



Minnesota

STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL — GENERAL

2011 ANNUAL REPORT
OCTOBER 1, 2010 — SEPTEMBER 30, 2011

Welcome to the State Rehabilitation Council annual report. This report can be made available in Braille, high contrast, large print, diskette and other formats upon request by calling 651.259.7364 or 1.800.328.9095. (TTY 1.800.657.3973; Minnesota Relay 711) Speech-to-speech telephone re-voice is 1.877.627.3848.

Duties of the State Rehabilitation Council

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. The council includes people with disabilities, community rehabilitation program employees, vocational rehabilitation counselors, advocates, VR participants and business leaders.

Members report annually to the governor and the U.S. Department of Education on the status of the VR program through this report.

The SRC assists the Vocational Rehabilitation program by helping to shape policy, engaging in strategic planning and providing guidance to promote increased employment for people with disabilities. They coordinate activities with other state councils, spearhead customer satisfaction surveys, participate in the preparation of comprehensive needs assessments, and co-host public forums statewide. For more information about the State Rehabilitation Council, see: www.positivelyminnesota.com/src.

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On behalf of the State Rehabilitation Council, I want to thank you and your staff at the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) for your tremendous support during the 2011 session of the Minnesota Legislature. By helping Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS) to secure stable funding over the next biennium you helped to ensure that more Minnesotans with disabilities will receive the assistance they need to find employment. Because of your efforts, most of VR's wait list will be gone by the time this report goes to press.

It is always difficult to request money from the Legislature, but in 2011, when our state faced an extremely large budget deficit, it must have been practically impossible. I cannot even begin to tell you how important it was — and what good news it was — for the disability community to learn from VRS Director Kim Peck that you had made VRS funding a priority when discussing strategy with Governor Dayton.

As you know, we face a thorny economic road back to prosperity; some say the most challenging since the Great Depression. For people with disabilities finding employment is difficult, even during good economic times. The most recent disability status report for Minnesota shows that 8.4 percent of all Minnesotans of working age have a disability. Of those Minnesotans with disabilities, only 44 percent are employed, compared to 82 percent of the general population (from the Employment and Disability Institute at Cornell University, www.disabilitystatistics.org).

One other issue deserves mention. This past year the Rehabilitation Services Administration (the federal funding partner for VRS) completed a monitoring visit to evaluate Minnesota's VR program. In its final report, RSA insisted that you realign DEED's organizational structure so that VRS would have control over its own budget and be given full parity with other DEED divisions on your executive leadership team. I'm pleased that you were able to accomplish this realignment. It really will make a difference in how VRS provides employment services to Minnesotans with disabilities.

If there is anything the State Rehabilitation Council and I can do to help you in promoting employment, please do not hesitate to ask. Thank you again!

Sincerely,

T. Jeff Bangsberg, Chair
State Rehabilitation Council

Eileen Parker: “An intense entrepreneurial desire”



Eileen Parker is disarmingly blunt about the daily challenges of living on the autism spectrum and managing bipolar disorder. She has grappled with those challenges for much of her life — in and out of hospitals, in and out of a succession of jobs, never holding one for long.

But she also describes an “intense entrepreneurial desire” that enabled her to teach herself marketing and public relations skills, to find employment as a consultant, and

ultimately, with assistance from DEED’s Vocational Rehabilitation Services, to start her own business. Her product is the Cozy Calm weighted blanket, filled with thousands of tiny plastic beads, which conforms to the body “like an overall hug” (<http://cozycalm.com/>). She cites evidence that weighted blankets have therapeutic value for people with autism, who often are hypersensitive to external stimuli. Hospitals purchase her blankets for use in their behavioral health units, and there’s a nationwide movement to persuade insurers to cover the cost of weighted blankets.

Today Cozy Calm is a profitable and growing business in Brooklyn Park, with contract employees and a bright future. But it might never have happened without an innovative self-employment initiative by Vocational Rehabilitation Services to provide entrepreneurial and self-employment training for


counselors and to work directly with people with disabilities who were interested in developing a business plan for self-employment. Through this program VRS also offers limited startup financing to leverage financing from third-party lenders and helps customers tap into the resources of DEED’s Small Business Assistance Office and regional Small Business Development Centers. Since 2009, VRS has reviewed 272 business ideas, 84 of which resulted in business plans that were approved for startup funding that totaled more than \$600,000.

Parker says she received both advice and money through the program, and would be hard pressed to say which was more important. What’s certain is that her own entrepreneurial energy, with an assist from the VR program, has transformed a great idea into a thriving small business that’s gathering momentum and gaining notice across the nation.

The SRC SELF-EMPLOYMENT COMMITTEE MISSION STATEMENT:

“Minnesota vocational rehabilitation participants will achieve self-employment at the same rate as workers in the overall Minnesota workforce.”

IN SUPPORT OF ITS MISSION, THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDED A THREE-YEAR PLAN THAT WOULD HELP MINNESOTANS WITH DISABILITIES ACCESS FINANCIAL RESOURCES AND PILOT A PROGRAM THAT WILL “INSOURCE” WORK THAT IS NOW OUTSOURCED TO OTHER STATES AND COUNTRIES. FOR MORE INFORMATION, GO TO THE COMMITTEE’S VISION STATEMENT: [HTTP://ALTURL.COM/OR4WX](http://alturl.com/or4wx).



THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL PLAYS AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN PROVIDING GRASSROOTS INPUT TO THE VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM. ONE WAY THIS IS ACCOMPLISHED IS THROUGH PUBLIC FORUMS.

June forum focuses on center-based employment

In June, the State Rehabilitation Council-General and Vocational Rehabilitation Services convened a day-long forum in St. Paul to provide a broad overview of the continuum of employment supports for people with disabilities. The forum focused specifically on center-based employment, and how the system has evolved and adapted to changes in public policy, shifts in social priorities, and ongoing debates.

The forum drew an audience of more than 100 people. Panelists and audience participants engaged in a lively discussion about the continuum of employment support services, a complex and constantly evolving system that spans decades and is marked by changes in perception, sharp shifts in philosophy, and frequent controversy. A significant portion of the discussion was devoted to the contentious issue of paying a subminimum wage to people with significant disabilities who work in center-based employment settings. Even though the public Vocational Rehabilitation program has not placed consumers into center-based employment since 2001, the forum consensus is that the practice will likely remain a piece of the broader employment services system for people with significant disabilities. A full report on the June public forum can be found at: <http://tinyurl.com/853le3a>.

September forum covers legislative outcomes and transportation

In September, a public forum in Mankato focused on the 2011 legislative outcomes and their impact on employment and independent living for people with disabilities. The forum was co-sponsored by the three disability councils mandated by federal law to provide direction to Minnesota's Department of Employment and Economic Development: Statewide Independent Living Council, State Rehabilitation Council-General and State Rehabilitation Council-Blind.

After a panel discussion, community members were invited to comment on issues related to employment and the array of supports people with disabilities sometimes need for independent living. A compelling theme of the public's testimony was the great need for accessible public transportation, particularly in rural areas. The councils heard about nonexistent coordination between transportation companies, few transit options and the impossibility of traveling across county lines. An outcome of the forum was a letter signed and endorsed by the three councils and sent to the Minnesota Department of Transportation. The letter outlined how the lack of accessible public transportation for a person with a disability can have a profound negative impact on community involvement, employment and economic well-being. For a copy of the letter and public testimony, go to: <http://alturl.com/kfi38>.



Vocational Rehabilitation at a Glance

Placements by Type of Employment

	Employment Outcomes	Percent of 2011 Placements	Average Wage
Competitive Employment Without Supports	1,988	80.0%	\$11.23
Self-employment	27	1.0%	\$15.56
Competitive Employment With Supports	462	19.0%	\$9.08
Total	2,477	100.0%	

NOTE: To track the VR Placement Rate for the past five years, go to page nine.

Consumers Served by Cultural/Ethnic Group

Percent of Total MN Population ¹	Cultural/Ethnic Group	Percent of Caseload	Percent Obtaining Employment
1.0%	American Indian	2.6%	1.6%
3.6%	Asian	1.9%	1.9%
4.3%	Black or African American	12.4%	10.0%
4.0%	Hispanic/Latino ²	3.0%	2.5%
0.0%	Pacific Islander	0.3%	0.4%

¹U.S. Census Bureau, 2010 American Community Survey, Demographic Housing Estimates.
www.factfinder2.census.gov

²Duplicate Count.

12 Largest Disability Groups serviced by Vocational Rehabilitation 2011

Primary Disability Group	2009		2010		2011		2011 % of Total Placements
	Participants	% of Caseload	Participants	% of Caseload	Participants	% of Caseload	
Serious Mental Illnesses	7,416	33.0%	7,055	33.0%	6,055	32.5%	31.0%
Learning Disability	4,193	18.5%	4,295	20.0%	3,800	20.5%	23.0%
Developmental Cognitive Disabilities	1,806	8.0%	1,643	7.5%	1,425	8.0%	9.0%
Autism	1,061	5.0%	1,216	6.0%	1,308	7.0%	5.0%
Orthopedic & Neurological Impairments	1,630	7.0%	1,395	6.5%	1,122	6.0%	6.0%
Traumatic Brain Injury / Stroke	959	4.5%	900	4.0%	770	4.0%	4.0%
Deaf / Hearing Loss	958	4.5%	895	4.0%	755	4.0%	5.5%
Chemical Dependency	587	2.5%	534	2.5%	366	2.0%	1.5%
Cerebral Palsy	369	1.5%	344	1.5%	298	1.5%	1.0%
Arthritis & Rheumatism	399	2.0%	351	1.5%	274	1.5%	1.5%
Cardiac / Circulatory System / Blood Disorders	254	1.0%	199	1.0%	158	1.0%	1.5%
Spinal Cord Injury	229	1.0%	191	1.0%	155	1.0%	0.5%

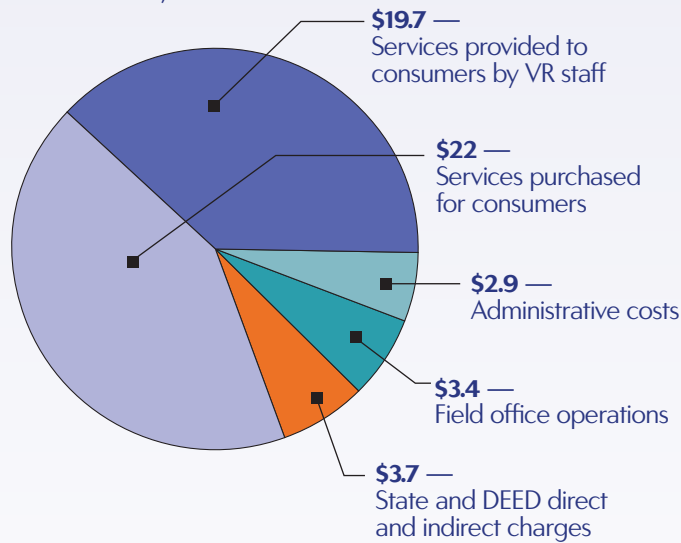
Competitive Employment* Placements 2011

Occupation	Number of Consumers	Percent of Total	Average Hourly Wage	Average Hours/ Week
Clerical/Sales	591	24.0%	\$9.69	28
Healthcare: support and service	323	13.0%	\$10.35	27
Industrial Trades	373	15.0%	\$11.61	35
Misc. Occupations	206	9.0%	\$11.11	32
Professional/Technical/Managerial	299	12.0%	\$17.23	33
Service	662	27.0%	\$9.02	25
Total	2,454	100.0%		

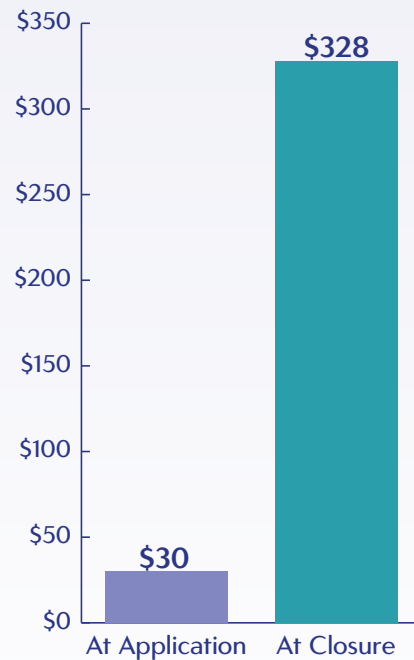
* Competitive employment is defined as work typically found in the community with wages and benefits commensurate to other employees.

Twenty-three people found employment below minimum wage, but are working towards competitive employment.

VR Expenditures 2011 (in millions)



Average Weekly Earnings: At Acceptance and Successful Closure



Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned a combined total of \$813,500 per week.

Earl Baversjo: “It’s like having your own PR company.”



Earl Baversjo used a hard word to describe himself: Obsolete. He was well past 50, out of work and homeless. Over the years he’d successfully held information technology contract jobs, often working 16-plus hours a day to add new computer experience and to gain access to many of the biggest companies in the Twin Cities for referrals and contacts. But when the tech bubble burst in 2000, he found it increasingly difficult to find regular employment.

In 2008, he made his way to the WorkForce Center in the Midway neighborhood of St. Paul. There he asked for help from Vocational Rehabilitation Services staff who specialize in providing services to clients who are deaf and hard-of-hearing.

In his first consultations with VRS staff, Baversjo said he learned to focus on “what I CAN do rather than the hearing loss.” It was a useful lesson. He began to find contract work again, but about a year ago contract positions became impossible to find. He came back to the Vocational Rehabilitation program and received counseling, coaching and consultation. Staff put him in touch with the Metropolitan Center for Independent Living to help him find

housing. Vocational Rehabilitation also helped him write an effective resume, rehearse interviewing techniques, and purchase some new clothes. Ultimately, the VR program helped him find a very successful summer office internship with the Social Security Administration.

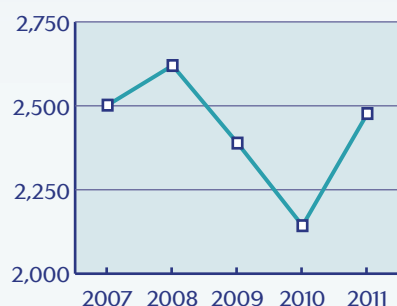
The internship ended in September, and Baversjo walked out the door carrying glowing letters of recommendation from two supervisors and the district manager. He had raised enough money to make payments on a truck. In November he moved into a new apartment and began actively seeking full-time employment.

“That was a gas,” he said, summarizing the experiences of the past year. “Everyone here at VR was just fantastic for me. It’s like having your own PR company. The whole organization is behind you, and they’re selling you like the latest brand of hotcakes!”

What’s next for Baversjo? With a renewed sense of self-confidence, a truck to drive and an apartment to live in, a good resume and letters of reference, he’s off to find that perfect job, and the VR staff who continue to work closely with him say they believe he’ll find it soon.

In 2011, 2,477 VR participants obtained employment. Although we are not up to pre-recession numbers, the number of VR participants who found employment rose substantially — up by a total of 334 people over the past year. It's difficult to ascribe the increase to any one factor, but concerted efforts by VR participants and staff, along with a slowly improving economy, certainly were important factors as VR met its primary goal of helping more people with disabilities find employment. The chart below illustrates how the recession affected VR's capacity to help participants find jobs.

Annual Number of VR Placements



David Senf, DEED Research Analyst, stated that Minnesota's job market recovery from the Great Recession continued in 2011 but improvement has been slow and uneven. The unemployment rate reached a post-recession low of 6.2 percent in October 2011 the lowest rate since November 2008 but still far above the 4.7 percent pre-recession rate in December 2007. Job growth in 2012 is expected to be slightly slower than in 2011 which will limit any further improvement in Minnesota's unemployment picture. By the end of 2012, the state is expected to have recaptured roughly half of the 158,000 jobs lost during in 2008 and 2009.

Who VR Serves

- ◆ 18,557 people with disabilities received services from the Vocational Rehabilitation program this year.
- ◆ There were 7,398 new applicants, compared to 8,970 in 2010, and 9,435 in 2009.
- ◆ 69% of VR participants had three or more serious functional limitations.
- ◆ 33% of VR participants report a serious mental illness.
- ◆ 37% of those accepted for service in 2011 were transition-age youths, age 16 through 21.
- ◆ At acceptance, 35.5% of VR participants were receiving Supplemental Security Income, Social Security Disability Insurance or a combination of both.
- ◆ Participants are served by VR teams with an average caseload size of 79. Teams include rehabilitation counselors, rehabilitation representatives, rehabilitation technicians, job placement coordinators, customer service and administrative support staff.

Top Six 2011 Vocational Rehabilitation Referral Sources

Educational Institutions	36%
Self Referral	24%
Workforce Centers	7%
Community Rehabilitation Program	7%
State or Local Government	6%
Health Care	4%

The Vocational Rehabilitation program is one of several partners in a mix of Workforce Investment Act (WIA) services for Minnesotans seeking training and employment. Vocational Rehabilitation and 16 other WIA-mandated partners provide job-related services in nearly 50 WorkForce Centers to general and targeted groups, such as youth, people with disabilities, dislocated workers, Veterans, older workers, and people with a difficult employment history. By leveraging program resources, these agencies are able to provide services to all Minnesotans. These “universal” services include access to job banks, classes and resume assistance. For more information on services offered in the WorkForce Centers, go to www.positivelyminnesota.com/wfc.

Much is going on at the federal level that may soon affect the WorkForce Center structure:

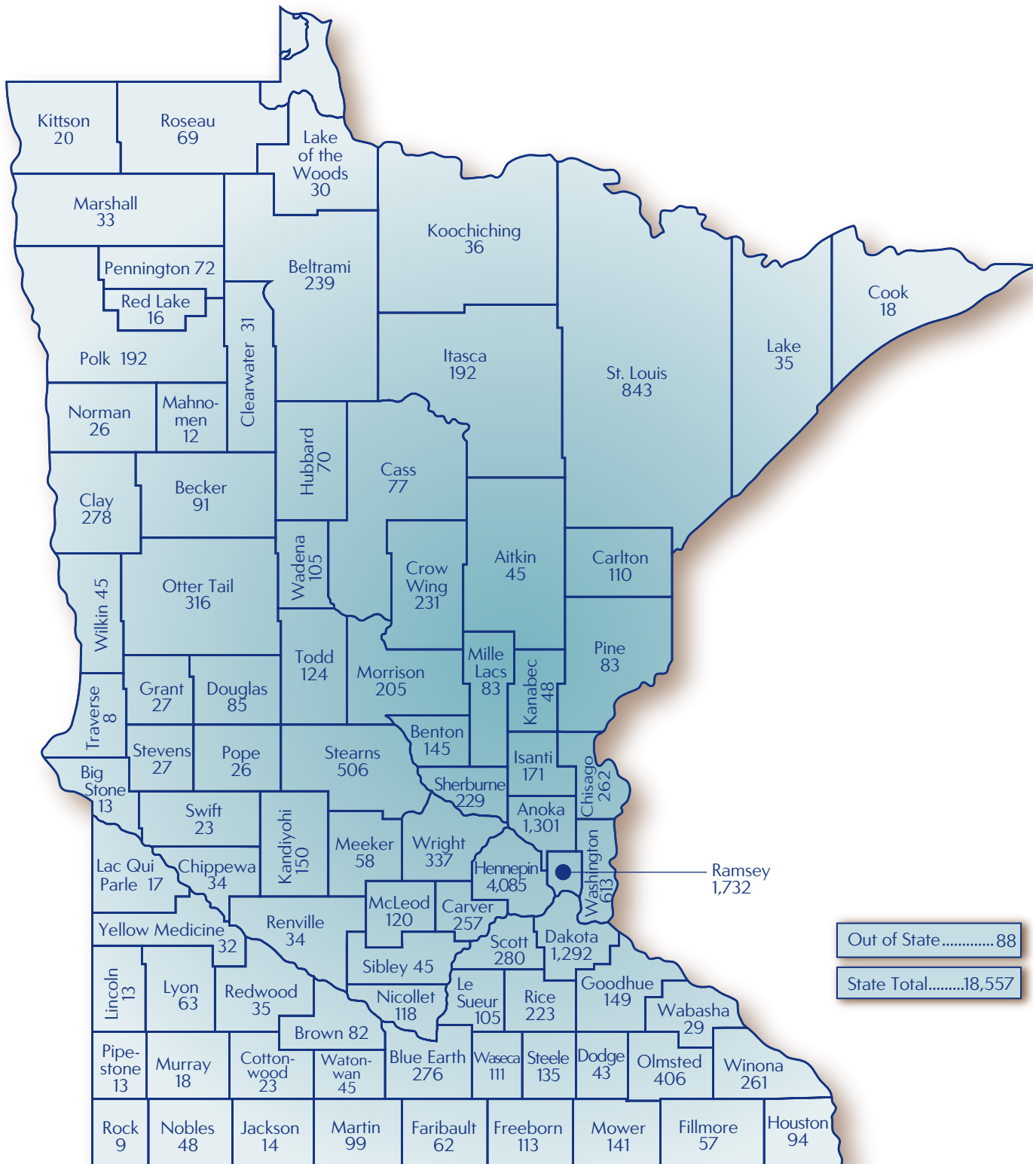
◆ **Balancing the federal budget.**

This year's federal budget was not approved. The ‘super committee’ created earlier this year did not agree on a viable ten-year plan to reduce the deficit. The Congress must now make cuts resulting in a 1.5 trillion dollar reduction in funding over the next ten years. With few exceptions, all federal services will be closely examined.

- ◆ **Workforce Investment Act Reauthorization.** The Workforce Investment Act of 1998 is long overdue for reauthorization. Many say that a ‘new WIA’ must reflect the rapid changes in technology, globalization and training that have occurred since the act was authored. With reauthorization, all WorkForce Center services will be examined for costs, success rates, and innovation.

Policymakers are challenged to imagine the future of the WorkForce Centers and employment and training services. The State Rehabilitation Council plans to work collaboratively with the Governor's Workforce Development Council (GWDC) as the GWDC prepares its biannual WorkForce Center Report, which will include the GWDC's recommendations for the future of Minnesota's WorkForce Centers.

Vocational Rehabilitation Participants by County



The Council Seeks Public Input

The State Rehabilitation Council obtains grassroots input from Minnesotans with disabilities about the Vocational Rehabilitation program. One way the council does this is to seek comment from the general public at public forums, typically scheduled two times a year. For more information about the time and location of forums and meetings, go to: www.positivelyminnesota.com/src.

Consider becoming a State Rehabilitation Council member.

If you are interested in disability employment policy, the State Rehabilitation Council offers an excellent opportunity. The council's members help to shape policy, engage in strategic planning, and provide guidance to Vocational Rehabilitation Services. For more information, please go to www.positivelyminnesota.com/src.



DEED is an equal opportunity employer and service provider.

Upon request, this document can be made available in alternative formats.

State Rehabilitation Council Member Roster

Jeff Bangsberg

New Hope
Advocate

John Barrett

Spring Lake Park
Community Rehabilitation Provider

Nicole Brand

Minneapolis
Former VR Participant

Mickey Kyler

Crookston
Statewide Independent Living Council Representative

Gloria LaFriniere

White Earth Reservation
American Indian VR Project

Hector Matascastillo

Saint Paul
Advocate

Andrea Moore

Bloomington
PACER

Kimberly Peck

Saint Paul
Vocational Rehabilitation Services Director

Christina Persons

Saint Paul
Advocate

Sherri Rademacher

Melrose
Former VR Participant

Wendy Rea

Saint Cloud
Advocate

Anne Robertson

Minneapolis
Client Assistance Project

Chuck Ryan

Robbinsdale
Business Representative

Terance Smith

Forest Lake
Governor's Workforce Development Council

Rebecca Sunder

Burnsville
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

Cindy Ulven

Hawley
Business Representative

Robyn Widley

Roseville
Department of Education

Dayna Wolfe

Minneapolis
Business Representative

For more information on State Rehabilitation Council meetings and membership, contact:

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