2013 Annual Report

Maryland State
Department of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services

GREETINGS

As we move forward to a new year, we have the opportunity to look back and reflect on the numerous successes of the remarkable programs and services provided through the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). DORS has made it possible for thousands of Maryland citizens with disabilities to find true independence, become employed, and have remarkable futures – often far beyond where they may have imagined without receiving such support.

This report features some of the innovative DORS programs that help people with disabilities transition to higher education, vocational training, and employment. The success of the programs also translates into success for Maryland businesses as DORS is equipped to match candidates with job openings, identify technologies, and even coordinate services for workplace disability issues. It's a win-win for those with disabilities and Maryland!

The personal stories throughout this report exemplify the successful rehabilitation of more than 2,500 DORS consumers. This year alone, DORS helped 2,533 people move into employment. These new employees added over $35 million to Maryland's economy. Proudly, the programs offered through DORS work.

The Division of Rehabilitation Services, in collaboration with its consumers, its staff, and its community and business partners, and Maryland schools, remains true to its mission – to ensure success for each of its programs. As Maryland's State Superintendent of Schools, it is my honor to not only be charged with ensuring that our next generation is ready for the world that awaits, but also to pledge my steadfast support to the DORS staff, consumers, and partners.

I am certain 2014 will prove to be another year of innovation and success for the many DORS programs.

Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
Maryland State Superintendent of Schools

It is my pleasure to present the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) 2013 Annual Report. The report highlights some of DORS' major accomplishments and features exciting news about innovative programs for DORS consumers. As we reflect back on the year, we thank our many community partners, schools, and local businesses for their partnership and support. Working together, we have assisted thousands of individuals with significant disabilities achieve their goals of employment, economic self-sufficiency, and independence.

The year also marked the 40th anniversary of the Workforce & Technology Center (WTC), a comprehensive rehabilitation center that offers a wide range of innovative and personalized programs and services to assist people with disabilities achieve their goals of employment and independence at home and in the community. Last year, WTC served 2,343 individuals with significant disabilities.

I am incredibly proud of our staff for their continued dedication to excellence in public service and their keen spirit of teamwork. All of us at DORS look forward to continued successes in 2014.

Suzanne R. Page
Assistant State Superintendent
Division of Rehabilitation Services
Maryland State Department of Education

To the Citizens of Maryland:

The Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC) serves as the people's collective champion for employment of Marylanders with disabilities, for enhanced awareness of the capabilities of people with disabilities, and for promotion of State and national policies that support those goals. Accordingly, the Council, in compliance with Federal law, monitors and oversees Maryland's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), the State agency that provides public vocational rehabilitation services and is responsible for helping people with disabilities to find and retain jobs.

As set out in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Council reports its findings to the federal Rehabilitation Administration, the Governor of Maryland, and most importantly, the people of Maryland.

During this last year, we formalized the practice of inviting public comment at each of our quarterly MSRC meetings. We invite everyone to come learn about the MSRC and to communicate with us so that we can be of optimal service to individual Marylanders and to DORS.

The MSRC will continue to work closely with elected officials, DORS consumers, staff and other stakeholders in the coming year so DORS can continue to offer a quality path to employment and self-sufficiency to all Marylanders with disabilities who want to go to work. For more about the work of the MSRC during FY 2013, see our annual report at: *www.dors.state.md.us/DORS/SRC/MSRC_Annual.*

Sincerely,

Josie Thomas
Acting Chair, Maryland State Rehabilitation Council

MARYLAND STATE
REHABILITATION COUNCIL

New logo!

Awards

Derek Cleland & Texas Road House, 2013 DORS Employer Leadership Award Winner

Consumer Derek Cleland came to DORS through the Charles County Public Schools' (CCPS) Adult Independence Program (AIP). Eighteen to 21-year-old students in AIP spend their last three school years working on independence, life, and job skills. CCPS also partners with businesses to give students volunteer experiences in real workplaces.

Derek attended the Workforce & Technology Center's community living skills program and became interested in a job in the food industry. He was able to do some volunteer work at Stethem Educational Center as a kitchen assistant, and the manager there was so impressed he contacted Howard Donze, Managing Partner at the La Plata Texas Road House (TRH). Howard was happy to meet with Derek: "Texas Roadhouse focuses on individuals' skills and abilities, not their disabilities." Derek was soon hired and has been working for more than three years at TRH, where he is a valued team member.

L - R: Derek Cleland & Brandon Scott, Texas Roadhouse Kitchen Manager: "Derek makes my job easier… he makes every day better by being here."

Giant of Maryland, LLC, 2013 DORS Employer Leadership Award Winner

Giant of Maryland, LLC also received the 2013 DORS Employer Leadership Award. Giant was a top employer of DORS consumers over the last four years, employing more than 114 individuals with disabilities, increasing hires each year, and hiring 40 individuals with disabilities in 2013.

L - R: Sue Page - DORS Director, Robin Anderson - Giant Human Resources Director, Darlene Peregoy - DORS Employment Specialist

MARYLAND DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

Accomplishments

The Maryland Disability Determination Services (DDS) had a stellar fiscal year 2013, exceeding federal performance standards established by the Social Security Administration (SSA). The DDS' team efforts yielded a new all-time record 80,783 disability claims clearances, representing a 3% increase over FY 2012. Additionally, productivity per work year (PPWY) was 329.5, which exceeded both the regional and national DDS PPWY. During a year of record-high disability claims adjudicated, the DDS achieved an impressive Net Accuracy rate of 100% (most recent quarter).

During the fiscal year, the Maryland DDS hosted a three-day SSA Region III Administrators Meeting, as well as visits from numerous other SSA components: Office of Disability Administrative Hearings, Social Security Office of Systems, and the Office of Disability Determination. Information shared during these meetings included the DDS's input into the new Disability Case Processing System, ways to better serve the public through each level of the process, and how to reduce the rising consultative examination budget.

The DDS continued its partnership with the Maryland Department of Human Resources' State Review Team, the office that makes State Medicaid disability determinations.

Despite various challenges during this fiscal year, the entire DDS staff remains focused, committed, dedicated and proud to provide services to Maryland citizens with disabilities.

DDS staff members have received recognition for their outstanding individual and/or group performance during FY13.

Left: DDS Team Award - Front row left to right: Dayle Smith, Nancy Rook, Emily Malls, Sylvia Porter. Back row left to right: Joyce Castora, Jonathan Rogers and Jim Ringsaker. Not pictured: Cynthia Alex-Williams

Right: Giulia Motta, pictured with DDS Director Dayle Smith, is one of the seven DDS Fiscal Unit members who received the SSA Associate Commissioner Citation. The unit processed over $8.2 million in payments for consultative examinations and $2.04 million in payments for medical evidence.

Autism Services & Pathways

The Workforce & Technology Center (WTC) created an Autism Services department, part of WTC's Rehabilitation Technology Services, to enhance programs and services for consumers with autism. During the year, Autism Services staff provided extensive training to DORS staff and community partners. These included a six-month series of sessions on topics such as "Autism & Employment," specialized activities during Autism Awareness Month in April, education and awareness training for DORS staff in offices statewide, and sensitivity and awareness training in the community.

Autism Services' *Pathways* program offered support to students with autism spectrum disorders who were enrolled at one of the three campuses of the Community College of Baltimore County. Advisors in the *Pathways* program helped students develop academic, social, independent living and career exploration/development skills. A new *Pathways* specialist was hired in 2013 to assist with the expansion of the program to additional Maryland community colleges.

Autism Services also helped with the development and implementation of a new and innovative driver's education program for individuals on the autism spectrum.

WTC's *Autism Program Planning Success for Employment (APPS)* two-week sessions continued to run during the year, offering individuals with autism the opportunity to explore skills related to self-determination and employment readiness. In APPS, consumers participated in small group activities, interactive learning sessions, and community-based employer worksite visits. APPS participants developed a resource and career map which will help guide them on their path to successful employment.

Right: WTC recently opened an Autism Services room that has an autism-friendly environment, including dimmable lights, comfortable chairs, accessible workstations, and puzzles and games that help distracted consumers to focus.

Below: Autism Services Self-Determination Group

OUR NUMBERS: FY 2013

SOURCE OF FUNDS

STATE FUNDS

State Matching Funds	12,099,053
State Non-matching Funds	778,126
TOTAL	**12,877,179**

FEDERAL FUNDS MATCHING FUNDS

Basic Program	41,660,436
Independent Living (Older Blind)	659,931
State Independent Living Services	349,437
Training	130,902
SUB TOTAL	**42,800,706**

FEDERAL NON-MATCHING FUNDS

Social Security Administration/DDS	31,599,666
Social Security Reimbursement	2,404,617
Seamless Transition Collaborative	417,033
Supported Employment State Grants	480,000
Client Assistance Program	177,619
SUB TOTAL	**35,078,935**
TOTAL	**90,756,820**

SPECIAL FUNDS

Business Enterprise Program for the Blind	2,494,738
Third Party	93,830
TOTAL	**2,588,568**
TOTAL COMBINED FUNDS AVAILABLE	**93,345,388**

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

Disability Determination Services	31,599,666
VR Client Services Program	20,902,425
Case Services	21,216,752
Workforce & Technology Center	11,773,675
Administration	5,143,725
Business Enterprise Program for the Blind	2,494,738
Seamless Transition Collaborative	214,407
TOTAL FUNDS EXPENDED	**93,345,388**

PERSONS REHABILITATED 2012-2013

PERSONS REHABILITATED BY PRIMARY DISABILITY	NUMBER REHABILITATED
Psychiatric Disability	994
Cognitive Disability	808
Orthopedic	104
Deaf & Hard of Hearing	180
Other Physical Disabilities	243
Blind & Visual Impairments	162
Communication Disabilities	33
Respiratory Impairments	9
Total	**2,533**

PERSONS REHABILITATED BY OCCUPATION AT CASE CLOSURE

Service	1,453
Clerical, Sales	390
Professional, Technical, Managerial	329
Production, Construction, Operating, Materials Handling	175
Homemaker	159
Farming, Fishery, & Forestry	20
Unpaid Family Worker	1
Vending Operator/Worker	6
Miscellaneous, NEC	0
Total	**2,533**

NOTES:

1. "Persons Rehabilitated" refers to those individuals who have achieved gainful employment as a result of DORS services.

2. The Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) provides statewide rehabilitative services to assist disabled Maryland citizens in becoming employed.

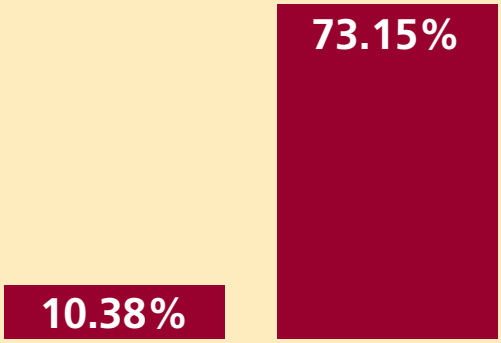
OUR NUMBERS: FY 2013

STUDENTS SERVED BY PRIMARY DISABILITY

	FY 11	FY 12	FY 13
Cognitive	4,559	4,996	5,239
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	535	533	546
Blind & Other Visual	239	236	252
Respiratory	12	8	10
TOTAL	**8,421**	**8,714**	**9,033**

PERCENTAGE OF INDIVIDUALS WITH WAGES AS THEIR PRIMARY SOURCE OF SUPPORT:

FY 2013 average wage was **$10.47**



At application, persons rehabilitated who claimed personal income as their primary support.

At closure

BENEFITS COUNSELING

During FY 2013 DORS continued to provide benefits counseling services to Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) beneficiaries and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients.

Benefits counseling is a focused, one-on-one service arranged by a DORS counselor to explore with a consumer how working will affect his or her SSDI and SSI benefits. The benefits counselor also explains the various Social Security work incentives available to help the consumer achieve higher income and possibly become financially independent from Social Security benefits.

DORS obtains benefits counseling services from a statewide network of DORS-approved certified benefits counselors. The benefits counselor meets with a consumer for an initial information gathering session. The counselor will then obtain the consumer's benefits information from Social Security and prepare an individual written report for the consumer. This report summarizes the individual's Social Security benefits status, explains how working affects these benefits, as well as the work incentives which will help the consumer transition to work and independence.

Benefits counseling has been shown to be effective in helping consumers better understand their SSDI and SSI benefits, and in reducing fears about employment leading to a loss of benefits.

After counseling, many consumers achieve a higher level of income and are able to transition from receiving disability to benefits to self-sustaining employment!

DORS Social Media

DORS is now on Facebook and YouTube!
Can't find us? Google search with *Maryland DORS Facebook* or *Maryland DORS YouTube* - and please - "Like" our Facebook page!

DORS' OFFICE OF FIELD SERVICES

Expanded Business Services Team

In 2013, as part of a long-planned goal to expand services to DORS' "other customer" – our business partners - the DORS Business Services Team expanded to include six new staff members who serve as regional business services representatives.

These new business reps use a "dual-customer" approach – they provide businesses with quality prescreened job applicants and consumers with support services that help them become job-ready.

Businesses are offered disability- and employment-related consultation services, including technical assistance, on-site support, labor market trend information, and other resources. Consumers get work preparation services, such as resumé development, job seeking skills, and supported employment services. DORS business reps also consult with consumers' vocational rehabilitation counselors.

In expanding the Business Services Team, DORS envisioned the primary role of the business representatives as developing active partnerships with businesses and business-related organizations to increase competitive employment opportunities for DORS consumers. They have already had much success, developing key partnerships with companies such as Genesis HealthCare, Manpower, Space Telescope Science Institute, and Didlake.

DORS business services representatives also:

- Stay aware of current economic development and labor market trends, and developing community college programs. They regularly share this information with DORS staff to enhance career counseling and consumer Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) development.
- Coordinate regional workforce recruitment activities, such as a hiring event for Manpower and Didlake, and hosting the Department of Business and Economic Development's Director of Business Development and Business Representatives.
- Play a primary role in identifying and assisting consumers with applying for the Governor's QUEST Internship Program, which gives DORS consumers the opportunity to gain valuable work experience in State government agencies.

Going forward, DORS business reps are gearing up for increased involvement with federal contractors now that the updated Section 503 regulations (federal regulations that prohibit discriminating in employment against individuals with disabilities and requires federal employers to take affirmative action to recruit, hire, promote, and retain these individuals) have been released. And several new internship programs are being implemented, including Genesis HealthCare, QUEST (year-round), and the Space Telescope Science Institute.

Left: Darlene Peregoy, OBVS Employment Specialist, and Tammi Ledley, OFS Employment Services, at an outreach event.

Over the last several years, through needs assessments, public meeting input, and other consumer feedback, DORS identified an increased need for services for the Deaf-Blind Community. In 2011 DORS Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS) formed a taskforce that included experts in the Deaf-Blind field and community partners. One recommendation of this taskforce was that a DORS Deaf-Blind Specialist position be created. In March 2013 this position was filled, with a focus on reviewing cases, providing consultations to both OBVS and DORS Office of Field Services, expanding local resources, and establishing a vocational rehabilitation (VR) based Support Service Provider (SSP) Program.

SSPs are specially trained professionals who enable people who have combined vision and hearing losses (Deaf-Blind) to access their environments and make informed decisions. An SSP provides the Deaf-Blind individual with visual and environmental information, sighted guide services, and communication accessibility. SSP services provide access to community and vocational rehabilitation services that a Deaf-Blind individual may not normally be able to access.

DORS' funds support VR activities related to preparing for, finding, securing and maintaining a job. In order to meet these VR goals the SSP can support the individual while they are looking for work, doing work-related trainings, meeting with job coaches, and other activities. Columbia Lighthouse for the Blind currently provides the trained SSPs. OBVS is exploring partnerships with other agencies as well.

Left: Deaf-Blind DORS consumer David Jessop and SSP Rachael Horowitz work together 3+ days per week. Rachael helps David with using the computer, getting to appointments, and other employment-related activities. "Before Rachael I couldn't easily get around…now I can go to the pool…and the best thing is the computer help." DORS Job Squad program manager, Lou Smith, says having the SSP is invaluable. "I can't imagine not having Rachael's assistance…we get so much more done because she's here. I can see all sorts of benefits to having a SSP."

OBVS – BISM COLLEGE PREP PROGRAM

In the fall of 2013, DORS and Blind Industries and Services of Maryland (BISM) began collaborating on a college preparatory program for students who are blind. The program is designed to be a bridge for students coming out of high school and needing some support during their first semesters at college. It also helps students who have graduated from high school and want to attend college, but need some help learning how to be independent.

Students attend two days of college classes and spend three days in the BISM CORE program. CORE is a comprehensive training that includes: Braille, travel and mobility training, computer technology classes, independent living and adjustment to blindness seminars, and a life skills residential program.

Jessica Brasseal attended Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC) in the fall, completing some of her general education requirements and getting comfortable with college life. "I didn't have any experience advocating for myself in terms of [college] disability support services…this program has given me a lot of support and is preparing me for taking the next steps on my own. I now have a much better sense of what I need."

Thomas Knebel was already enrolled as a biology major at University of Maryland, Baltimore County (UMBC) when he lost his vision. He wanted to get his life back on track and finish his degree; the DORS/BISM college prep program offered what he needed. "It removed the conflict…I could do both [go back to college and adjust to blindness]." Thomas says the mobility training has been the most valuable aspect of the BISM CORE training. "I feel independent again. Before I had to ask a friend for help getting around campus, now I find my own way around." The assistive technology supplied by DORS has made it possible for him to stay on top of his college work. "I'm using JAWS and OSR Reader to scan texts…and doing well in my classes."

BISM recruiting manager Andy McIver says the program helps students with disabilities compete in college on a more even playing field. "We're blending the skills of independence and college prep…to help students with disabilities keep up with their peers…and it's been a huge success."

Thomas agrees: "I often feel like the only blind guy on campus, so having the support [of this program] has been invaluable, not just technically, but emotionally too. The key is getting on with your life…I've been able to do that because of this program."

Above: Thomas Knebel has learned how to live independently: "Before BISM's CORE program, I used to burn everything; now I make great cookies!"

Left: Jessica Brasseal reads her remarks following her graduation from BISM's CORE program.

DORS Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS) started its new ABLE (Adjustment to Blindness for Life and Employment) program in March. ABLE is an eight-week program designed to help individuals who have recently lost their vision with developing basic adjustment to blindness skills, including independent living skills, and work readiness skills.

Before joining ABLE, consumers are tested to determine their Braille aptitude, independent living skills, and academic abilities. Consumers must have the ability to learn Braille to participate.

Once in the program, consumers receive instruction in Braille, assistive technology, household management, and health and wellness. They also participate in recreational activities and community outings.

OBVS Supervisor Beneda Jackson says the biggest change observed after consumers complete ABLE is the boost to their self-confidence. "We had one student who was afraid of knives – by the end she could slice, dice, and chop anything!"

Another less tangible benefit of the program are the skills learned from working with other people who have lost their vision. ABLE participants interact and share concerns and solutions with other program participants during regular group sessions. Beneda Jackson: "A lot of older adults who lose their vision don't know anyone else who is blind, so they are isolated. They have a new comradery in the group. Before ABLE they thought that losing their vision means they can't do anything, but they learn that they *can* do most things that they did before. They also never knew a blind person who has a job, so we invite former OBVS consumers to talk to the group."

Consumer Kenneth Duval was guest speaker at a spring ABLE meeting. Kenny lost his vision in 2010. He had been a truck driver and decided to use the skills he had gained as a driver to start a freight management business. With assistance from DORS, he attended a Load Training class in Arizona, and started his own business: TRUCKERSLOOKING. "I was scared at first, but I went to Arizona by myself – took the plane, the shuttle – and I didn't have to depend on anyone. I've been in business since September of 2012 and I'm still going strong!"

After ABLE many participants go on to other DORS programs, including Job Squad, WTC job training programs, Maryland Business Enterprise Program for the Blind, as well as programs at Blind Industries and Services of Maryland.

Left: Kenneth Duval was guest speaker at a spring ABLE meeting.

Martin O'Malley, *Governor*

Charlene M. Dukes, Ed.D., *President, Maryland State Board of Education*

Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D., *State Superintendent of Schools*

Suzanne Page, *Assistant State Superintendent in Rehabilitation Services*

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services

DORS Administrative Office & Headquarters, Office of Field Services,
Office for Blindness & Vision Services and the Workforce & Technology Center are located at:
2301 Argonne Drive
Baltimore, Maryland 21218-1696
Phone: 410-554-9442
Toll-free: 1-888-554-0334
VP 1-866-371-3614/443-453-5981
dors@dors.state.md.us
Annual Report: www.md-dors.org/report

DORS field and OBVS counselors are located in over 20 field offices throughout Maryland.
To find the nearest one, contact DORS headquarters or visit www.dors.state.md.us

Disability Determination Services
P.O. Box 6338
Timonium, Maryland 21093-6338
Phone: 410-308-4500
TTY: 410-308-4550
Toll-free: 1-800-492-4283
md.dd.timonium.dds@ssa.gov

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