and Kim Peck, VRS Director, sat down to reflect on the changes they've experienced over the past six years. Bangsberg was appointed to the council six years ago, and is now required to leave after serving two three-year terms — the final two years as the council's chair. Peck's tenure as VRS director coincides almost exactly with Bangsberg's time on the council — so they have a considerable amount of shared experience. Their conversation in early November was moderated by SRC member Mickey Kyler. What follows is an edited version of the discussion.

Mickey: Jeff, when you first began your work with the SRC what, in your opinion, seemed to be the most pressing issue facing disability employment?

Jeff: Making sure that people with disabilities were able to attain employment. But I learned that there's a lot more to it than just employment. Even though the original outcome desire was finding a job, people found out a lot more about themselves and what they wanted to do in life as a career path as opposed to just a job.

Mickey: What do you think was the biggest barrier to employment?

Jeff: Attitudes in the work place. The real barrier is attitudes of the employer community and society in general. People with disabilities can do more, they can be part of something, they can participate in society and in commerce when they have dollars to spend. Give them the ability to work and become employed and they contribute to our economy like everyone else.

Mickey: Kim, what are the most important priorities for the SRC in the next year or two?

Kim: Making sure the new DEED commissioner, DEED leadership and the new representatives in the House and Senate know who the SRC is and what they do. We need to manage the transition in leadership within the council effectively. With the election behind us, we can now look ahead to the possible reauthorization of the Rehab Act and WorkForce Investment Act. We need to continue advocating for a full complement on the council so that we can do our work. We need to keep taking the pulse on what the key policy issues are and to use the public forums to raise the level of awareness of the disability community and the larger community. And this is something the council has heard many times from me: We need to keep telling the story, to set expectations, change attitudes, and change the narrative about employment of people with disabilities.

Mickey: Can you provide us with your vision of VRS for the next five years?

Kim: The VRS value proposition is a statement that says, because we are the keepers of the public trust, the federal and state dollars, we have a responsibility to bring the system together to convene the stakeholders to identify what are emerging best practices and invest in and move the system forward. We need to ensure the quality of the services on the front end, and ensure that counseling and guidance are top-notch. That sets the stage for everything else that happens. We need to continue to build strong connections between Vocational Rehabilitation, Extended Employment and Independent Living.

Mickey: Besides the concern of financial resources, what issues regarding VRS keep you awake at night?

Kim: Recruitment and retention of staff. Telling our story: How do we brand what we do, and how we talk about it in a way that is compelling?

Mickey: Jeff, what is the most useful piece of advice or encouragement you would leave with present and future SRC members to ensure the continuation of this important work?

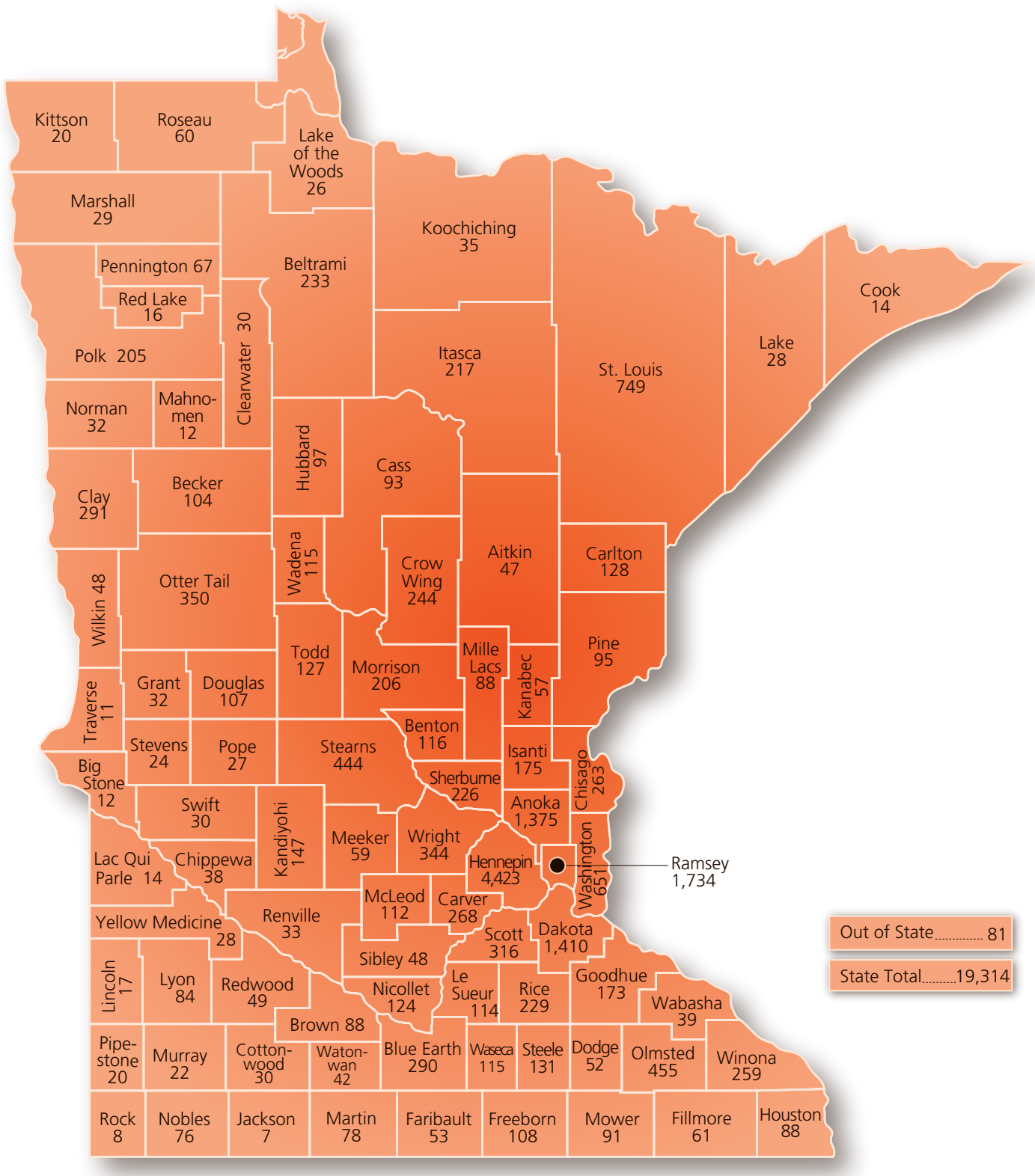
Jeff: I feel good about our involvement in the comprehensive statewide needs assessment. I think being able to review the process and provide comment enriches the process. We bring a reality to the page, and put a face on the statistics. I would really like to see a few more SRC members sitting at that table.

Mickey: Do you think the SRC can assist in increasing the goal of improving employment for people with disabilities? If so how?

Kim: Through advocacy and by telling the story. The SRC needs to hold the VR program accountable for delivering the results. The SRC is essentially our board of directors, and we need your involvement in the comprehensive statewide needs assessment. We need you to keep asking the questions about outcomes and challenging our strategic approach.

Jeff: One of the five strategic goals that VRS has set for itself is to have a robust State Rehabilitation Council. In my view, that's extremely important. We need a robust and active council. I think we've made progress toward that — and I really believe that the council is much more active and involved now than it was when I started. We need to keep that up. You need to keep that up. I'm going to miss it — a lot.

Vocational Rehabilitation Participants by County



Council Meetings

The State Rehabilitation Council obtains grassroots input from Minnesotans with disabilities about the Vocational Rehabilitation program. Time is set aside at each meeting for the public to address the council. Another way the council seeks public comment is at public forums, typically scheduled two times a year. For more information about meeting and forum locations and times, go to: **www.positivelyminnesota.com/src**

Council Membership

If you are interested in disability employment policy, consider applying for State Rehabilitation Council membership. SRC members help to shape VR policy, engage in strategic planning and provide guidance to Vocational Rehabilitation Services. For more information, please go to: **www.positivelyminnesota.com/src**

For more information contact:

Gail Lundeen
Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council
Department of Employment and Economic Development
332 Minnesota Street — Suite E200
Saint Paul, MN 55101

Gail.Lundeen@state.mn.us
VOICE: 651.259.7364
1.800.328.9095
Minnesota Relay: 711

State Rehabilitation Council Member Roster

Jeff Bangsberg
New Hope
Advocate

John Barrett
Spring Lake Park
Community Rehabilitation Program

Nicole Brand
Minneapolis
Former VR participant

Emma Corrie
Saint Paul
Business, Industry or Labor

Al Hauge
Roseville
Department of Education

Mickey Kyler
Crookston
Statewide Independent Living Council

Gloria LaFriniere
White Earth Reservation
American Indian VR

Hector Matascastillo
Saint Paul
Advocate

Andrea (Andie) Moore
Bloomington
PACER

Kimberley Peck
Saint Paul
Vocational Rehabilitation Services Director

Sherri Rademacher
Melrose
Former VR Participant

Claire Reeve
Rogers
Business

Anne Robertson
Minneapolis
Client Assistance Project

Chuck Ryan
Saint Michael
Business

Rebecca Sunder
Burnsville
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Bob Wagner
Saint Paul
Former VR participant

Nicholas Wilkie
Saint Paul
Advocate

Dayna Wolfe
Minneapolis
Business

POSITIVELY Minnesota
Department of Employment and Economic Development

DEED is an equal opportunity employer and service provider.

This report can be made available in Braille, high contrast, large print, diskette and other formats upon request by calling 65.259.7364 or 1.800.328.9095.

(Minnesota Relay 711; Speech-to-speech telephone re-voice is 1.877.627.3848)