

M I N N E S O T A
STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

2 0 0 9 A N N U A L R E P O R T

OCTOBER 1, 2008 - SEPTEMBER 30, 2009

The State Rehabilitation
Council shall prepare
and submit an annual
report to the Governor
and the Commissioner on
the status of vocational
rehabilitation programs
operated within the state,
and make the report
available to the public.

*—Section 105 of
the Rehabilitation Act*



JEFF BANGSBERG

New Hope
Advocate

STEVEN DITSCHLER

Eagan
Community Rehabilitation
Provider

ANNE DYKSTRA

Golden Valley
Business

MICKEY KYLER

Crookston
Business

GLORIA LAFRINIÈRE

White Earth Reservation
American Indian VR Project

STEPHANIE MORRIS

Vadnais Heights
Advocate

WILLIAM NEGAARD

Vernon Center
Business

KIMBERLEY PECK

Vocational Rehabilitation
Services Director

CHRISTINA PERSONS

Saint Paul
Advocate

WENDY REA

St. Cloud
Former VR Participant

ANNE ROBERTSON

Minneapolis
Client Assistance Project

SEAN ROY

Minneapolis
Parent Training &
Information Center

ARDIS SANDSTROM

Motley
Former VR Participant

TERANCE SMITH

Forest Lake
Governor's Workforce
Development Council

REBECCA SUNDER

Burnsville
Rehabilitation Counselor

GREG TOUTGES

Moorhead
Former VR Participant

CINDY ULVEN

Hawley
Business

ROBYN WIDLEY

Roseville
Special Education

ANN ZICK

Osage
Statewide Independent Living
Council Representative

The Minnesota State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a citizen advisory council, appointed by the governor, to provide guidance to the state's Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. Its members help to shape policy, engage in strategic planning, and provide guidance to promote increased employment for people with disabilities. Members report annually to the governor and the U.S. Department of Education on the status of the VR program. They coordinate activities with other state councils, spearhead customer satisfaction surveys, participate in the preparation of comprehensive needs assessments, and co-host public hearings and forums. The council includes people with disabilities, community rehabilitation program employees, vocational rehabilitation counselors, advocates, VR customers and business leaders.

THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL INVITES YOU TO APPLY FOR MEMBERSHIP:

If you care about issues pertaining to disability and employment, the SRC encourages you to apply for council membership. For more information, call 651.259.7364.

An application form can be obtained by calling 651.259.7364 (TTY 651.296.3900 or 1.800.657.3973) or on the internet by going to the frequently asked questions section of the 'open commissions appointment' menu at www.sos.state.mn.us.

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES MISSION

Empower Minnesotans with disabilities to achieve their goals for employment, independent living and community integration.

STRATEGIC GOALS

Nearly three years ago Minnesota's public VR program, along with the leadership of the SRC, developed a set of five strategic goals that guide the mission of Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Today these five goals are the organizational foundation for all of the programs within Vocational Rehabilitation

Services and, to a large extent, for the work of the SRC. This 2009 report on the current status of the VR program is organized to demonstrate how the public VR program and the SRC are living into the principles articulated in each of the following five strategic goals:

GOAL 1: Through *purposeful innovation*, build our capacity to deliver increased quality and number of employment outcomes, creating *public value* for the people of Minnesota.

GOAL 2: Improve our *organizational vitality* as a customer centered, mission driven organization through individual professional development, continuous learning, best practices, *adaptation to change*, and critical thinking.

GOAL 3: Identify and publicly communicate strategic aims for our *collaborations with community partners* statewide, for advancing the mission and interests that we share with them and the state's employers.

GOAL 4: Provide *statewide leadership* for the continued development of the Minnesota WorkForce Center System's capacity to serve Minnesotans with disabilities.

GOAL 5: Facilitate *robust and effective participation* of the State Rehabilitation Council and the Statewide Independent Living Council in the achievement of our mission, consistent with the letter and spirit of their statutory roles.

VR OUTCOMES:

- 2,389 Vocational Rehabilitation participants obtained employment, down 9% from last year's placement rate of 2,620.
- The majority of those who found employment, 2,293, obtained jobs above minimum wage. The remaining 96 persons found employment with potential for a competitive wage.
- Of all obtaining employment, 19% utilized formal supports.
- The average wage of participants earning above minimum wage, without formal supports, was \$11.04, slightly down from last year. This figure compares well to 2009's second quarter average wage for all Minnesota job openings, \$12.41.

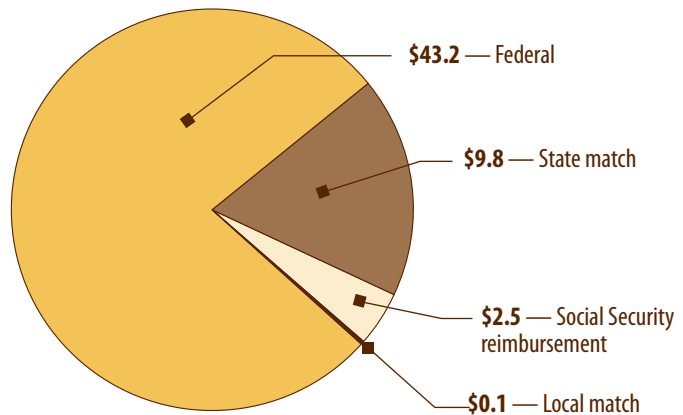
WHO VR SERVES:

- 22,521 people with disabilities received services from Vocational Rehabilitation Services this year.
- There were 9,431 new applicants, compared to 9,864 in 2008, and 8,285 in 2007.
- 67% of VR participants had three or more serious functional limitations.
- 33% of VR participants report a serious mental illness as their primary disability.
- 38% of VR participants receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) or a combination of both.
- 38% of VR participants are transition aged youths, age 16 through 21.

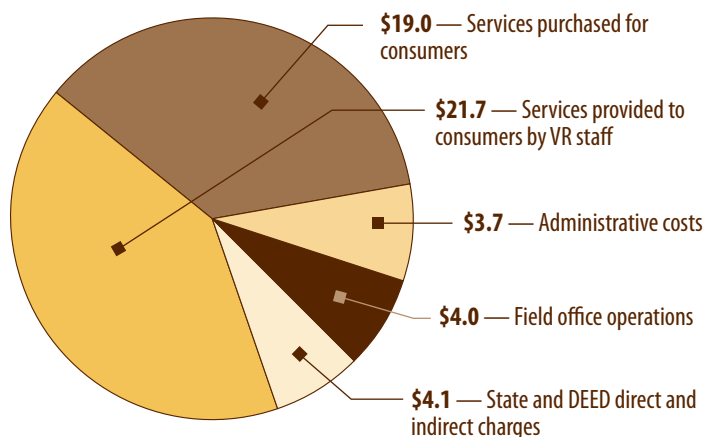
VR STAFF:

- Consumers are served by VR teams with an average caseload size of 95. Teams comprise Rehabilitation Counselors, Rehabilitation Representatives, Rehabilitation Technicians, Job Placement Coordinators and Customer Service and Administrative Support Staff.

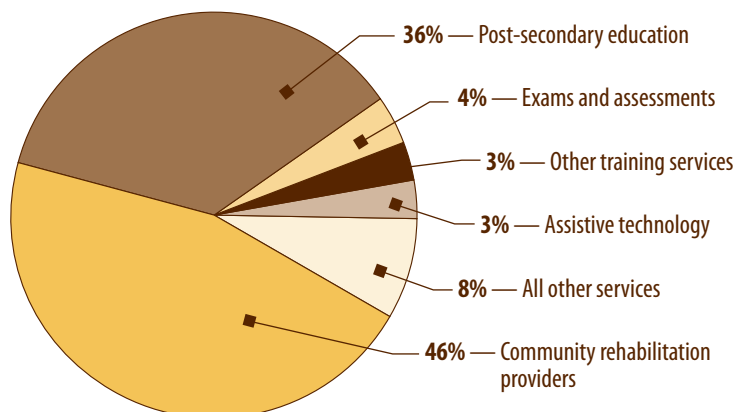
VR FUNDING SOURCES 2009 (in millions)



VR EXPENDITURES 2009 (in millions)



SERVICES PURCHASED FOR CONSUMERS 2009



2009: MINNESOTA'S ECONOMY

Minnesota's job market deteriorated sharply during the first half of 2009 as the national economy suffered through its worst recession in more than half a century. Soaring layoffs and slumping hiring rates pushed Minnesota's unemployment rate to a 26-year high last June. The labor market stabilized during the summer — and continued improvement is anticipated through 2010 — but analysts expect that full recovery from the dismal labor conditions will take more than a year.

PLACEMENTS BY TYPE OF EMPLOYMENT

	2007	2008	2009	Percent of 2009 Placements
Competitive Employment	1,964	2,077	1,891	79%
Self-employment	42	49	39	2%
Employment With Supports	496	494	459	19%
Total	2,502	2,620	2,389	100%

COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENTS 2009 — WITHOUT ONGOING SUPPORTS*

Occupation	Number of Consumers	Percent of Total	Average Hourly Wage	Average Hours/Week
Clerical/Sales	516	27%	\$10.06	28.2
Healthcare: support and service	259	14%	\$10.78	26.7
Industrial Trades	263	14%	\$11.42	35.1
Miscellaneous Occupations	127	7%	\$11.63	32.5
Professional/Technical/Managerial	291	15%	\$15.95	30.3
Service	434	23%	\$8.65	25.9
Total	1,890	100%	\$11.04	29

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

COMPETITIVE EMPLOYMENT PLACEMENTS 2009 — WITH ONGOING SUPPORTS*

Occupation	Number of Consumers	Percent of Total	Average Hourly Wage	Average Hours/Week
Clerical/Sales	93	23%	\$9.13	23.5
Healthcare: support and service	31	8%	\$11.10	21.6
Industrial Trades	31	8%	\$9.07	27.4
Miscellaneous Occupations	20	5%	\$8.54	22.0
Professional/Technical/Managerial	21	5%	\$12.11	27.5
Service	207	51%	\$8.07	20.8
Total	403	100%	\$8.86	22.4

*Ninety-six people found employment outcomes below minimum wage, but are working towards competitive employment. Of these employees, 49 are utilizing ongoing employment supports.

Ongoing employment support services represent a wide array of services, such as job coaching and job skill training, that support an individual in his or her job for an extended period of time.



ANNIE BALLANTINE: SELF EMPLOYED DESIGNER

When Annie Ballantine decided to pursue a college education, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors David Fullerton and Jenny Kruger not only offered counseling and advice on developing an employment goal, they also helped her obtain financial assistance for tuition and books to assist her in achieving that goal.

After studying at St. Catherine University, and later graduating from the Art Institute International, Ballantine started asking established interior designers for opportunities to work with them and learn the trade. Despite regular hospital visits to treat her rheumatoid arthritis, she soon felt sufficiently able and confident to start her own business.

Kruger liked the idea and nominated Ballantine for a \$5,000 Jude Jacobson Grant from the Courage Center. After receiving the grant, Ballantine established a home-based business, using vocational rehabilitation funding to buy equipment such as a chair, desk, and supplies.

Her business grew rapidly, and today the 27-year-old operates her design firm from offices at International Market Square in Minneapolis, a building that's filled with artists, trend-spotters and designers.

Ballantine's relationship with the Vocational Rehabilitation program extends back more than a decade, beginning in her teenage years. She gives considerable credit to Kruger and Fullerton for their help and encouragement, as well as to the Vocational Rehabilitation program for its financial assistance. In the end, though, it was the personal touch that mattered.

"For me David and Jenny were the first people who encouraged me to start a business," Ballantine says. "It would have been harder for me to do what I did without the encouragement and help from my Vocational Rehabilitation counselors."

PURPOSEFUL INNOVATION

The economic recession in 2009 made career planning and job placement very difficult for everyone, including people with disabilities working with the Vocational Rehabilitation program. This year the number of VR participants who obtained jobs decreased from last year. (see page 4)

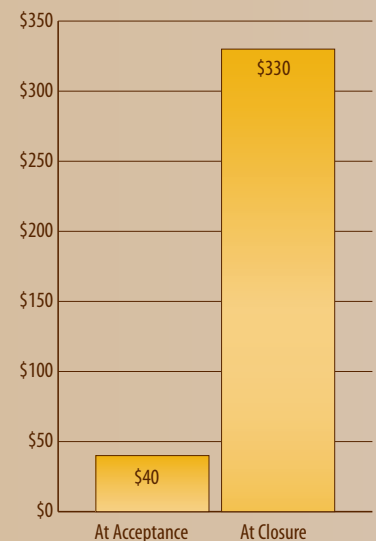
In addition to the economic hardships of 2009, the year also brought a large infusion of federal cash — about \$6.4 million — from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Vocational Rehabilitation Services used a portion of these economic stimulus dollars to encourage innovation and build system capacity throughout Minnesota. Listed below are some of the projects that received ARRA funding:

- Innovation in Transition grants, awarded to five communities throughout Minnesota, will pay for short-term projects designed to help students and young adults with disabilities prepare to make the transition from school to work.
- Project Search is a collaboration involving school, county, community partners, and Medtronic. It is designed to recruit and train people with significant disabilities for clerical positions and jobs in document imaging and storage.
- FastTRAC funding will strengthen the partnerships between VR, Adult Basic Education and post-secondary education to enable people with significant disabilities to more quickly obtain skills training and industry recognized credentials.
- The Governor's Council on Developmental Disabilities received a grant to research digital employment careers such as digital imaging, video gaming, and software testing for transition-age students on the autism spectrum.
- Establishment grant dollars will help to expand employment services in Southwestern Minnesota through a partnership with the Achievement Center, operated by Hope Haven, Inc.
- Community rehabilitation providers with center-based employment programs will receive funding to convert center-based employment to competitive jobs.
- The Demonstration to Maintain Independence and Employment, collaboration between the Department of Human Services and the Department of Employment and Economic Development, assists people with mental illnesses to access an array of employment support services that improve their job stability and overall independence.
- The Saint Paul WorkForce Center was awarded funding to create a computer lab and conference room to help applicants develop resumes, fill out applications and practice mock interviews.

PUBLIC VALUE

Of those who found employment this year, 25% received health insurance through their employer, 19% carried private insurance, and 51% accessed Medical Assistance, Medicare or MinnesotaCare.

AVERAGE WEEKLY EARNINGS: AT ACCEPTANCE AND SUCCESSFUL CLOSURE



Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned a combined total of \$741,500 per week.

ADAPTATION TO CHANGE

In 2008, a joint work group, convened by the SRC, laid out a 10-year plan to increase self-employment opportunities for people with disabilities. The joint work group's ultimate goal is to close the gap between the national self-employment rate for people with disabilities, 12 percent, and VR's self-employment rate of 2 percent. As a first step, VR hired an expert in small business plan development who offered training sessions in five locations across the state. VR's specialist is now assisting VR counselors with more than 40 consumers who are working through the complex and daunting steps of developing and implementing a business plan. Next year, the SRC will focus on identifying models of financial support for self-employed persons with disabilities.

ORGANIZATIONAL VITALITY

Twenty-five percent of the Vocational Rehabilitation staff is eligible to retire within three years. Recruiting an adequate number of trained professionals will pose a significant challenge. The SRC encourages readers to consider this vibrant career. For more information go to <http://library.ncrtm.org/pdf/V999.0001.01.pdf> or contact Lori.Thorpe@state.mn.us.

COLLABORATIONS WITH COMMUNITY PARTNERS

Vocational Rehabilitation Services — in collaboration with the Department of Human Services' Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services Division — has launched a new Rapid Response initiative to help businesses meet the workplace needs of employed persons with hearing loss.

A rapid response consultant has provided assessments of job retention and advancement risks, and offered tailored solutions to communication and performance issues. By year's end, the consultant had provided interventions and assessments to eight employers, including community non-profit agencies, small businesses, other state departments and Fortune 500 corporations, benefitting more than 80 persons.

Referrals are generated by employed individuals, from employers, from professional colleagues and from family members. Solutions have included individualized coaching, facilitated communications, use of assistive technologies, sign language interpreters; other outcomes may include referrals to Vocational Rehabilitation Services for intensive services, referrals to Independent Living, or for mental health services, as needed.

STATEWIDE LEADERSHIP

INTERNSHIPS AT WORKFORCE CENTERS

From October 2008 to October 2009, the number of job seekers visiting Minnesota WorkForce Centers increased 38 percent. As a partial response to this demand for services, the Vocational Rehabilitation program leveraged Pathways to Employment money to fund the hiring of interns with disabilities in WorkForce Center resource areas. The highly successful effort resulted in the hiring of 66 interns at more than 34 WorkForce Centers. As of November 2009, 44 interns had graduated from the program. Thirty percent found employment with the state and 40 percent with the private sector. Another 9 percent continued in school.

ROBUST AND EFFECTIVE PARTICIPATION

DISABILITY COUNCIL SUMMIT

On June 24 the SRC made history by convening representatives from 10 disability councils with a stakeholder interest in disability employment. More than 50 people gathered in Roseville for the first Disability Council Summit to discuss whether and how each council assesses the employment needs of people with disabilities, how the councils identify the needs of the communities they serve, how the councils might support each other's work, and whether common threads of interest could be identified.

Several common themes emerged from the discussion:

- All of the councils conduct some form of a needs assessment regarding disability employment. How could this work be approached more efficiently? Perhaps, as several participants suggested, in the form of a "mega assessment" involving multiple councils.
- All councils serve transition-age youths. Many councils spoke of the need to develop coherent and collaborative strategies to support this population.
- Other commonly identified themes were health care, outreach to minorities, services to seniors, and mental health needs.

- A common language is needed. Is there a common definition of disability? How do we define meaningful employment? How do we quantify what a person's service needs are?

Participants agree that the Disability Council Summit was a useful first step toward long-term collaboration and coordination among the 10 councils. Although the summit resulted in no specific action items, there is general agreement to continue to tap into the collective wisdom and experience represented by the councils to more effectively serve Minnesotans with disabilities.

COMMUNITY VOICES

In September the SRC and DEED sponsored a public forum in Willmar to discuss how state and community agencies can collaborate to help people with disabilities find jobs. The day featured panel and public discussions on how state, county and non-profit agencies can leverage their employment and community support services. Organizations participating included Goodwill/Easter Seals, Kandiyohi Human Services, Independent Lifestyles and West Central Industries. Thanks to the Willmar Vocational Rehabilitation office for hosting the event and sharing their knowledge with the SRC.

VR PARTICIPANTS RECEIVING SSI/SSDI AT APPLICATION

Social Security Benefits at Application	Number Served	Percent
SSI	2,986	13%
SSDI	4,413	20%
SSI & SSDI	1,028	5%
Total	8,427	38%

The individuals who represent VR's caseload are of all ages and from all walks of life. Although each person has his or her own unique story, it can be useful to look at aggregate numbers to understand broad programmatic needs.

CONSUMERS SERVED BY CULTURAL/ETHNIC GROUP

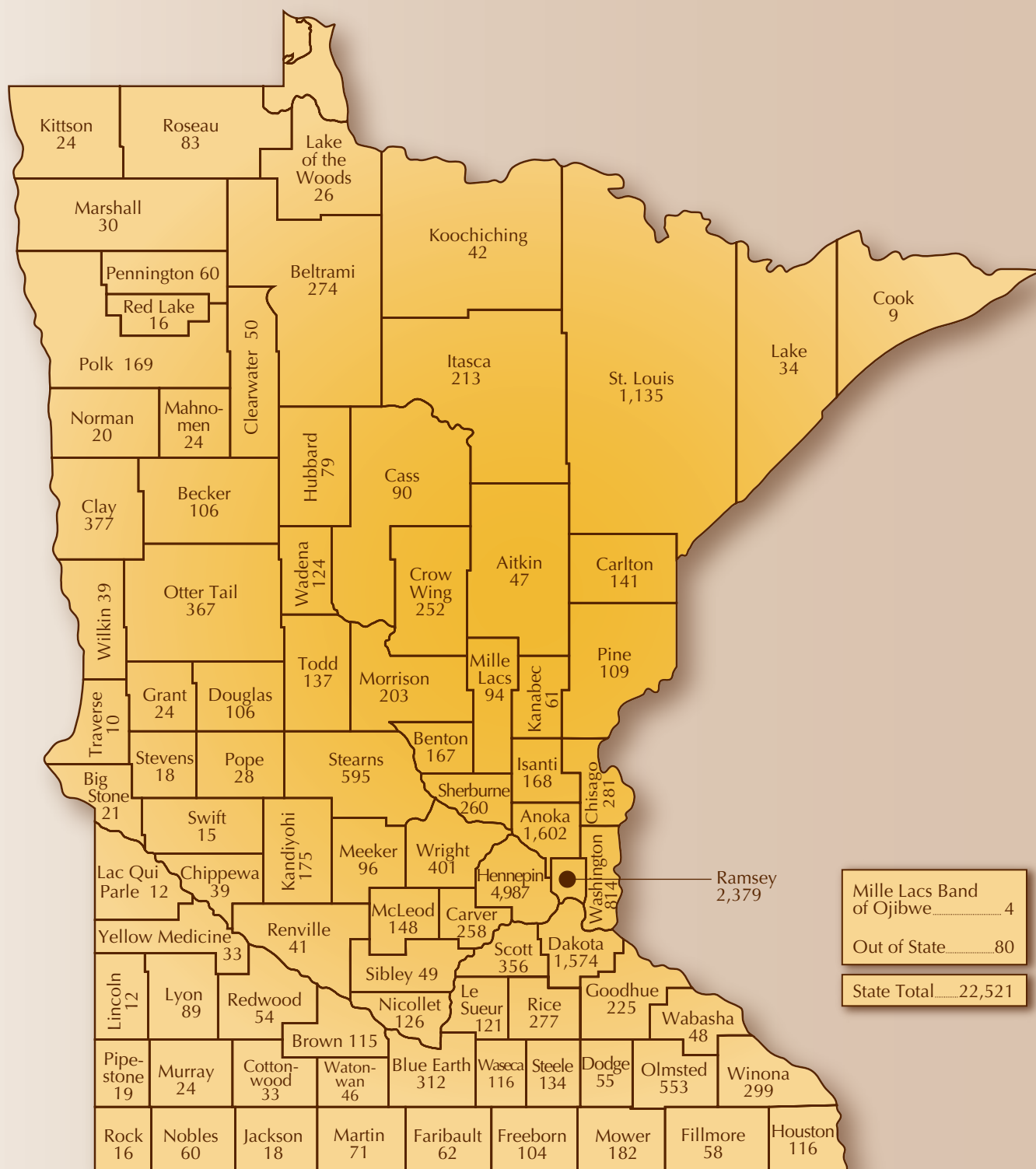
Percent of Total MN Population ¹	Cultural/Ethnic Group	Percent of Caseload	Percent of Total Employment Outcomes
1.2%	American Indian	2.8%	1.9%
3.5%	Asian	2.2%	2.1%
4.6%	Black or African American	12.2%	9.4%
4.1% ²	Hispanic/Latino	2.6%	2.1%
0.1%	Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.2%

¹ U.S. Census Bureau, 2008 Minnesota QuickFacts,
<http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/27000.html>

² Duplicate Count.

12 LARGEST DISABILITY GROUPS SERVED BY VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION 2009

Primary Disability Group	2007		2008		2009		2009
	Participants	% of Caseload	Participants	% of Caseload	Participants	% of Caseload	% of Total Placements
Serious Mental Illnesses	6,585	32%	7,380	33%	7,416	33%	31%
Learning Disability	3,461	17%	3,912	17.5%	4,193	18.5%	19%
Developmental Disabilities	2,497	12%	2,756	12%	2,868	13%	14%
Orthopedic & Neurological Impairments	1,774	8.5%	1,806	8%	1,630	7%	7%
Traumatic Brain Injury / Stroke	992	5%	1,007	4.5%	959	4.5%	4.5%
Deaf / Hard of Hearing	960	5%	1,019	4.5%	958	4.5%	6%
Chemical Dependency	567	3%	575	2.5%	587	2.5%	2%
Arthritis & Rheumatism	374	2%	407	2%	399	2%	1.5%
Cerebral Palsy	378	2%	370	1.5%	369	1.5%	1.5%
Cardiac / Circulatory System / Blood Disorders	241	1%	264	1%	254	1%	1%
Spinal Cord Injury	280	1.5%	248	1%	229	1%	1%
Diabetes	226	1%	226	1%	198	1%	1%



For information on the WorkForce Center nearest you, go to <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com> and look under the job seekers menu or call 1.800.328.9095 (TTY 651.296.3900).

THERE ARE MANY WAYS TO LET THE COUNCIL KNOW YOUR THOUGHTS.

You can call:

Voice 651.259.7364 or
1.800.328.9095

TTY 651.296.3900 or
1.800.657.3973
Minnesota Relay 711

Speech-to-speech telephone
re-voice 1.877.627.3848

You can write:

Chair, State Rehabilitation Council
DEED — Rehabilitation Services
332 Minnesota St., Suite E200
St. Paul, MN 55101-1351

You can fax:

651.297.5159

YOU CAN ATTEND A MEETING OR A PUBLIC FORUM.

All State Rehabilitation Council meetings and forums are open to the public. Meetings are the fourth Wednesday of every month with the exception of July and a combined meeting in November and December. Time is scheduled during all meetings for the public to address the council. Twice a year, the council hosts public forums.

For more information on the State Rehabilitation Council, go to the 'job seekers' section of <http://www.positivelyminnesota.com/>. The minutes and meeting times for the SRC can be found by clicking on 'people with disabilities' and then looking under 'for our partners'.

This report can be made available in Braille, high contrast, large print, diskette, audiotape, or other formats upon request by calling 651.259.7364, 1.800.328.9095 (TTY 1.800.657.3973; Minnesota Relay 711).

Speech-to-speech telephone re-voice:
1.877.627.3848.