

MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES

2020

# ANNUAL REPORT



## trans·for·ma·tion

/, tran(t)sfər'māSH(ə)n/  
noun

an act, process, or instance of transforming or being transformed.

The events of 2020 transformed the Division of Rehabilitation Services beyond anyone's wildest imagination. A state agency might introduce one innovation or substantial policy change in a year. As a result of the COVID pandemic that would not be the case in 2020.

Prior to COVID, DORS was seeing an increase in the number of students with disabilities applying for Pre-Employment Transition Services. The number of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients finding and keeping jobs was higher than it had been in the previous two years. All the signs were pointing to a very good year for DORS.

Then in March, COVID hit and all in-person services, schools and DORS offices were shut down. Literally overnight DORS and its sister agencies, service providers and consumers were thrust into a virtual world where most had never really ventured before. The old adage "Adversity is the mother of invention" took hold in a big way as DORS began reinventing what the VR process would look like in this new world in which we all found ourselves.



Scott Dennis  
Assistant State Superintendent

In a matter of weeks, DORS staff working alongside our provider community began to develop programs and services that could be offered online. We quickly learned how to use various meeting platforms to deliver services to our consumers and students virtually. While some services, such as hands-on training programs, could not be moved fully to a virtual environment, even those programs were able to provide some level of training services virtually.

As with most government organizations, the majority of the back-of-office business processes were set in a brick-and-mortar facility. Even those process were moved to an all-digital environment. This involved the creation of new systems that allowed for the transfer of information between DORS, providers and consumers online in a secure way.

With 2021, there is much optimism that the vaccines will bring an end to the COVID pandemic. However, what we've learned over the past months about working and living in a virtual environment will not be forgotten once the pandemic is over. The way that VR services are being delivered now will remain, the changes that the COVID pandemic has brought will not be undone. We are realizing that there are too many benefits to be gained by being able to create and deliver services in a virtual fashion. The VR program in Maryland has forever been transformed.

Scott Dennis  
Assistant State Superintendent

## DORS CONSUMERS – ESSENTIAL WORKERS DURING THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

**Shakera** is a Sales Associate at Weis Markets; she successfully completed the DORS Workforce & Technology Center (WTC) Work Readiness and CVS Retail Training programs. She was able to transfer her skills and abilities to a business outside of the CVS network—one of the key features of the program. She has been working at Weis Market since August.



**Shemardo** is a custodian at Weis Markets. She completed the WTC Work Readiness and Environmental Services Training programs. She was hired by Weis in January and has continued to work throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Her supervisor and team praise her positive attitude and dependability, especially during these trying times.



**Luke** is the first DORS consumer to successfully complete the WTC Pharmacy Technician training program. The program is a DORS WTC partnership with CVS Health® and the Community College of Baltimore County that prepares students to take the Pharmacy Technician Certifying Board test and become Certified Pharmacy Technicians. Luke works in a CVS store in Anne Arundel County and reports that he loves his job!



SOURCE OF FUNDS

STATE FUNDS

State Matching Funds.....	\$13,064,970
State Non-matching Funds.....	595,334
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$13,660,304</b>

FEDERAL FUNDS MATCHING FUNDS

Basic Program.....	\$42,279,199
Independent Living (Older Blind).....	616,411
State Independent Living Services.....	380,839
<b>SUB TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$43,276,449</b>

FEDERAL NON-MATCHING FUNDS

Social Security Administration / DDS.....	\$28,505,021
Social Security Reimbursement.....	6,128,813
Supported Employment State Grants.....	459,428
Client Assistance Program.....	248,327
Way2Work.....	1,808,416
<b>SUB TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$37,150,005</b>
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$94,086,757</b>

SPECIAL FUNDS

Business Enterprise Program for the Blind....	\$2,511,698
Third Party.....	108,045
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$2,619,743</b>
<b>TOTAL COMBINED FUNDS AVAILABLE.....</b>	<b>\$96,706,501</b>

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS

Disability Determination Services.....	\$28,505,021
VR Client Services Program.....	31,546,221
VR Case Services (CS).....	8,536,653
Pre Employment Transition Services CS.....	5,545,830
Workforce & Technology Center Administration.....	9,832,232
Business Enterprise Program for the Blind.....	8,622,642
for the Blind.....	2,309,485
Way2Work.....	1,808,416
<b>TOTAL FUNDS EXPENDED.....</b>	<b>\$96,706,501</b>

REHABILITATION OUTCOMES

TOP TEN OCCUPATIONS

- Office and Administrative Support
- Food Preparation and Serving Related
- Building & Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance
- Sales and Related
- Transportation and Material Moving
- Personal Care and Service
- Production
- Healthcare Support
- Community and Social Service
- Education, Training, and Library
- GRAND TOTAL.....1,145**

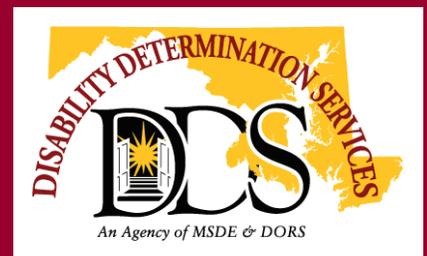
YOUTH

*Demand for Services for Youth and Students Continues to Rise in FY20*

- 42% of DORS consumers were between 14 and 24 years of age.
- 7,282 youth received DORS services.
- 3,264 students received Pre-Employment Transition Services (services for students with disabilities).
- DORS spent \$5,545,830 on Pre-ETS and \$6,645,959 for vocational services on youth who are 24 and younger.
- 25% of DORS Workforce & Technology Center consumers were 16-19 years of age, and 32% were 20-29.

Despite COVID-19's impact on our business process, the Maryland Disability Determination Services (DDS) continued to provide services to the citizens of Maryland.

DDS also sustained its participation in the Social Security Administration's SOAR Project, which helps states and communities increase access to disability benefits for eligible adults and children who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a serious mental illness, medical impairment, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder. DDS had an 86% approval rating, ranking among the top ten states across the country.



# DORS GOES VIRTUAL!

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Maryland in mid-March, Governor Hogan issued a stay-at-home order for all non-essential State employees and invoked mandatory telework. As a result, DORS immediately halted all in-person programs. This left both DORS and Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) in a bind as to how to meet the needs for consumer services.

Immediately, DORS began collaborating with partner agencies, including the Behavioral Health Administration and Developmental Disabilities Agency, to develop standards for virtual services. By early April, DORS had issued guidance to CRPs as to how to resume consumer services in a virtual world.

For vocational rehabilitation consumers being served by DORS' Office of Field Services (OFS) and Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS), virtual services meant being able to receive services without having to risk infection. CRPs soon found that they could offer virtual services statewide, expanding access to individuals who were previously underserved. This includes services such as job coaching and development, work readiness, career assessments, and even work-based learning experiences.

DORS helps students with disabilities prepare for employment or post-secondary education with **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)**, including:

- Job exploration counseling
- Counseling on transition or postsecondary educational programs
- Workplace readiness training
- Instruction in self-advocacy
- Work-based learning experiences

In order to continue working with students, parents, schools, and partner agencies, DORS Pre-ETS counselors began using service delivery tools to meet and communicate. DORS was able to maintain four out of the five Pre-ETS categories during 2020, with the exception of work-based learning services. New remote programs were initiated, including Explore-Work, which was developed by the Workforce Innovation Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) as a Pre-ETS resource for students. By year's end, DORS was working with 28 providers as they facilitated and supported students in Explore-Work modules.

DORS' **Workforce & Technology Center (WTC)** staff quickly adapted to using online tools to continue providing many of WTC's services to consumers during the pandemic.

- Academic Services offered tutoring and assessments for driver's permits, GED prep, and the apprenticeship exam.
- Behavioral Health Services offered assessments, screenings, counseling, referrals, and behavioral health education via weekly webinars.
- Deaf Services began planning for virtual tours.
- Employment Services helped consumers get jobs in essential industries.
- Work Readiness became a five-week virtual program.

By the end of calendar year 2020, some in-person WTC services resumed under strict CDC protocols, with DORS regularly reevaluating the possibility of safely resuming other WTC programs.



OBVS Virtual Quarterly Meeting

DORS has received positive feedback from consumers, CRPs, and workforce partners indicating that the transition to virtual service delivery has gone very smoothly. We do not yet know what 2021 will bring, but we are ready!



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Larry Hogan, Governor

Clarence C. Crawford, President, Maryland State Board of Education

Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D., State Superintendent of Schools

Scott Dennis, Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Rehabilitation Services  
Maryland State Department of Education

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 • Video Phone: 1-866-371-3614 / 443-798-2840 • dors@maryland.gov

DORS field and OBVS counselors are located in over 20 field offices throughout Maryland. To find the nearest one, contact DORS headquarters or visit [dors.maryland.gov](http://dors.maryland.gov)

Disability Determination Services P.O. Box 1810, Cockeysville, MD 21030-1810, Phone: 410-308-4500

• Toll-free: 1-800-492-4283 • [md.dd.timonium.dds@ssa.gov](mailto:md.dd.timonium.dds@ssa.gov)

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*The Vocational Rehabilitation program receives 78.7 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For Federal fiscal year 2020, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$48,000,000. The remaining 21.3 percent of the costs \$12,991,105 were funded by State appropriations.*



December 23, 2020

As Chair of the Maryland State Rehabilitation Council (MSRC), it is an honor to serve the people of Maryland. The MSRC is the people's champion for employment of Marylanders with disabilities, for enhanced awareness of the capabilities of students, youths, and adults with disabilities, and for promotion of State and national policies that support those goals.

The MSRC is appointed by the Governor of Maryland, in compliance with federal law, to monitor, advise and oversee the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). Established in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, the Council reports its findings annually to the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Governor of Maryland and, most importantly, the people of Maryland.

### **For the fiscal year 2020:**

#### COVID Pandemic

The COVID-19 Pandemic compelled DORS to move service delivery from traditional brick and mortar office spaces to a virtual environment. DORS worked with local service providers to implement various meeting platforms, such as Google Meets, Zoom, or Web Ex and collaborated to transition most in-person services to virtual. In addition, DORS and their providers worked to convert, what traditionally been only offered as in-person services, into virtual versions, including new variations of Career Assessments and Worked Based Learning. The feedback from both providers and consumers indicate that these virtual models were effective, and so a number of these virtual services will become the norm post-pandemic.

#### Quality Assurance

Quality case management is something that both DORS and MSRC want to see applied to every consumer case. DORS has developed and implemented an in line case management tool that is used to ascertain the quality of services being delivered by the agency. The Quality Review Teams took on a different role in 2020, looking at existing processes to see where streamlining could occur with both staff and consumers, now working in a virtual environment. As these new processes mature, the Quality Review Teams will be looking closely at the new processes to make sure that the high quality that is expected remains, and will offer recommendations on where there needs to be changes.

#### Waitlist

The primary driver in the growth of the waitlist in the increase in the number of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) students who applied to DORS during the year. WIOA requires that a minimum of 15% of each state's VR grant be allocated to Pre-ETS, and that providing Pre-ETS is prioritized. By the end of FY19, that number of students seeking Pre-ETS stood at 5,737, an increase of nearly 2,000 over the previous fiscal year. In FY 2020 that figure grew to 6,124. Pre-ETS will continue to be a factor in the DORS waitlist in the coming year, as the

Pre-ETS program will continue to grow and expand as more parents and transitioning students become aware of this new opportunity. However, the pandemic offered a unique opportunity for DORS to review its waitlist. DORS had a group of VR counselors who traditionally provide in person services at the Workforce and Technology Center go through the waitlist and reevaluate the initial eligibility decision to see if additional documentation would allow the individual to move off the wait list. Because of this initiative, 318 individuals were moved from the Category 2 wait list into services. With another 577 individuals deciding that they no longer need services from DORS.

In closing, I would like to commend DORS for its commitment to the employment needs of people living with disabilities and for its transparency to the people of Maryland through its partnership with the MSRC.

Sincerely,



Anil Lewis, Chair, Maryland State Rehabilitation Council

## **By The Numbers**

In 2020, the Division of Rehabilitation Services:

- Provided VR services to 21,898 individuals with significant disabilities.
- Prepared 7,282 students with disabilities to move from high school to employment, higher education or career training through vocational rehabilitation (VR) services. The agency's Pre-Employment Transition Services program has an additional 6,124 students. Forty-seven percent of the individuals served by DORS are between the ages of 14 and 24.
- Personnel and programs helped 1,145 Marylanders with significant disabilities to become successfully employed in competitive integrated environments. This number reflects changes related to the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act.
- DORS Business Services staff provided 3,184 direct services to Maryland businesses, including recruitment assistance, disability training, and information and technical assistance on hiring and tax incentives.