



*Minnesota*  
**State Rehabilitation Council — General**  
2014 ANNUAL REPORT OCTOBER 1, 2013 — SEPTEMBER 30, 2014





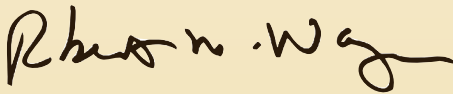
# Welcome to the State Rehabilitation Council — General 2014 Annual Report

Welcome to the State  
Rehabilitation Council-General's  
2014 Annual Report on Minnesota's  
Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.

The State Rehabilitation Council-General is a governor-appointed council charged with partnering and advising Minnesota's Vocational Rehabilitation Program. One of our responsibilities is to report to the governor and the citizens of Minnesota on Vocational Rehabilitation's annual performance.

This year we will provide a special focus on an important VR partner — Minnesota's employers. Of course you will still find VR performance data, features on innovations and client stories.

We hope you enjoy this report.



Bob Wagner, LP  
Chair, State Rehabilitation Council  
Ramsey County Community Human Services  
Disability Services Supervisor  
Representing Former Vocational Rehabilitation Participants





# Employer Resources Offered by Vocational Rehabilitation Services:



Vocational Rehabilitation Services' (VRS) Employment Specialists offer employers creative strategies to recruit and retain skilled workers with disabilities. Their goal is to connect businesses with qualified job seekers, saving them time and money. Employers can tap into the following services free of charge:

- **Recruitment:** Access to a prescreened and qualified talent pool that ranges from entry-level to professional.
- **Education and training:** Assistance in creating a disability-inclusive work environment through VRS customized training on disability recruitment, employment and retention.
- **Consultation and technical assistance:** Resources to answer complex disability employment questions on topics such as the Americans with Disabilities Act and affirmative action for federal contractors.
- **Follow-up:** Create success for new employees through close communication between the VRS Employment Specialist and your business.
- **Job Coaching:** Assistance with individualized training to maximize the skill development of employees recruited through VRS.
- **Accessibility:** Information about job accommodations, job restructuring and worksite modifications.
- **Financial Incentives:** Information about tax credits, deductions, and cost reimbursements that are available to businesses that hire people with disabilities.

To find the VR Employment Specialist in your area, go to [www.mn.gov/deed/vrstalent](http://www.mn.gov/deed/vrstalent) or call 1-800-328-9095.



# VR's Partnership With Medtronic, Indrotec Leads to Jobs for People With Disabilities



Jacob Branum



Jacob Branum started working in August 2014 at Medtronic Perfusion Systems

Val Nauth, production manager for Medtronic Perfusion Systems in Brooklyn Park, is an enthusiastic proponent of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. “My philosophy,” he says, “is that anyone and everyone can do the job — until they show me they can’t.” It’s a philosophy that has led to the hiring of several individuals with disabilities—sometimes as student interns, sometimes as contract employees, and sometimes as full-time regular employees assembling perfusion devices used for blood management during surgery.

Jacob Branum, a 21-year-old from East Bethel, is one of them. He’s a contract employee who started at Medtronic Perfusion Systems in September 2014 and has a realistic expectation of working his way into a permanent full-time career there. His story showcases a unique partnership model that matches the goals and skills of job candidates with the recruiting and hiring needs of an employer. In this instance, the partnership includes counselors and employment specialists from Vocational Rehabilitation Services, HR professionals and plant managers at Medtronic, and a Minneapolis staffing consultancy called Indrotec.



Jacob, whose disabilities affect his ability to find and keep work, was laid off from a previous job. He came to VRS and worked with Sara Wolf, placement coordinator in Blaine, who assisted him with his resume, mock interviewing, and finding job leads. Jacob also worked with Michelle Chmielewski, VRS placement coordinator in Brooklyn Park, who is the primary point of contact with Medtronic and Indrotec for recruiting and screening VRS candidates. “They helped me plan what I wanted to do, and they kept me moving really quickly,” Jacob recalls. “And what I really wanted to do was to work with my hands, to have a hands-on job.”

Soon the VRS partnership with Medtronic Perfusion Systems and Indrotec began to pay dividends. Sara suggested that Jacob might consider applying for an assembly position at Perfusion Systems. Meanwhile, Michelle contacted Patrick Lange, an account manager at Indrotec, who has a strong working relationship with the Medtronic human resources department. Together they were able to introduce Jacob to the workplace, assess his interest and skill set for the job, and establish that it would be a suitable fit for him. “Everybody wants to help people get a foot in

the door,” Patrick says. “These are quality jobs and career positions... and we want to be sure to put candidates in a position where they can succeed.”

Jacob started his new job last September, and if his career path follows the anticipated trajectory, he’ll work as a contractor through Indrotec for about a year, and then make the conversion to becoming a full-time permanent employee with a pay increase and full benefits. “It’s a great job,” he says. “I like it a lot and hopefully it’s going to turn into a career.”

The VRS relationship with Medtronic and Indrotec ensures that there’s a regular and formal process for recruiting, interviewing and hiring people with disabilities — and that there will continue to be opportunities for VRS clients to begin their careers at the global medical technology company. Val Nauth, Perfusion’s production manager, says he anticipates hiring several more employees like Jacob. “I have an appetite for this,” he says. “Give us the candidates... there is no limit to what we can do.”



Val Nauth, production manager for Medtronic Perfusion Systems



Patrick Lange, account manager for Indrotec staffing consultancy



# Kwik Trip Convenience Stores: A Successful Partnership with Vocational Rehabilitation



Russ Swain was hired at the Owatonna Kwik Trip store in January 2014

In August 2013 Joalyn Torgerson placed what proved to be a productive phone call to the Vocational Rehabilitation Services office in Mankato. She was calling from the human resources department at the Kwik Trip convenience store headquarters in La Crosse, WI, and she had a question: Would VRS have any interest in a partnership with Kwik Trip to fill retail helper positions in the chain's rapidly growing network of Minnesota stores?

Kwik Trip had been hiring people in Wisconsin stores through its retail helper program for more than 20 years — but until Torgerson placed that phone call the chain had never made a particular commitment in Minnesota to hiring people with disabilities. “That call, and the resulting partnership with VRS, is what really moved it forward,” she says.

A year later, Kwik Trip has hired more than 40 people with disabilities, nearly all of them customers of Minnesota's VR program. “Partnering with Joalyn has been very successful in providing more employment opportunities for people with disabilities” says Roberta Johnson, the Mankato-based VRS program specialist who works most closely with Kwik Trip. Marci Jasper, a Twin cities VRS



program specialist, also worked closely with Kwik Trip in the metro area and elsewhere throughout the state.

Russ Swain is one of many VR customers who have benefited from the partnership. In January 2014 he started his job at Kwik Trip in Owatonna, where he now works 15 hours a week making coffee, cleaning up, unloading trucks, stocking shelves. “I just come and do my job, whatever I’m told,” he says, showing off the list that he carries to remind him what needs doing.

The list is a useful and necessary prompt, a simple accommodation that makes it possible for him to do his job. Swain has a form of diabetes, which in 2012 led to a severe drop in his blood sugar, resulting in a seizure that left him unconscious and hospitalized for 10 days. The episode caused significant brain damage and short-term memory loss, and forced him to leave a supervisory position at a business management consultancy. He worried that he might never work again.

For more than a year after his hospitalization, Swain received a variety of intensive services — counseling and guidance, home supports, assessment, job search assistance, job coaching, and



Bobbi Moore, store leader; Russ Swain, Peggy Zinniel, former store leader

transportation — from VRS and Straight River Enterprises, a day training and habilitation program that provides specialized vocational and skill building supports.

When the Owatonna Kwik Trip store posted an opening for a retail helper position, Swain was screened by Johnson, applied and interviewed for the job, and ultimately was hired by Peggy Zinniel, who was then the store leader. Her successor, Bobbi Moore, is now Swain’s supervisor. Both contend that Kwik Trip’s retail helper program works extremely well because of the strong relationship with VRS.

“It’s great to have the relationship,” Zinniel says. “Our working relationship is really good and extremely productive. I’m just honored and

thankful that we have this program.” And Moore adds that the program focus on hiring people with disabilities has been a huge benefit to the convenience store chain: “I’ve never seen people work harder than the retail helpers we’ve hired through this partnership. They’re irreplaceable, in my opinion.”

And the future looks bright. The company has a policy of promoting from within, so people who have been hired as retail helpers will likely have a good opportunity to advance in their careers. Additionally, Kwik Trip is rapidly expanding its presence in Minnesota, and on pace to open dozens of new stores in the coming years. Most of the stores will have retail helper positions to fill — and many will be filled because of the partnership with VRS.



# Vocational Rehabilitation Outcomes



## VR Outcomes

- This year, **2,869 Vocational Rehabilitation participants obtained employment**, up 131 from 2013.
- 25 percent of those finding employment utilized ongoing supports, up from 18 percent in 2012 and 20 percent in 2013.
- The average hourly wage for participants earning above minimum wage without long-term job supports is \$11.46. Hourly wages ranged from \$7.25 to above \$99.00.

## Return on Investment

- For every \$1.00 VR spends on services, case management and administration, \$8.90 goes back into Minnesota's economy through wages earned by VRS participants. The \$8.90 has a broader impact on the economy, resulting in an additional \$17.80 of economic activity. For more information, go to <http://mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/research/general.jsp>.
- This year, the 2,869 people finding employment through Vocational Rehabilitation average earnings increased from \$28 per week to \$326 dollars per week. Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned a combined total of \$935,000 per week.

## Who VR Serves

- 18,459 people with disabilities received services from the Vocational Rehabilitation Program in FFY 2014, down 1,076 from FFY 2013.
- 4,381 applicants developed employment plans this year.
- 76 percent of participants of Vocational Rehabilitation had three or more serious functional limitations. An additional 18 percent of the VR caseload had two serious functional limitations.
- 34 percent of all VR participants report a serious mental illness.
- 42 percent of those accepted for service in 2014 were transition-aged youth, age 16 through 24 (see page 14).
- At application, 33 percent of VR participants were receiving Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance or a combination of both.



# Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance

## Placements by Type of Employment 2014

	2012	2013	2014	Percent of 2014 Placements	Average Weekly Wage
Competitive Employment	2,023	2,183	2,125	74%	\$345.00
Self-employment	21	16	44	1.5%	\$459.00
Employment With Supports	446	539	700	24.5%	\$232.00
Total	2,490	2,738	<b>2,869</b>	100%	

## VR Participants by Cultural/Ethnic Groups 2014

Percent of MN Population, ages 18-24 <sup>1</sup>	Cultural/Ethnic Group	Percent of Caseload	Percent Obtaining Employment
1.00%	American Indian	2.5%	1.8%
4.40%	Asian	2.3%	1.9%
5.20%	Black or African American	12.9%	12.1%
4.90%	Hispanic/Latino <sup>2</sup>	3.8%	3.4%
0.00%	Pacific Islander	0.5%	0.2%

<sup>1</sup>Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ACS 2012

<sup>2</sup>Duplicate Count

## The VR Caseload: What are the Major Categories of Disability?

Primary Disability Group	2014	2014	2014
	Participants	% of Caseload	% of Total Placements
Serious Mental Illness	6,299	34.0%	31.0%
Learning Disability	3,655	20.0%	21.0%
Autism Spectrum Disorder	1,875	10.0%	9.0%
Developmental Cognitive Disabilities	1,304	7.0%	8.0%
Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	909	5.0%	5.0%
Deaf/Hearing Loss	748	4.0%	5.0%
Traumatic Brain Injury/Stroke	681	4.0%	4.0%
Cerebral Palsy	277	1.5%	1.5%
Arthritis & Rheumatism	245	1.5%	1.5%
Chemical Dependency	243	1.5%	1.5%
Epilepsy	155	1.0%	1.0%
Spinal Cord Injury	148	1.0%	0.5%



# Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance

## Competitive Employment\* Placements 2014

Occupation	Number of Consumers	Average Hourly Wage	Average Hours per Week	Average Weekly Wage
Clerical/Sales	777	\$9.71	28	\$275
Healthcare: support and service	304	\$10.80	30	\$324
Industrial Trades	382	\$11.87	34	\$413
Misc. Occupations	247	\$10.78	30	\$342
Professional/Technical/Managerial	394	\$16.60	31	\$516
Service	763	\$9.03	25	\$232
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,867</b>	<b>\$10.97</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>\$326</b>

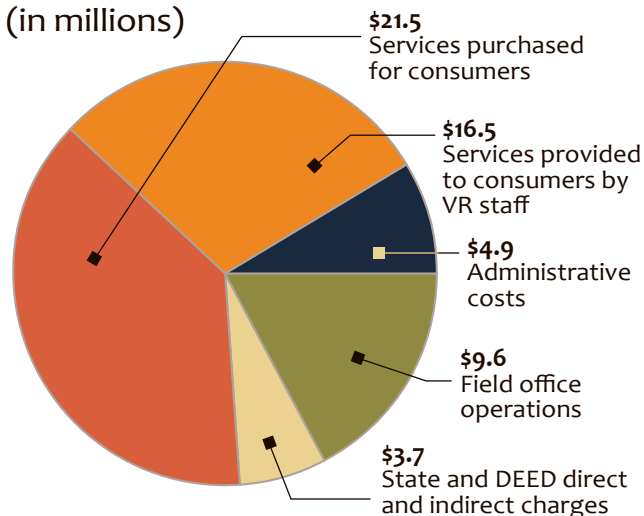
Competitive employment is defined as work typically found in the community with wages and benefits commensurate to other employees.

\*Two participants found employment below minimum wage, but are working towards commensurate wages.

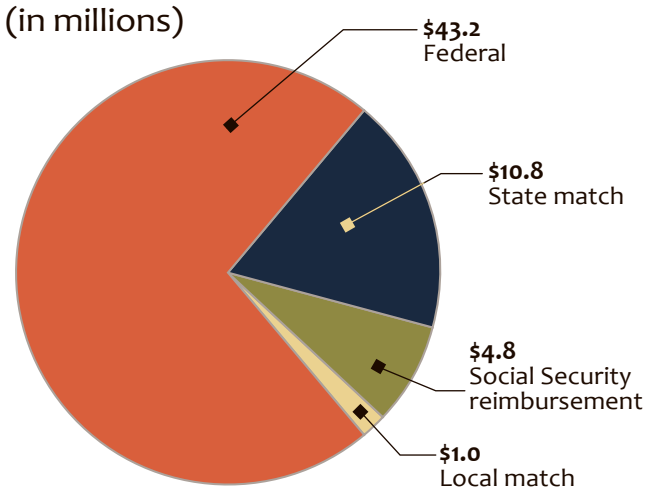
## Top Six 2014 Vocational Rehabilitation Referral Sources

Referral Source	Percentage
Educational Institutions	36.0%
Self Referral	23.0%
Workforce Centers	7.0%
Community Rehabilitation Program	7.0%
State or Local Government	5.0%
Health Care	4.0%

## VR Expenditures (in millions)

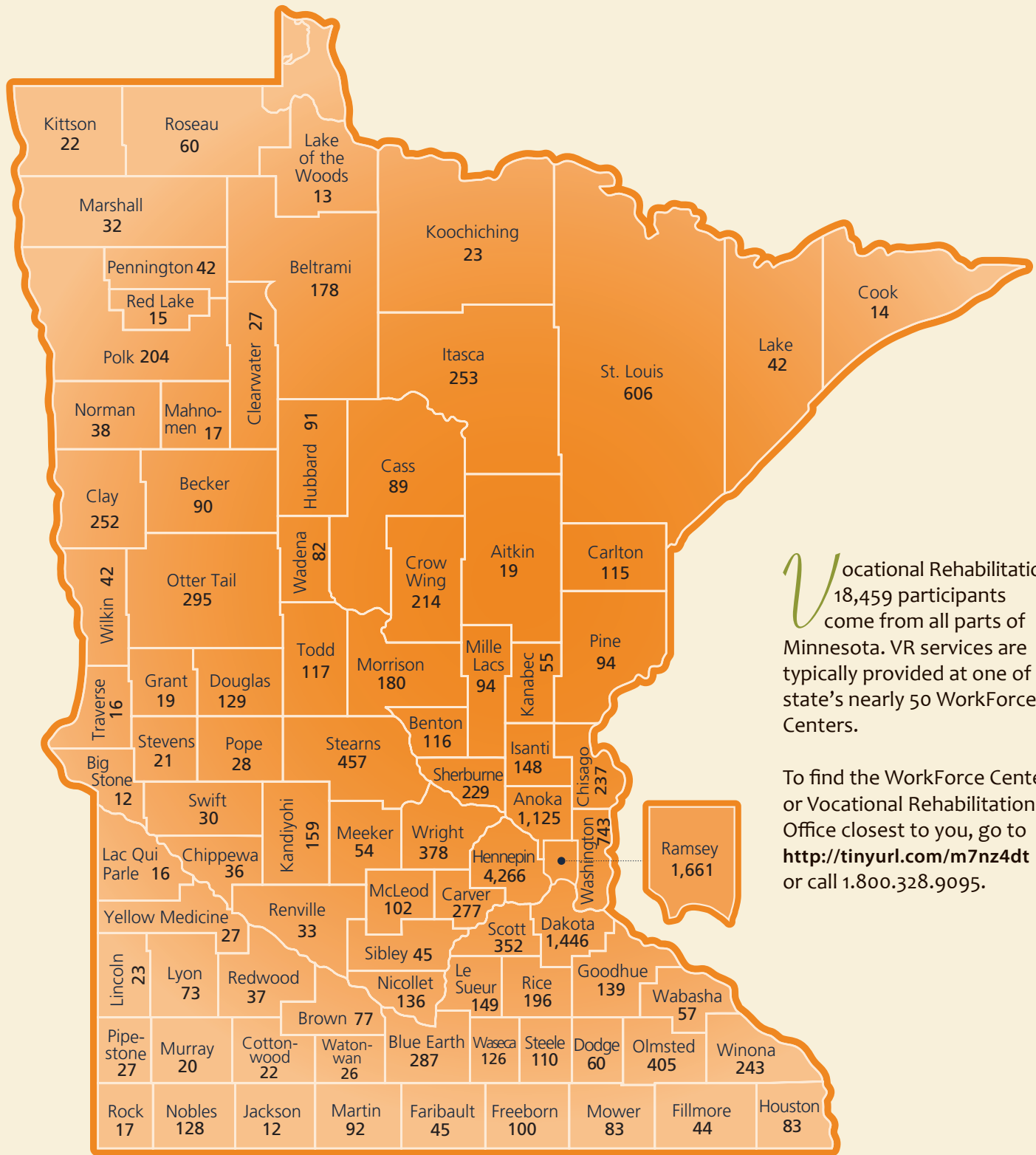


## VR Funding Sources (in millions)





# Vocational Rehabilitation Participants by County



Vocational Rehabilitation's 18,459 participants come from all parts of Minnesota. VR services are typically provided at one of the state's nearly 50 WorkForce Centers.

To find the WorkForce Center or Vocational Rehabilitation Office closest to you, go to <http://tinyurl.com/m7nz4dt> or call 1.800.328.9095.

Out of State ..... 65

State Total ..... 18,459



# Public Forum: Individual Placement and Support

The State Rehabilitation Council holds public forums to gather information on statewide employment need and to better prepare themselves to give advice to Vocational Rehabilitation Services. In June 2014, the council sponsored a day-long forum in Duluth focusing on the topic of Individual Placement and Support (IPS).

## Why this forum?

Work is a vitally important part of recovery for people with mental illness. That was the clear message at the SRC's public forum, which focused on an innovative approach to supporting people with mental illnesses as they move toward employment and economic self-sufficiency.

Vocational Rehabilitation Services has long invested in targeted employment services and supports for persons living with mental illness. The IPS approach to supported employment turns on its head the idea that work is too stressful to handle for people with mental illness. Instead, the IPS approach draws on evidence that suggests people with mental illness not only can be successful at work, but also that employment can help them in their recovery process.

In fact, a growing body of rigorous studies has shown IPS to be the most effective way to provide employment services for people with serious mental illness. IPS is unique because employment services and supports are provided by a team that includes VR counselors, employment service providers and mental health providers.

The IPS practice of supported employment for persons with serious mental illness will be expanding in Minnesota. The Olmstead Plan, Minnesota's response to a court settlement that requires people with disabilities be served in the most integrated environment, requires the state to devise a plan by June 2015 to expand IPS supported employment services statewide. The SRC must be prepared to advise Vocational Rehabilitation on how to meet the requirements of the Olmstead Plan.



Anecdotally, VR clients speak very highly of the IPS approach. Here is what some of the participants had to say about their experiences with IPS:

I am not a mental illness. I am a person with a mental illness... When a person with mental illness is employed, whether it's full-time, part-time, or volunteer, your self-esteem goes up, your confidence goes up, and you get happy again. It's a step to recovery. It might not be a recovery, but it's a step to recovery.

What people like the most is that they've been so inundated with, "This is your diagnosis, this is what your diagnosis says, these are the symptoms." We get to focus on hopes. It's like a hope machine. You're not just whatever your diagnosis is. There's a whole person, and I get to acknowledge that.

I was always told "You can't do that...you don't want to do that... you don't want to work with those kinds of people"... Laura and Sam, they said, "Try it, go for it." To hear that, someone giving you encouragement and support like that, ... just hearing that, my confidence went up and I started saying to myself "you can do this".



## What is Individual Placement and Support?

The approach rests on principles that aim to integrate employment services with mental health treatment services, assure client choice and consumer preferences, achieve competitive employment and provide continuous, ongoing job supports.

Individual Placement and Support rests on a foundation of eight core principles:

1. Individual Placement and Support employment services are integrated with mental health treatment services.
2. Eligibility is based upon participant choice.
3. Participant preferences are honored.
4. Employer contact begins rapidly after participants enter the program.
5. Employment specialists build relationships with employers based upon participant job interests.
6. Competitive jobs are the goal.
7. Benefits planning (work incentives planning) is offered to all participants who receive entitlements.
8. Job supports are continuous.





# Alec Erickson: VR Partners Help With a Successful Transition From School to Work

Alec Erickson, who is now 23 years old, came to VRS in November 2011 with a diagnosed developmental cognitive disorder. He was in his second year at the VECTOR South Transition Program in Richfield, and beginning to think about a career in the food industry. On his own, he had applied at a Byerly's grocery store and obtained a job as a bagger, working 15-20 hours a week. He loved working at Byler's and they loved him there, but it wasn't clear that the job was his best long-term option. Alec wanted to work more hours and earn more money.

Alec's VR counselor offered to help him explore other aspects of the

food industry as well as related fields and other career paths. Together they chose to work with Autism Works, a service provider that uses the Discovery Process, an intensive form of vocational assessment.

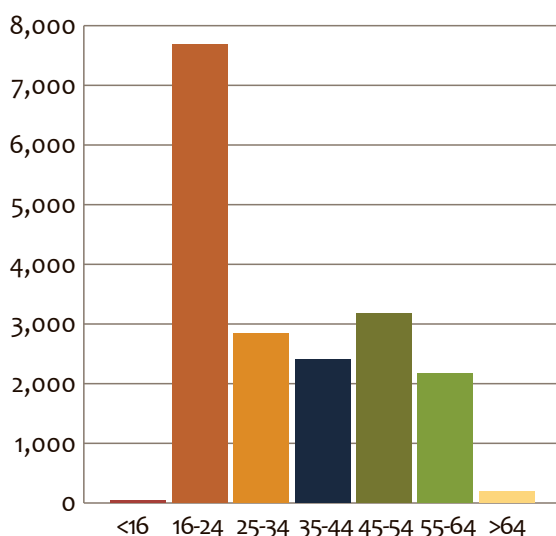
Autism Works set up a meeting with Alec's supervisor, who offered training that might allow Alec to take on inventory and ordering duties in the dairy department. Autism Works provided emotional support and encouragement and Alec made the transition smoothly and now works 30-plus hours a week making more than \$10 an hour.

Next up was obtaining a driver's license. Alec lived with his mother in an area without reliable bus routes, and he didn't want to rely on others

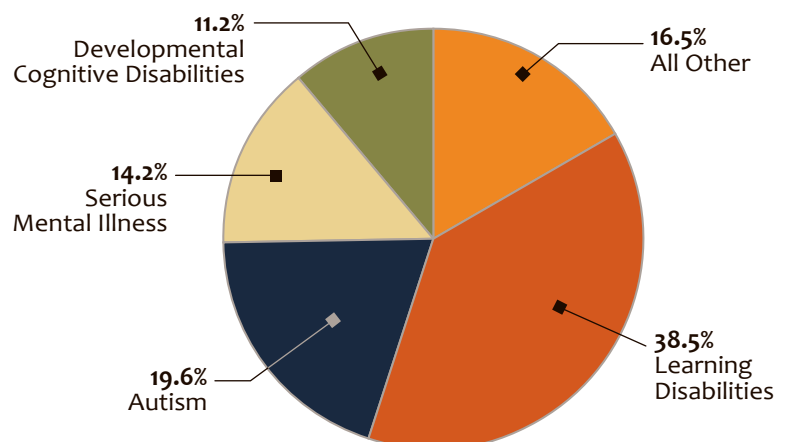
to get him to and from work. VRS agreed to do driver's assessment and driving lessons through Courage Center, where Alec is currently working to complete his licensing course.

Alec and his brother recently moved to a shared townhome with access to a good bus route. He received bus training through the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living, quickly learned to ride independently, and now takes the Metro Transit bus to and from work. And in a nice little development, Alec has joined Bridging Hearts, an online social network that connects young adults with learning disabilities, and will be going on their Caribbean Cruise this winter.

Number Served by Age Group



Transition Age Group by Type of Disability





# Looking Forward: The 2015 SRC Public Forum Will Discuss Transition-Age Services

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), authorized in July of 2014, will have far-reaching effect on the work of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Among many other changes, WIOA places increased emphasis on services to transition-age youth and will require VRS, in conjunction with the Department of Education, to provide prevocational services to younger students with disabilities. The State Rehabilitation Council will host a public forum to discuss how to best implement this requirement. Watch for more information about the time and location of this forum at <http://tinyurl.com/k5y735b>



# The State Rehabilitation Council Seeks Public Input

The SRC is the citizen's voice for VR. We are appointed by the governor, represent many walks of life and come from across the state.

We work with VRS to conduct statewide needs assessments, shape VR policy, develop a strategic plan and write the state plan. We are responsible for conducting customer satisfaction studies, assessing program effectiveness and writing this annual report.

We value citizen input. Our meetings are always open to the public. We have time set aside at every meeting to take public comment.

In 2015, we are seeking representation from the following categories.

- advocates
- vocational rehabilitation counselors
- community rehabilitation providers
- current or former vocational rehabilitation participants
- business, industry or labor.

Applications can be obtained at: [www.sos.state.mn.us/](http://www.sos.state.mn.us/)

For more information about the State Rehabilitation Council, go to <http://tinyurl.com/k5y735b> or call Gail Lundeen at 651-259-7364.

## State Rehabilitation Council Members

**JEFF BANGSBERG** — New Hope  
Advocate

**CHRISTINE BAUMAN** — Mankato  
VR Counselor

**SCOTT BERSCHIED** — Saint Michael  
Business, Industry and Labor

**EMMA CORRIE** — Saint Paul  
Business, Industry and Labor

**STEVEN DITSCHLER** — Eagan  
Governor's Workforce  
Development Council

**AL HAUGE** — Owatonna  
Department of Education

**MICKEY KYLER** — Crookston  
Statewide Independent Living Council

**GLORIA LAFRINIERE** — Naytahwaush  
White Earth Vocational Rehabilitation

**CLAYTON LIEND** — Keewatin  
Community Rehabilitation Provider

**ANDIE (ANDREA) MOORE** — Bloomington  
PACER

**ANITA OLSON** — Fertile  
Former VR participant

**KIMBERLEY PECK** — Saint Paul  
VRS Director

**SHERRI RADEMACHER** — Melrose  
Former VR Participant

**CLAIRE REEVE** — Rochester  
Business, Industry and Labor

**ANNE (ANDREA) REDETZKE** — St. Joseph  
Advocate

**ANNE ROBERTSON** — Minneapolis  
Client Assistance Project

**CHUCK RYAN** — Saint Michael  
Business, Industry and Labor

**BOB (ROBERT) WAGNER** — Saint Paul  
Former VR participant

**NICK (NICHOLAS) WILKIE** — Saint Paul  
Advocate

The Department of Employment and Economic Development is an equal opportunity employer and service provider.

Upon request, this information can be made available in alternate formats for individuals with disabilities by calling 651.259.7364 or emailing [Gail.Lundeen@state.mn.us](mailto:Gail.Lundeen@state.mn.us).