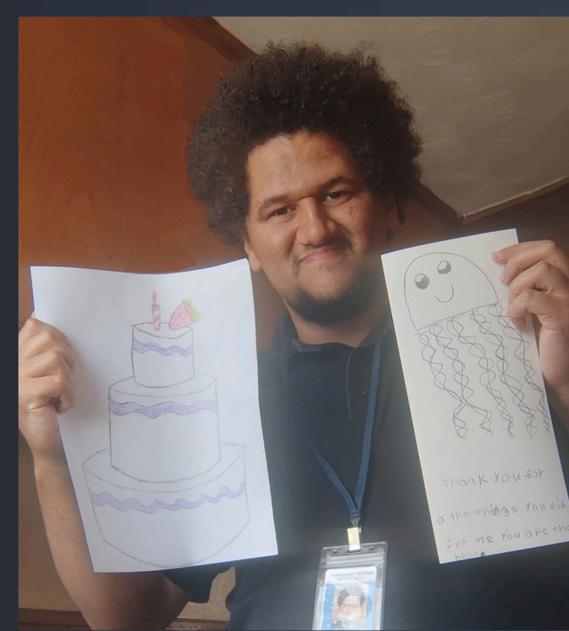


2025 ANNUAL REPORT



State of Rhode Island
Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services

and

Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council

Unleashing Possibilities

*Your Success is
Our Priority*

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Message from the Director

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) is an organization of opportunity, providing an array of services to the people who need important support and resources. The agency is dedicated to creating an environment where staff and customers have the tools, resources, and assistance needed to thrive at home, work, and in the community.

The Office of Rehabilitation Services is charged with empowering Rhode Islanders who have disabilities and voluntarily wish to obtain and maintain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and full integration into society. Vocational Rehabilitation, Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI), and Disability Determination Services (DDS) provide resources which enhance the quality of life for Rhode Island residents with disabilities.

The work of the ORS team represents an important dedication to community service driven by the desire to support our community members in a variety of ways. I am proud of the work of this team. With that in mind, I am pleased to provide you with this annual report highlighting the important work taking place and making a positive impact for Rhode Islanders.



Kimberly Merolla-Brito
Director - RI DHS

Message from the Associate Director

On behalf of the Office of Rehabilitation Services, I am pleased to present to you the 2025 Annual Report. Our staff is dedicated to the mission of the Office of Rehabilitation Services: to provide customized and comprehensive services to individuals with disabilities to maximize their quality of life, self-reliance, and economic independence in the community. In this annual report, we continue the practice of including success stories that reflect the diversity of our customers and their needs. These stories underscore the partnership between our staff and our customers that makes vocational rehabilitation work as well as spotlighting services we provide in our Older Blind program. The investments that our staff provide our customers through the State Vocational Rehabilitation Program increases revenue at all levels of government, decreases the burden of income maintenance programs, and allows individuals more independence in their daily lives.



Joseph Murphy

The accomplishments outlined in this annual report reflect on the dedication of our staff who, by hard work and commitment, continue a long tradition of serving Rhode Islanders with disabilities in all communities. We are also indebted to the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council, Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired, State Committee of Blind Vendors, and Rhode Island Council on Assistive Technology for their partnership and help in maximizing the potential of individuals with disabilities. I also extend my appreciation to our hard-working and capable staff along with our many public and private partners, who continue to display tremendous passion and creativity to provide high quality services and innovative strategies to engage our customers and the many small and large business owners throughout the State to meet staffing goals. Their work truly reflects the enthusiasm, desire, and commitment to help those we mutually serve.

Inside you will read several individual success stories, and I am sure you will be impressed at the accomplishments of these amazing individuals. It is these stories, and many more like them, that give hope and inspiration to all of us and underscores why we all love to do what we do here.

January 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1 New Year's Day State Offices Closed	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19 MLK Jr. Day State Offices Closed	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27 State Rehabilitation Council Meeting 2-4pm ORS 1st floor conference room	28	29	30	31

Vocational Rehabilitation

Karen Davis - Administrator

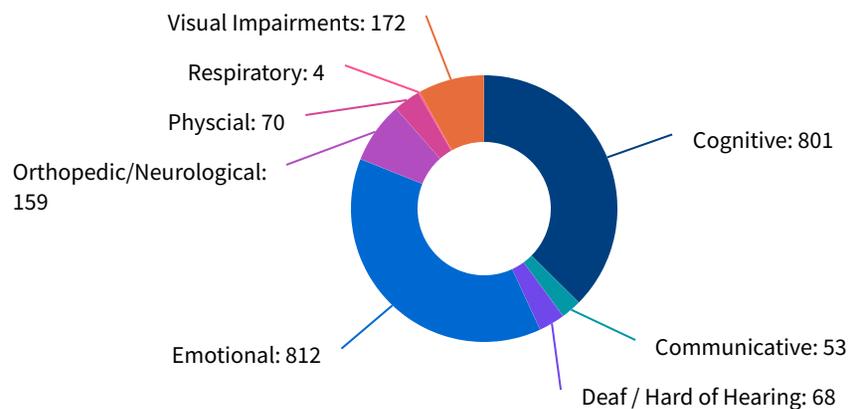
The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program is the public state and federally funded program that assists individuals with disabilities to choose, prepare for, obtain, advance in, and maintain competitive integrated employment with employment being the successful outcome of services provided. It is expected that individuals with disabilities who apply for services are interested in becoming employed and understand that this is the focus of the VR program.

A Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) works with the individual to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This plan includes an employment goal, the time expected for the individual to reach the goal, the individualized services needed, and how the services will be provided to suit the needs of the particular individual.

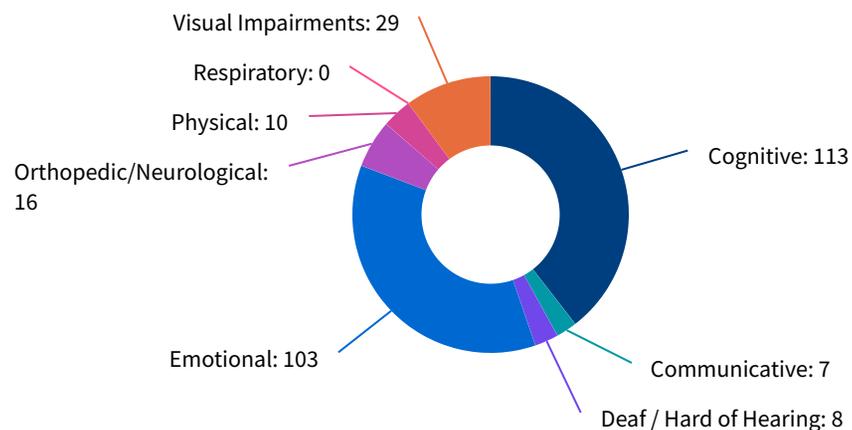
In PY2024, ORS had **1,310** applicants, developed **771** Individualized Plans for Employment (IPEs), and had **646** closures, of which **290** were competitive integrated employment.

Who Are Our Customers? Program Year (PY) 2024 (7/1/24 - 6/30/25)

Primary Disability of 2,170 Individuals with Disabilities Served by ORS



Primary Disability of 290 Successfully Employed Individuals with Disabilities

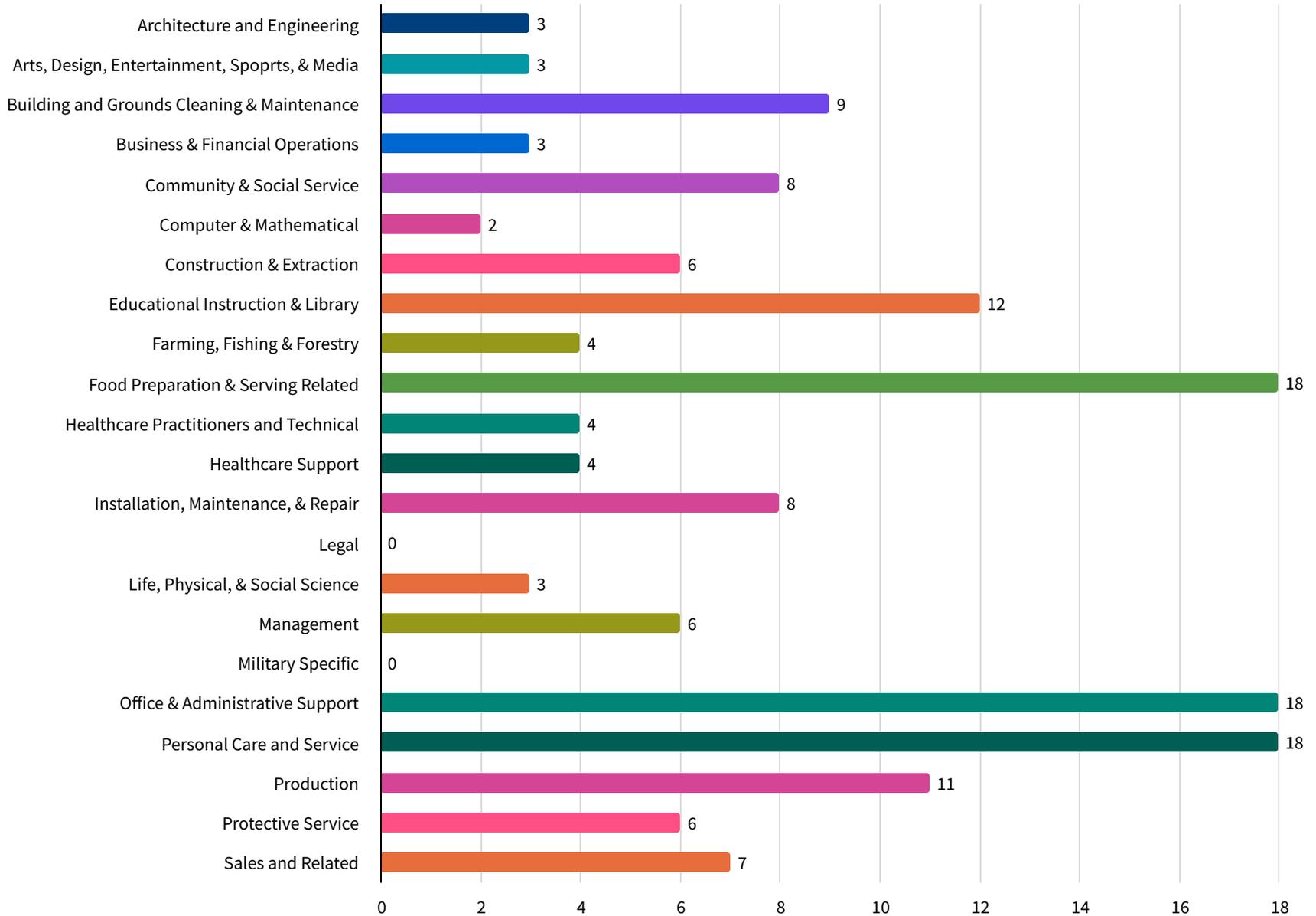


February 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14 
15	16 Presidents' Day	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28

VR Statistics

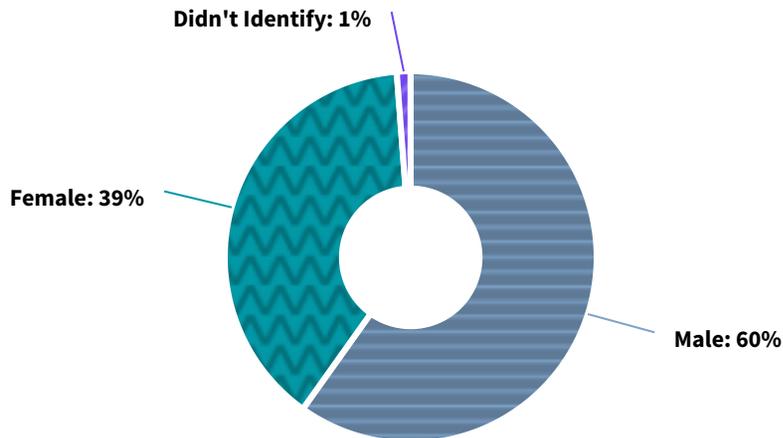
Primary Occupation of 290 Successfully Employed Individuals with Disabilities



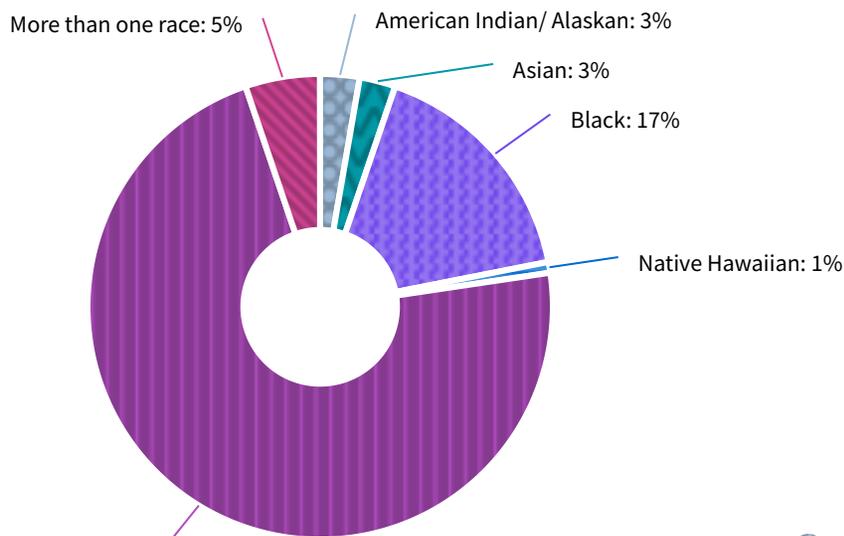
March 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17 	18	19	20	21
22	23	24 State Rehabilitation Council Meeting 2-4pm Zoom	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

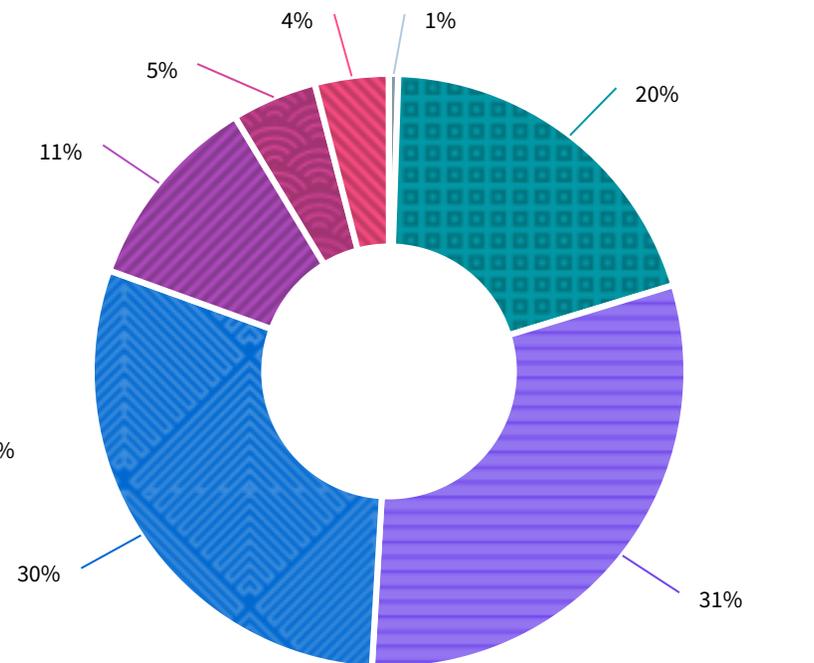
Gender, Age and Ethnicity of 2170 Individuals with Disability who Received Services through ORS



Male Female Didn't Identify



American Indian/Alaskan Asian Black Native Hawaiian White More than one race

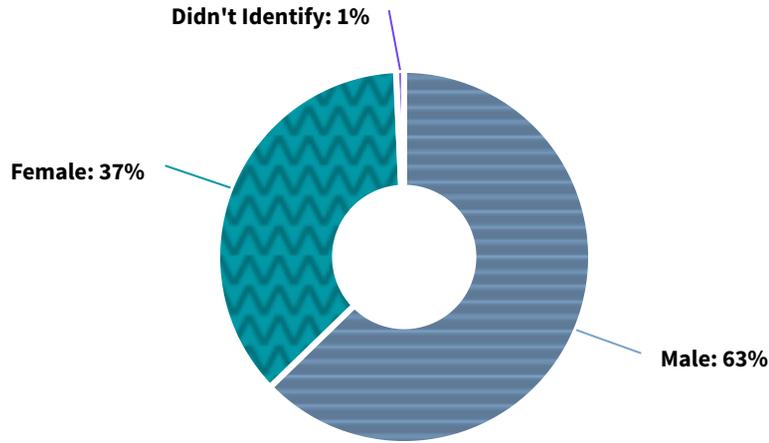


< 16 16 - 18 19 - 24 25 - 44 45 - 54 55 - 59 60+

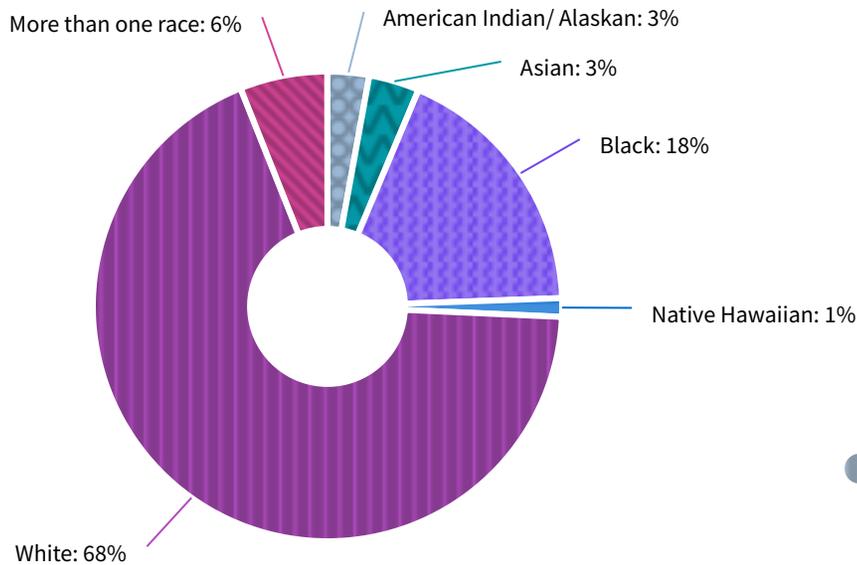
April 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30		

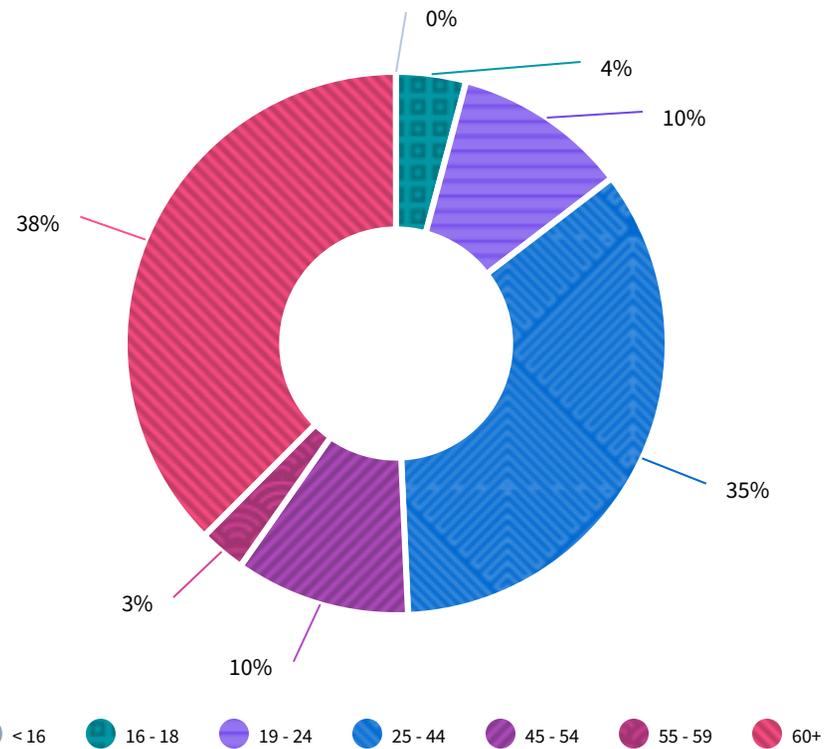
Gender, Age and Ethnicity of 290 Successfully Employed Individuals with Disabilities



● Male ● Female ● Didn't Identify



● American Indian/Alaskan ● Asian
 ● Black ● Native Hawaiian
 ● White ● More than one race



● < 16 ● 16 - 18 ● 19 - 24 ● 25 - 44 ● 45 - 54 ● 55 - 59 ● 60+

May 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25 Memorial Day	26	27	28	29	30
31						

Supported Employment

Melanie Sbardella - Assistant Administrator

The ORS Supported Employment (SE) Services Program assists individuals with the most significant disabilities to acquire the skills and experience, along with the appropriate supports, to obtain and maintain competitive, integrated employment. ORS continues to work with Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals (BHDDH), Department of Labor and Training, Department of Education (RIDE), and Employment Specific Providers to develop services to meet the employment needs of individuals of all ages and abilities. This strong partnership strengthened due to the Consent Decree between the Department of Justice (DOJ) and the State of Rhode Island which created an atmosphere of stronger interagency partnerships.

ORS has moved back to a hybrid model of services and support for those who might benefit from it. The foundation of ORS is 1:1 in person support, but a hybrid provides a customized approach for those that may need more access without direct 1:1 vocational counseling. ORS has identified virtual services as an alternative method of communication and employment service delivery for individuals who may benefit from in person virtual services. ORS continues to have in person services for individuals utilizing supported employment.

ORS and BHDDH continue working together with respective technical support providers to identify how best to meet the demand and attempt to overcome staffing shortages. ORS continues to explore the development of an Integrated Resource Team (IRT) model, which utilizes a full array of available resources in the State. Services are centered around what an individual with multiple needs requires: housing, employment, and mental health services.

ORS continues to work with supported employment fidelity models to support individuals supported by behavioral health programs and developmental disability funded programs. The specific fidelity models ORS has utilized

include Individualized Placement and Support (IPS) for individuals with behavioral diagnoses, customized employment, and Project Search programs. ORS completed the second year of Adult Project Search at Bally's in Lincoln. This program provides individuals diagnosed with IDD the opportunity of skills training specific to employment and job placement and retention.

ORS continues to facilitate Supported Employment Council (SEC) and support in-house vocational counselors and direct service providers with technical assistance, professional development regarding supported employment trends, and exploring innovative strategies to support job seekers.

Additionally, work continues to be a collaborative effort with ORS, Department of Labor and Training (DLT), BHDDH, RIDE, and Department of Human Services (DHS) to help individuals with disabilities obtain employment. This essential interagency partnership supports the Rhode Island Employment First Initiative brought to the attention of the Governor's Office. Work is being done across several State agencies to highlight the needs of individuals with disabilities. ORS and BHDDH are working with the DLT to ensure that anyone with a disability is provided the same access to any State sponsored employment programs as those without disabilities. ORS believes that the collaboration with State Agencies and the Governor's Office will help increase employment opportunities for any individual with a disability and especially for those who need supported employment services.

In August of 2024, Rhode Island's Governor signed an executive order to establish the state's Olmstead Advisory Group to help Rhode Island strengthen collaboration across government, and, in partnership with the community, prioritize efforts to improve systems for people with disabilities.

Virtual Supported Employment and Non-Supported Employment Services: ORS has returned to in-person meetings but has retained the ability to provide virtual services for those who may still be hesitant about meeting in person. ORS will also offer virtual assistance to individuals who may not have a service provider in their local area but want to seek employment such as the following.

Vocational Evaluation (Virtual): Approved for adult vocational evaluations. This is a virtual/remote service that can consist of, but is not limited to exploration, interest inventory testing, and virtual job shadowing.

Virtual Job Preparation: Consists of 9 hours per week for 4 weeks; scheduling of classes is up to the provider at a minimum of 9 hours per week. All other services similar to non-virtual job prep should include a resume and interviewing skills as part of reporting.

Job Retention: Service can be provided virtually and would include at least weekly phone calls to check in with the employer (if necessary) and the client.

Job Coaching Services: Provided virtually and telephonically.

June 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19 Juneteenth State Offices Closed	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

Barbara Mulligan - Assistant Administrator

The Office of Rehabilitation Services provides transition services to students with disabilities to prepare them for adult life. ORS Counselors are working with all school districts, students, and families to prepare for career development, job training, and employment opportunities before and after high school. Transition and Pre-Employment Transitions Services (Pre-ETS) are activities and supports designed to help the students identify their interests and strengths so that they can work on skills needed to be successful in employment and their future.

Project SEARCH is a national organization that partnered with Cranston Public Schools, with the goal of preparing young people with developmental and intellectual disabilities for success in competitive, integrated employment.

Project SEARCH job coaches and instructors provide support and guidance for the interns alongside their work supervisors, to assist with any work-related questions and to ensure internship goals are being met each day.

In addition to working toward the ultimate goal of permanent employment upon graduation for its students, Project SEARCH provides classroom instruction around career search exploration, independent living skills, travel training for public transportation, monthly employment conferences, and adult services. To accomplish its goals, Project SEARCH partners with the state Office of Rehabilitation Services, Perspectives Corporation, and the Rhode Island Department of Behavioral Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals.

Pre-ETS Statistics for Program Year 2024 (7/1/2024 - 6/30/2025)

- 1,747 - Number of Students with Disabilities (SWD) Reported
- 239 - Number of SWD Receiving Pre-ETS Services
- 188 - Number of SWD Receiving Pre-ETS who are Potentially Eligible
- 51 - Number of SWD Receiving Pre-ETS who Applied for ORS Services

Types of Services Received

- 62 - SWD who received Job Exploration
- 31 - SWD who received Work-based Learning Experience
- 62 - SWD who received Counseling & Enrollment
- 96 - SWD who received Work Readiness
- 1 - SWD who received Self Advocacy

July 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
			1	2	3	4 Independence Day
5	6 State Offices Closed	7	8	9	10	11
12	13	14	15	16	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27	28	29	30	31	

Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired

Laurie Diorio - Administrator

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) offers a wide array of services to eligible individuals who are blind or visually impaired through its Vocational Rehabilitation Unit, Business Enterprises Program, and Social Services Program. The various services offered by these programs are designed to help individuals of all ages achieve independence at home, in the community, and in the workplace.

Vocational Rehabilitation Program... A Federal/State Program created to assist people who are blind or visually impaired to obtain or maintain employment. Services provided include evaluation, orientation, mobility training, rehabilitation technology, guidance and counseling, career assessment, educational planning, vocational training, provision of adaptive equipment, job development, job placement, and follow-up services.

Business Enterprises Program... The Federal/State Randolph-Sheppard Program which provides entrepreneurial employment opportunities for individuals who are legally blind. Business Enterprises establishes vending facilities in state and federal buildings which are operated by licensed vendors supervised by SBVI. Presently there are 15 locations throughout the state. Types of facilities include vending machines, micro markets, small coffee shops, and larger food service sites serving hot and cold entrees prepared on-site. All operate under the name of "Coffee Plus".

- 15 Vending facilities are supported by the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprises Program (BEP) at Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. These 15 facilities collectively also provided employment for numerous individuals around the state. Multiple operators have a second location they managed with operations continuing to adjust to the changing market and post-pandemic environment.

Social Services Program... Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired coordinates a federal comprehensive service program which focuses primarily on children from age 3 - 14, elderly individuals, and individuals for whom a vocational goal is not feasible.

- Rhode Island again recognized its annual White Cane Awareness Day celebration on October 17, 2024.

NEWSLINE: A newspaper reading services provided by the National Federation of the Blind (NFB) funded by SBVI.

- 565 individuals are registered for this service with 16 new subscribers.

August 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
						1
2	3	4	5	6	7	8
9	10 Victory Day State Offices Closed	11	12	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21	22
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30	31					

Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (cont.)

Children's Case Management Services include family casework, coordination with early intervention programs, educational guidance, summer camp for youths, arrangement of ophthalmologist and low vision evaluations, and information and referral to appropriate community programs. RISBVI continues its role of supporting parents through advocacy and service coordination for children with severe visual impairments.

Independent Living for Older Blind Program provides case management services, along with ancillary services for mobility and orientation, rehabilitation teaching for skills training in activities of daily living, management of low vision, provisions of adaptive equipment, and information and referral to support groups and appropriate community services.

- **251** older individuals who are blind or visually impaired (over age 55) received services from this program allowing **96%** to report feeling more confident and in greater control. **100%** of individuals receiving assistive technology (AT) services and training maintained or improved functional abilities that were previously lost or diminished as a result of vision.

Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP)...The Office of Rehabilitation Services is the lead agency for the Rhode Island Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP). ATAP is a statewide program funded under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998. ATAP is designed as a statewide partnership of organizations, each with a targeted assistive technology focus, working together to improve access to and acquisition of assistive technology for individuals. ATAP's main initiatives include Device Demonstration, Device Loan, Device Re-Use, Training, Public Awareness, Collaboration, Information and Referral.

In total Statewide, **238** individuals were provided AT devices; **73** individuals received demonstrations; **836** individuals received training; and **1,380** individuals received information about AT from ATAP Resource Centers. ATAP Partners include Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Program (ATEL), West Bay Educational Collaborative (WBEC), Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL), and TechACCESS of RI.

Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Program (ATEL)... The ATEL Program loans telephone equipment to residents of the State of Rhode Island who have hearing, speech, or neuro-muscular (unable to dial or hold a receiver) impairments and have a signed certificate of disability. Equipment is issued on a first-come, first-served basis.

81 individuals were provided with specialized equipment through ATEL.

September 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7 Labor Day State Offices Closed	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30			

Disability Determination Services

Beth Rioles - Administrator-DDS

The Rhode Island Disability Determination Services (RI DDS) is a unit within the Office of Rehabilitation Services, which operates under a “state-federal” partnership. The function of the RI DDS is to make determinations as to the medical eligibility of adults and children with physical and/or mental impairments who have applied for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits.

The RI DDS is assigned a budgeted workload under a regulatory agreement with the Social Security Administration (SSA). The RI DDS is 100 percent financed by SSA to adjudicate initial disability applications, appeals of cases initially denied, and continuing disability reviews. The RI DDS also performs disability hearings on cases in which benefits have been terminated.

In total, the RI DDS processed 12,609 disability cases this year. Based on an anticipated increase in staffing and an expected increase in intake, RI DDS anticipates processing approximately 13,000 cases in FFY2026. RI DDS has completed the transition to the new computer system that SSA developed. The system is referred to as National Case Processing System (NCPS). The roll out began in March of 2017. Currently 100% of the staff are using the system. SSA is constantly improving the software and tools that the examiners use in their daily functions to enhance timely and accurate decisions and make the system more functional for users. Rhode Island was one of the first states to switch over to DCPS, and now all states in the country are working in this case processing system.

In FFY 2024 RI DDS had three examiner losses. These vacant positions could not be filled due to a federal hiring freeze. This decrease in staffing presented challenges that resulted in a slight decrease in productivity and slight increase in processing time in FFY24.

In FFY 2025 RI DDS processed 12,609 disability claims. The RI DDS has been able to maintain excellent initial decisional accuracy ratings of 99.3%. FFY25 ended with an overall processing time of 114 days which is well below the national threshold of 224 days.

Rhode Island continues to operate a Cooperative Disability Investigations (CDI) unit to help combat fraud in the program. This unit investigates fraud at initial and reconsideration applications, prior to claimants being put in pay status. Recently, they have been able to work fraud cases for individuals already in pay status. The referrals come from the field offices, DDS, and the public. The CDI unit consists of a DDS examiner, a field office representative, two investigators from the Attorney General’s office, and a special agent. SSA continues to put a high emphasis on combatting fraud in the program.

October 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
				1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12 Columbus Day State Offices Closed	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31
						

DDS Statistics for FFY 2025

- 11,438** Total cases were received by the Disability Determination Services (DDS)
- 12,609** Claims were processed by the DDS
- 7,077** Initial claims were received
- 7,344** Initial claims were processed
- 2,801** Continuing Disability Review cases were completed
- 123** Pre-Hearing Cases were processed, resulting in
107 Disability Hearing decisions
- 3,490** Consultative Exams were purchased
- 11,193** Medical Evidence Records were purchased

- \$1,201,776** Total Medical Costs with Total DDS Budget of \$ **11,217,835**.

Local Social Security Field Offices

30 Quaker Lane, 1st Floor
Warwick, RI 02886-0111
1-866-964-2038

4 Pleasant Street
Pawtucket, RI 02860
1-866-931-7079

Pavilion Plaza
2168 Diamond Hill Road
Woonsocket, RI 02895
1-877-229-3542

130 Bellevue Avenue
Newport, RI 02840
1-866-253-5607

1 Empire Plaza, 6th floor
Providence, RI 02903
1-877-402-0808

November 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
1	2	3 Election Day State Offices Closed	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11 Veterans Day State Offices Closed	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26 Thanksgiving Day State Offices Closed	27	28
29	30					

2024 Raymond A. Carroll Award

Jessica Palumbo - Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor

The Raymond A. Carroll Award is given to an individual who exemplifies the same dedication in serving individuals with disabilities as Mr. Carroll had during his 42 years of state service. Raymond Carroll began his career at the Office of Rehabilitation Services in 1966 and retired in 2008. During that time, he demonstrated his awareness of the needs of individuals with disabilities and was a dedicated and effective advocate for improving the standards set for programs providing services for those individuals with disabilities.

On October 24, 2024 at ORS's Annual Strategic Planning Day, the award was given to Jessica Palumbo, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor. Jessica was nominated not by only one person, but by the whole region she works within. Jessica began his career at ORS as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I in 1996. She was later promoted to a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II in December, 2005. In April 2015 Jessica was promoted once again, this time to the position of Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor of Region V. One of the administrative team commented "Jessica's calmness I feel anchors the office, her staff, and her co-workers and often goes unnoticed because it is consistent. It is beneficial to the framework of ORS. I have been lucky to work with her for over 20 years and she really is the best of us".

One thing that all her staff agreed upon was that "Jessica is the heart and soul of Region 5." They believe that through her professionalism and wealth of knowledge, she exemplifies the mission of ORS. It was for these reasons that they heartily endorsed and nominated Jessica for this award. "Jess embodies the qualities and the spirit of this award, and we urge you to seriously consider her for this esteemed honor."

Another staff member commented that "Jessica has shown nothing but kindness, reassurance, patience, and respect while I have been navigating the VR world. Jessica is calm and approachable, and I always feel comfortable asking her any questions and appreciate her guidance".

They all feel that Jessica is willing to think creatively to help move clients forward. She is willing to listen and to support new initiatives. Her management style fosters growth and dedication to exceptionalism by her team. She also builds commitment without micro-managing. She is a quiet role model who sets high standards and who consistently moves her counselors towards them as well.

Congratulations Jessica on this well-deserved award!!!!



Jessica Warwick-Palumbo, VR Supervisor

Past Recipients

- 2011** - Sharon DiPinto - Sr. Human Services Policy & Systems Spec.
- 2012** - Kathy McCabe - Sr. Rehabilitation Counselor
- 2013** - Sherry Olink - Jr. Resource Specialist
- 2014** - Teresa Scaramuzzo-DiMattia - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II
- 2015** - Rosemary Feeney - Sr. Human Services Business Officer
- 2016** - Paula Stachelek - Word Processing Typist
- 2017** - Sheridan Lomax - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- 2018** - Rosemarie Aponte - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- 2019** - Karen Davis - Asst. Administrator - Supported Employment
- 2020** - Michelle DeVita - Sr. Word Processing Typist
- 2021** - Daniel Moitoso - Desktop Support Specialist
- 2022** - Patricia Robert - Clerk Secretary
- 2023** - Linda Deschenes - Assistant Administrator

December 2026

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
		1	2	3	4	5
6	7	8	9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25 Christmas Day State Offices Closed	26
27	28	29	30	31		

2025 Raymond A. Carroll Award

Michael A. Lombardi - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II

The Raymond A. Carroll Award is given to an individual who exemplifies the same dedication in serving individuals with disabilities as Mr. Carroll had during his 42 years of state service. Raymond Carroll began his career at the Office of Rehabilitation Services in 1966 and retired in 2008. During that time, he demonstrated his awareness of the needs of individuals with disabilities and was a dedicated and effective advocate for improving the standards set for programs providing services for those individuals with disabilities.

This year the award was given to Michael Lombardi, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II. Mike was nominated not by one person, but by the whole region he works within. Mike began his career at ORS as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I in August, 2008. He was later quickly promoted to a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II in September, 2009 due to his dedication, reliability, knowledge, and strong work ethics.

The following are just a few of the comments that Mike's Region 3 co-workers provided.

"Mike has a remarkable ability to connect with those others might overlook, personally helping them secure competitive employment and truly changing the course of their lives."

"Mike consistently goes above and beyond by taking on some of the most difficult and complex files without hesitation, demonstrating both his expertise and work ethic."

"Mike is the kind of colleague everyone hopes to work with. He is a true team player: reliable, knowledgeable, and always willing to step in wherever he's needed. Mike consistently shows up with a positive attitude and a strong work ethic."

"What stands out most is how much he genuinely cares — about his work, about doing things the right way, and about the people he works with. That commitment doesn't go unnoticed. His efforts consistently earn high praise in client satisfaction surveys, a testament to the trust and respect he builds through every interaction. Mike doesn't seek recognition, but he absolutely deserves it."

Congratulations Michael on this well-deserved award!!!!



Mike Lombardi - Karen Davis, Administrator

Past Recipients

- 2011** - Sharon DiPinto - Sr. Human Services Policy & Systems Spec.
- 2012** - Kathy McCabe - Sr. Rehabilitation Counselor
- 2013** - Sherry Olink - Jr. Resource Specialist
- 2014** - Teresa Scaramuzzo-DiMattia - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor II
- 2015** - Rosemary Feeney - Sr. Human Services Business Officer
- 2016** - Paula Stachelek - Word Processing Typist
- 2017** - Sheridan Lomax - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- 2018** - Rosemarie Aponte - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- 2019** - Karen Davis - Asst. Administrator - Supported Employment
- 2020** - Michelle DeVita - Sr. Word Processing Typist
- 2021** - Daniel Moitoso - Desktop Support Specialist
- 2022** - Patricia Robert - Clerk Secretary
- 2023** - Linda Deschenes - Assistant Administrator
- 2024** - Jessica Palumbo - Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor

Letter from the State Rehabilitation Council Co-Chairs

Dear Consumers, Families, Friends, Partners, and Stakeholders:

The Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council had a successful year supporting the Office of Rehabilitation (ORS) in its work on behalf of people with disabilities in Rhode Island. The Annual Report will provide you with an overview of our activities of the past year along with future goals for 2026. Our combined detailed report from the subcommittees that do the work of the Council, and a list of Council members with brief biographies of those members and the constituency each member represents are also included.

We have an engaged and energized Council membership who actively took part in our work on behalf of the community. Since COVID-19 created challenges for some of our membership, we now do our work with a hybrid of in-person and video conference work. We found that virtual meetings have increased attendance for those who have difficulty traveling to in-person meetings or need to be socially distanced due to medical issues.

The “Let’s Get to Work” initiative continued during 2025. The Council was pleased to see strong placement outcomes and effective collaboration among partners. The Department of Labor & Training (DLT), the Governor’s Workforce Board, and numerous community groups have continued to work together to connect individuals, especially those with disabilities, to employment through vocational rehab, job coaching, skills training, and supports such as transportation, independent living skills, and childcare.

We would like to thank the ORS and their vendors publicly for their contributions to the growth of our consumers and to let you know that your voices and enthusiasm continue to exemplify the best of vocational rehabilitation work in R.I.

In 2025, the Council demonstrated a strong commitment to its strategic objectives, implementing several initiatives that have positively impacted our community. The Council regularly convened to address key priorities and initiatives. Throughout these meetings, Council members actively engaged in discussions focused on strengthening partnerships, advancing Council goals, and ensuring robust participation from required stakeholders. These achievements reflect the collective effort and dedication of all Council members. We wish to extend our thanks to the membership of this key Council. Your commitment of time and the expertise that you bring continue to foster an environment that supports thoughtful discussion, meaningful change, and—most importantly—better outcomes for the individuals we serve.

Letter from the State Rehabilitation Council Co-Chairs (cont.)

Shaping the Future Together

We congratulate the ORS personnel and their vendors for keeping the momentum going this year with transition activities, career exploration, and virtual career events. The SRC is poised to develop greater partnerships with the ORS Business Engagement Team and the Department of Labor and Training in the coming year. In addition, the Council would like to collaborate with ORS on their training of vocational evaluations and person-centered planning for vendors during 2026. The Council plans to assist ORS in continuing to build its interactive online presence by expanding the ways that individuals and families can easily learn about ORS' available supports and services. The Council is especially interested in continued focus on serving students with 504 Plans in schools, better training for school counselors, and clearer communication about the role of ORS in transition services. We value the effort to create brief reference videos in English and Spanish to help reach more Rhode Islanders. As ORS moves toward a rebranding initiative, we look forward to seeing these improvements come together to strengthen connection and understanding across the community.

The Council will continue to fulfill its role by monitoring the progress that the State of Rhode Island and the ORS are making in fulfilling their responsibilities under the Rhode Island Supported Employment and Integrated Day Service Consent Decree.

The Council will monitor the delivery of Pre-ETS programming to ensure consumers receive the services needed to successfully transition into employment services.

The Council will also continue to monitor the use of the Supported Decision-Making model with students in transition as required by the Act.

We look forward to supporting the ORS as it creates new opportunities to meet the employment needs of Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

Supported by a committed community of State Council members, providers, our partners, and ORS counselors, we remain steadfast in our advocacy to ensure that all individuals with disabilities have meaningful opportunities for full community participation, including community-based employment and independent living.

Letter from the State Rehabilitation Council Co-Chairs (cont.)

We recognize and value the productive partnership established with Joseph Murphy, ORS Associate Director; Karen Davis, Administrator of Vocational Rehabilitation; John Valentine, Strategic Planning Supervisor; and the committed ORS staff, which enables joint efforts toward optimal employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. As we review this year's activities, we acknowledge ongoing challenges while noting significant advancement.

Collectively, we are addressing barriers and fostering opportunities that positively affect individuals with disabilities throughout Rhode Island.

Sincerely,

Melissa Brusso and Nina Fiasconaro
Co-Chairs, Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council

State Rehabilitation Council

Advancing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

Overview

The State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs) act as the consumer voice for the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program. Federally mandated membership requirements guarantee that a wide variety of stakeholders are represented, providing opportunities for diverse groups to participate in the governance of the VR agency. This inclusive structure is fundamental for effective collaboration between the VR program and individuals with disabilities, helping them achieve independence, full integration into the community, and meaningful employment.

Representation and Advocacy

SRC members serve as vital links between the state agency and many partners, including employers, parents, educators, community rehabilitation programs, and other stakeholders involved with the VR program. They uphold the principle that individuals with disabilities are capable of attaining quality employment outcomes.

While federal law requires this partnership, the relationship between SRCs and the VR program is broader than just fulfilling statutory obligations. It is a collaborative effort focused on advocacy and amplifying the voices of VR participants. This ongoing partnership calls for dedication and prioritization from all involved, aiming to transform the VR system into a catalyst for positive change and support people with disabilities in obtaining integrated, competitive employment.

(McGuire-Kuletz, M., Tomlinson, P., & Hurley, K.B. 2019)

Mission Statement

The Council is committed to working alongside the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) to ensure that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities have the opportunity to secure and retain meaningful and satisfying employment.

Vision Statement

Functioning as an independent body of diverse members, the SRC collaborates to drive continuous improvement in ORS employment outcomes. The Council is focused on enhancing communication among all stakeholders dedicated to expanding opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Additionally, it aims to increase employer awareness of the value and productivity of people with disabilities and to conduct comprehensive reviews and analyses of consumer satisfaction with the State Agency's employment-related activities.

State Rehabilitation Council

Advancing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

Key Partners

- Office of Rehabilitation Services
- Rhode Island State Independent Living Council
- Governor's Workforce Board
- Governor's Commission on Disabilities
- Rhode Island Department of Elementary & Secondary Education
- Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals

Council Goals

Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act, the State Rehabilitation Council is responsible for:

- Reviewing, analyzing, and advising ORS on the planning, development, and implementation of services for individuals with disabilities to support competitive employment outcomes.
- Advising and assisting with the State Plan, strategic planning, reporting, needs assessments, and evaluations as required by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.
- Conducting reviews and analyses of consumer satisfaction relating to the State Agency's employment-related functions and activities.
- Providing advice to the State Agency and fostering partnerships with the Statewide Independent Living Council.
- Performing additional relevant functions as determined by the Council.
- Preparing and submitting an Annual Report to the Governor and the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

State Rehabilitation Council

Advancing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

National Engagement

The Rhode Island SRC is an active and longstanding member of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC). NCSRC strengthens local SRCs by building their expertise, offering educational and training opportunities, and connecting them with peer states and subject matter experts. While each SRC maintains its distinct identity, NCSRC serves as a national resource and training platform.

NCSRC Mission:

On behalf of people with disabilities, our national membership coalition will advocate for and work in partnership with the national public vocational rehabilitation system's continual quest for excellence.

NCSRC Vision:

NCSRC will be the premiere national organization of the consumer voice to enhance the employment opportunities of persons with disabilities through the public vocational rehabilitation system.

NCSRC Core Values:

- Integrity: Honesty, dignity, responsible stewardship, and accountability.
- Commitment: Support for disability non-discrimination laws, including the Rehabilitation Act and Americans with Disabilities Act.
- Excellence: Empowerment of VR customers to make choices leading to independence.
- Advocacy: Education and information for the public and policymakers regarding disability issues.
- Diversity: Appreciation for disability, race, ethnicity, gender, age, sexual orientation, and religion.
- Leadership: Fostering excellence and inclusive opportunities among people with disabilities.
- Partnership: Collaboration with state and non-governmental agencies to promote meaningful employment.
- Teamwork: Trust and cooperation with VR administrators and staff.
- Culture: Support for a VR service system that reflects the lived experience of disability.
- Communication: Effective communication in appropriate formats.

State Rehabilitation Council

Advancing Opportunities for Individuals with Disabilities

The NCSRC consists of 53 SRCs from states and territories delivering public VR services. Members engage in bi-monthly conference calls and attend two annual training conferences coordinated with Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) national meetings.

Statement of Partnership and Common Purpose

The Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council maintains a strong and lasting partnership with the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Services, built on credibility and trust. Through collaboration involving sharing information, program data, and expertise, both organizations strive to ensure that eligible Rhode Islanders receive individualized and effective vocational counseling and guidance.

The Council enhances the vocational rehabilitation program by asking strategic questions, evaluating internal and external factors influencing service delivery, and making recommendations to improve policy and practice. The partnership aims to empower each VR program participant to identify specific employment goals and create actionable plans to achieve them.

Additionally, the Council continually seeks qualified and dedicated individuals to contribute their perspectives, collaborate with the Office of Rehabilitation Services, and serve Rhode Island's diverse population of individuals with disabilities.

2025 – 2026 State Rehabilitation Council Meeting Schedule

- **November 3, 2025**, 2 PM – 4 PM (Zoom)
- **January 27, 2026**, 2 PM – 4 PM (In person) – 1st floor conference room at Office of Rehabilitation Service, 40 Fountain Street Providence RI 02903
- **March 24, 2026**, 2 PM – 4 PM (Zoom)
- **May 19, 2026**, 9 AM – 11 AM (In person) – 1st floor conference room at Office of Rehabilitation Service, 40 Fountain Street Providence RI 02903

If you want more information about the RISRC, you can visit our webpage <http://www.ors.ri.gov/SRC.html>

State Rehabilitation Council - Members



Melissa D. Brusso is the Co-Chair of the Council. She sits on the Council as a representative of a Disability Advocacy Group representing individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, or mental disabilities who have difficulty in representing themselves or are unable due to their disabilities to represent themselves. She is an Educational Advocate at the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College. She has worked in educational advocacy for a total of nineteen years, first with the Office of the Child Advocate and the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities, and later with Justice Resource Institute in Massachusetts. She has worked in adult education and ESL at Dorcas International Institute of RI, helping recently resettled refugee students and other newcomers through the process of beginning their English education. The RI Department of Education appointed her to make educational decisions for children and youth in foster care throughout Rhode Island. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Providence College, and a Master's Degree from Rhode Island College.



Regina Connor sits on the Council representing Persons with Disabilities and the Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired. She has more than thirty years of experience in the field of rehabilitation. Her background includes working as a Rehabilitation Teacher for the Blind and earning a Master of Arts degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Rhode Island College. She has served as a vocational rehabilitation counselor, senior VR counselor, supervisor, and State Coordinator for the Deaf. Her administrative experience includes serving as Training Coordinator for all agency personnel, Program Director for the state's Assistive Technology Act Program, and Transition Coordinator for youth with disabilities. Regina's volunteer work includes serving on the State Rehabilitation Council and as Chairperson of the Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Regina is active in the National Federation of the Blind, serving as Secretary of the Rhode Island Affiliate. She is also a commissioner with the Governor's Commission on Disabilities and a member of its Legislation Committee.



Lynn Domenici sits on the Council representing the Parent Training and Information Center (RIPIN) established pursuant to Section 1431(e)(1) of Title 20. Lynn joined the RIPIN team in 2023 and serves as the Peer Transition Coordinator. Much of her work is with students with disabilities transitioning from school to adulthood. Her committee work includes representing RIPIN on the State Rehabilitation Council and the CSI (Continuous Systemic Improvement) Committee, ensuring the continuation of the valuable achievements of the Consent Decree. She has previous professional experience in supporting high school students with disabilities and working for ORS vendor agencies as a job developer, job coach, and CESP (Certified Employment Support Professional). Lynn is the mother of an adult daughter with ID who is living her best life using the self-direction service model with BHDDH funding.

State Rehabilitation Council - Members



Judith L. Drew, Ph.D., CRC, sits on the Council representing a Community Rehabilitation Provider and served on the Council as the chair spanning several formative years. After a leave of absence, she returned to the Council and resumed her role as an active member. She has been in private practice for over forty years and focused on career and rehabilitation counseling, school-to-work transition assessments, vocational expert testimony, vocational assessment, and staff development and training for profit and non-profit organizations. In 2023, she retired from full-time teaching to pursue opportunities to volunteer for Thrive Behavioral Health's Club House program. Dr. Drew obtained her Ph.D. from The Ohio State University. She has been teaching Rehabilitation Counseling courses in higher education institutions for over thirty years. In addition, she frequently is a speaker for regional, national and international conferences on vocational assessment practice and transition issues for youth. Dr. Drew's research and writing interests include evidence-based practice models for vocational assessment, career counseling with underserved populations, and the intersection between governmental disability employment policies and the real-world implementation and application of those policies.



Nina Fiasconaro serves as Co-Chair of the Council and has been an active member since 2018. She represents Persons with Disabilities, specifically in her capacity as a parent of a son with significant needs. Ms. Fiasconaro began her advocacy for individuals with disabilities when her son entered Early Intervention in 1999. She has participated in various committees at Jawonio, UCP of Rockland NY and CPW, UCP for Westchester NY. From 2010 to 2016 she was a member of the Board of Directors for The Miracle League of Westchester NY. Her role was Director of Development, helping develop and run after-school programs for children with disabilities. During that time, she participated in the Family Support Services Advisory Council of Westchester NY overseeing a \$6 million budget for respite programs in Westchester NY. Her former career was in wholesale jewelry manufacturing. She developed a brand that donated portions of its proceeds to community organizations that support children with disabilities. At that time in 2013 she became part of The Meeting Street Org. community where her son attended school. She participated in the Parents Advisory Board. She continues to be involved with Meeting Street. In 2018 with their help as the fiscal agent, she founded 401 A League of Our Own. A free program for RI special needs individuals and their siblings to experience the joy of being part of a team while learning the sport of baseball. She was part of BHDDH's Barriers Workgroup on restructuring the consent decree. She is currently a Broker Associate at Residential Properties LTD.

State Rehabilitation Council - Members



Bethany Hogan sits on the Council representing Educational Advocacy at the Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College. The RI Department of Education appointed her to make educational decisions for children and youth with disabilities who are in RI's foster care system. She was a middle and high school teacher of English Language Arts, English Enrichment, and Literacy. She worked with families navigating their public-school districts at the state's designated Parent Information Center. She holds a Bachelor of Arts degree from Rhode Island College. Most importantly, she is the Mom to two young men who happen to have disabilities. Being their advocate has enabled her to work with agencies and organizations around the state to help increase positive outcomes for all individuals with disabilities.



Olivia Lozier sits on the Council as a representative of Disability Rights Rhode Island, representing the Client Assistance Program established under section 732 of this title under 43 CFR part 370, She is a Legal Advocate at Disability Rights Rhode Island (DRRI) and recent graduate of Roger Williams University, where she earned her B.A. in Psychology and Cultural Studies. Her experience with Protection and Advocacy (P&A) began in Washington, D.C as an intern for the National Disability Rights Network (NDRN), the national membership association for the P&A/CAP network. She worked closely with NDRN's public policy team to research, track, and comment on legislation helpful to the P&A network. It is this role that sparked her interest in the work that DRRI does on the state level, bringing her back to Rhode Island to intern at DRRI while finishing her last semester of college. This role furthered her passion for disability justice, leading her to come on board as DRRI Legal Advocate. Liv works on a variety of projects including outreach, developing fact sheets and self-advocacy materials, and assisting the DRRI attorneys with client work.



Tracey Martins sits on the Council representing a Community Rehabilitation Provider. She has spent 30-plus years in the field of day and supported employment for individuals served by multiple state departments including The Division of Developmental Disabilities, The Department of Veterans Affairs, The Department of Transitional Services, various state Vocational Rehabilitation agencies, and Ticket to Work. She has been successful in assisting organizations in transformation projects and building successful leadership teams, in multiple states until settling in Rhode Island where she served as the Associate Director of Employment at Behavioral Health Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals before becoming the CEO/ President at Accesspoint Rhode Island. She is also an active member of multiple committees including the Institute of Community Inclusion Advisory Board in Boston, the RI Governor's Commission on Disabilities- employment committee, and the Governors Workforce Board Career Pathways Advisory Committee. She is also a recent graduate of Salve Regina University's Dual

State Rehabilitation Council - Members

	<p>Master’s Program in Rehabilitation Counseling and Innovation and Strategic Management which has fueled her enthusiasm for promoting system change in Rhode Island.</p>
	<p>Jay Mollo is the Vice-Chair of the Council. He sits on the Council representing Business, Industry and Labor. Upon completing a Bachelor’s Degree at Rhode Island College with a double major in Justice Studies and Public Administration, with a concentration in Political Science, Jay Mollo’s professional journey began in 2016 at International Game Technology (IGT), now known as Brightstar Lottery. Jay’s current role at Brightstar Lottery is a Sr. Manager of Talent Acquisition Operations, Corporate Recruitment, and Contingent Labor. From the outset, Jay has been driven by a clear and compelling mission: to cultivate a workplace culture rooted in belonging, inclusivity, and excellence. Over the years, he has spearheaded strategic transformative initiatives that have delivered measurable results, introduced innovative talent strategies, and aligned recruitment operations with broader organizational goals. Outside of his professional endeavors, Jay is a passionate advocate for community engagement and social impact. He serves as Vice Chairperson of the State Rehabilitation Council, contributes to the American Heart Association’s Southern New England Heart Walk Executive Committee, is a member of the Board of Directors for the New England Technical Academy, and the Upwage AI Advisory Council. A proud alumnus of Leadership Rhode Island, Jay completed the College Program in 2015 and graduated from the Upsilon II Core Program in 2024—an experience that deepened his civic commitment and broadened his leadership perspective. He later served on the organization’s New Programs Advisory Committee, further contributing to the development of future leaders. Jay enjoys spending quality time with family and friends along with coaching youth sports.</p>
	<p>Morna A. Murray, J.D. sit on the Council representing the Client Assistance Program established under section 732 of this title under 43 CFR part 370. She is an expert in state and federal policy and programs for vulnerable people and people with disabilities. She is a chief executive who has successfully led strategic and innovative organizational change in the non-profit and governmental sectors. Morna is currently the Executive Director of Disability Rights Rhode Island (DRRI), the federally mandated Protection & Advocacy (P&A) agency for the state of Rhode Island, dedicated to protecting and advocating for the legal rights of individuals with disabilities. She has more than 25 years’ experience working in public policy and advocacy in the private sector, state government, and the U.S. Senate. Prior to DRRI, Morna served as Commissioner of the Connecticut Department of Developmental Services, and a member of Governor Dan Malloy’s cabinet. In that position, she oversaw state services for children and adults with disabilities throughout Connecticut. Prior to that, she was President and CEO of the Connecticut Community Providers Association, advocating and</p>

State Rehabilitation Council - Members

	<p>lobbying for disabilities and behavioral health non-profit providers at the state level. From 2007–2010, Morna served as Senior Counsel to Senator Bob Casey, Jr. (D-PA), leading all healthcare and children’s issues. She was Senator Casey’s lead staff during the development and passage of the Affordable Care Act. She worked with key national and state stakeholders in drafting legislation in the areas of autism, disabilities, early childhood, childcare, mental health parity, and multiple other issues. Morna previously served as Director of Youth Development for the Children’s Defense Fund, Washington, D.C. A graduate of the George Washington University Law School, she is a member of the Connecticut, District of Columbia, and Florida Bars. She has two adult children and three grandchildren.</p>
	<p>Rene Rico sits on the Council representing the Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities, and Hospitals (BHDDH). She currently works as the Administrator of Rehabilitative Services at the RI State Psychiatric Hospital. As an administrator her responsibilities include oversight of all rehabilitative services including Psychology, Social Work, Occupational Therapy, and Therapeutic Recreation. She brings eighteen years of professional experience in human services, specifically working with individuals living with psychiatric and substance use disorders. She obtained an undergraduate degree from the University of RI in Sociology with a minor in Criminal Justice. Later she obtained a graduate degree from Salve Regina University in Rehabilitation Counseling and a Certificate of Advanced Graduate Studies in Mental Health. Rene is a member of the Narragansett Indian Tribal Nation on her maternal side, and the daughter of a Bolivian father who emigrated to the US in the 1960s. The unique experience of being first generation Bolivian and Indigenous American has provided her with a deep connection to diversity and inclusion for all. Rene is honored to be involved in the Latina Leadership Institute, graduating in the class of 2013. The goal of the institute is to empower women to become leaders in the community at all levels of service. In addition, she sits on the BHDDH Race Equity Committee, the RI State Rehabilitation Council, and is the chair of the RISPH Health Equity Committee.</p>

State Rehabilitation Council - Members



Mireille Sayaf sits on the Council representing the Ocean State Center for Independent Living (OSCIL). She has worked for more than 30 years in the field of Independent Living and disability services. She began her career at the OSCIL as Finance Director, overseeing federal and state grant management, budgeting, and organizational compliance during periods of program growth and increased statewide demand for services. In 2021, Mireille was appointed Executive Director of OSCIL. In this role, she has led the expansion of independent living services across Rhode Island, strengthened partnerships with state agencies, and advanced OSCIL’s mission to support individuals with disabilities in living safely and independently in their communities. Under her leadership, OSCIL has launched new initiatives in home modifications, assistive and smart-home technology, Deaf services, and youth transition, while also broadening outreach and strengthening program quality. Mireille actively participates in statewide disability policy work through her roles on the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Medicaid Advisory Committee, and the Olmstead Advisory Committee. She has collaborated with state and community partners to advance accessibility, expand community-based services, and promote the rights and inclusion of people with disabilities. Throughout her career, Mireille has remained committed to strengthening the Independent Living system, supporting consumer choice, and improving access to equitable services for all Rhode Islanders with disabilities.



Nicole Rico Serrano sits on the Council representing the American Indian VR program. She is the Director of the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation Vocational Rehabilitation Program in Mashantucket, CT. She has worked for the tribe for 18 years. Nicole is a Narragansett tribal member and is committed to advocating on behalf of the tribal communities to bring cultural awareness and Indigenous representation to both RI and CT. She has a bachelor’s degree in international relations and a master’s degree in education. She has also sat on the councils for RI SILC, CT BRS, and CT BESB.



Christine Yankee sits on the Council representing a Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider and individuals with barriers to employment. Christine is the Vice President of Program Services at Goodwill of Southern New England. She brings over 25 years of experience in the areas of workforce development, adult education, and transition services for youth and adults with and without disabilities. Her committee work includes representing Goodwill at the RI Workforce Alliance Meeting, and as a Providence/Cranston Workforce Development board member.

State Rehabilitation Council - Members

Vocational Rehabilitation Services	
	<p>Ex-officio Joseph Murphy, Associate Director, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR). Employed by the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) for 24 years, he was recently named Associate Director of the ORS in April 2022. He has worked as a VR Counselor, Transition Counselor, Regional Supervisor, Assistant Administrator and Administrator. Joe has a Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling from Assumption College and has been a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor since 2000 and a Certified Employment Support Professional since 2015. Before coming to the ORS, Joe worked in the Vocational Rehabilitation field at a community mental health center for four years and then at a school for students with disabilities for another four years.</p>
	<p>Karen Davis, Administrator, has been employed by the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) for 21 years. While at the ORS, she has worked as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor I, Supervisor, and Assistant Administrator for the Supported Employment Program. She has a Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. Before coming to the ORS, she worked in Private Rehabilitation for 16 years, working with individuals who have been injured at work.</p>
	<p>Natalia Montoya, M.A., CRC, sits on the Council as Liaison for the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with knowledge of and experience with Vocational Programs and community services for the ORS participants. She has a Master’s Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and is a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor. Natalia is a VRC II in the South County Region and has been working for the Office of Rehabilitation Services since 2014 serving the adult population and youth in transition. In addition to her work with the Council, she is also the liaison to North Kingstown High School, South Kingstown High School, Bradley School South County, South County Chamber of Commerce, Galilee Mission Liaison, College Unbound Liaison, and South Shore Mental Health.</p>
Supporting Personnel	
	<p>Laurie DiOrio, Administrator of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired Jessica Palumbo, Assistant Administrator of Operations John Valentine, Strategic Planning Supervisor Nancy Baker, SRC Facilitator/Contact</p>

DHS does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, age, religion, or sex in acceptance for or provision of services, employment, or treatment in its education and other programs and activities.



**Department of Human Services
Office of Rehabilitation Services**

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