

**Maryland State Department of Education  
Division of Rehabilitation Services  
Annual Report 2021**

**2021 ANNUAL REPORT • DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE**

**adaptation**

\ , a- , dap- ' tā-shən , -dəp- \

A change in structure, function, or behavior by which a species or individual improves its chance of survival in a specific environment... a change or adjustment to improve something, or to make it suitable to a different situation.

For the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS), Program Year '21 was a year of adapting to the new COVID-19 normal.

Fluctuating infection rates, evolving safety guidance, and shifting workplace and school schedules affected DORS staff, consumers, the provider community, and service delivery.

As DORS and service providers learned more about and implemented COVID-19 safety protocols, in-person services gradually increased. In July, DORS staff returned full time to the offices. By the fall, consumers could choose between receiving most services in person or virtually. Overwhelmingly, consumers chose virtual services. Virtual-service options remove obstacles around access to transportation, scheduling limitations, and the ability to include a support person or family member in an appointment.

In adapting to our new COVID-19 normal, we understand that the pandemic has affected us all in many ways. Our professional and personal lives have been forever changed. All this change has affected societal mental health, which has repercussions for us as individuals, as well as for our family and friends, colleagues and work partners, and the clients we serve.

I want to thank the hard-working and dedicated DORS staff who have given it their all, adapting despite daunting challenges over this past year and continuing to provide excellent services to Marylanders with disabilities. They exemplify the DORS' Vision: to make Maryland the best place in our nation for persons with disabilities to live and work. As we move forward, as we adapt, DORS renews its commitment to this vision; recognizing that in order to do this, we must start by supporting each other.

Scott Dennis, Assistant State Superintendent

## **WTC**

As it continued to adjust to the new COVID-19 normal, DORS' Workforce & Technology Center (WTC) resumed full operations in 2021 by offering in-person, virtual and hybrid services to DORS consumers. These services were provided by the following WTC departments: Academics, Assistive Technology, Autism, Blind & Low Vision, Career Assessment, Career & Technology Training, Driving & Vehicle Modifications, Employment/Job Placement, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Home Modifications, Occupational & Physical Therapies, Work Readiness, and Worksite Services.

With strict COVID-19 safety protocols in place, the WTC dormitory, enrichment activities, and cafeteria reopened in the fall, which enabled participants from all areas of Maryland to receive services at WTC.

One in-person program that continued to have successful outcomes is the Sephora Customized Training. This collaboration with Sephora's Aberdeen, Maryland, Distribution Center and the Community College of Baltimore County began in September of 2020, during the height of the pandemic. Each Sephora training consists of a cohort of students who begin the program simultaneously, first completing a week of classroom training, and

then moving on to several weeks of paid on-the-job training at Sephora.

To help ensure the safety of the trainees, Sephora created detailed scheduling strategies to limit contact between the cohorts and other staff.

By the end of 2021, six training Sephora cohorts had been completed, which included 15 graduates, 14 of whom became Sephora employees, and one who was hired to work at another warehouse.

During this time, Sephora increased their starting wage from \$15/hour to \$17.30/hour with full benefits, including health, 401K and tuition reimbursement available. Four Sephora cohorts are scheduled for 2022.

Despite the challenges that the pandemic continues to present, WTC was successful in graduating consumers from the following WTC job training programs throughout 2021: Automotive Detailing/Refinishing, Automotive General Service Technician, Environmental Services, GED, Office Technology, and general Warehouse training. WTC held class graduation celebrations following social distancing guidelines in order to honor the accomplishments of the training program graduates.

## **OUR NUMBERS • FY 2021**

### **SOURCE OF FUNDS**

#### **STATE FUNDS**

- |                            |              |
|----------------------------|--------------|
| • State Matching Funds     | \$14,549,871 |
| • State Non-matching Funds | 655,583      |

<b>TOTAL STATE FUNDS</b>	<b>\$15,205,454</b>
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## FEDERAL FUNDS MATCHING FUNDS

• Basic Program	\$33,557,004
• Independent Living (Older Blind)	562,569
• State Independent Living Services 3	81,277
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$34,500,850</b>

## FEDERAL NON-MATCHING FUNDS

• Social Security Administration/DDS	\$26,464,119
• Social Security Reimbursement	6,081,822
• Supported Employment State Grants	460,005
• Client Assistance Program	144,114
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>\$33,150,060</b>

**TOTAL FEDERAL FUNDS** \$82,856,363

## SPECIAL FUNDS

- |                                             |             |
|---------------------------------------------|-------------|
| • Business Enterprise Program for the Blind | \$1,526,953 |
| • Third Party                               | 58,315      |

**TOTAL SPECIAL FUNDS** \$1,585,267

**TOTAL COMBINED FUNDS AVAILABLE** **\$84,441,631**

## **EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS**

- |                                             |              |
|---------------------------------------------|--------------|
| • Disability Determination Services         | \$26,464,119 |
| • VR Client Services Program                | 23,251,032   |
| • Case Services (CS)                        | 11,865,708   |
| • Workforce & Technology Center             | 7,998,694    |
| • Administration                            | 9,558,051    |
| • Business Enterprise Program for the Blind | 1,619,237    |
| • Pre-Employment Transition Services        | 3,684,790    |

**TOTAL FUNDS EXPENDED** **\$84,441,631**

## **REHABILITATION OUTCOMES**

### Top 10 Occupations

1. Office and Administrative Support
2. Building & Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance
3. Sales and Related
4. Food Preparation and Serving Related
5. Transportation and Material Moving
6. Production
7. Community and Social Service
8. Personal Care and Service
9. Education, Training, and Library
10. Computer and Mathematical

**GRAND TOTAL 925**

## **YOUTH**

### **Services to Youth Remain a Focus for DORS in 2021**

- 45% of DORS consumers were between 14 and 24 years of age.
- 6,693 youth received DORS services.
- 1,326 students received Pre-Employment Transition Services (services for students with disabilities).
- DORS spent \$6,290,488 on services for youth.

## **DEAF/HARD OF HEARING SERVICES UPDATE**

In July, DORS welcomed Noe Turcios (pronounced No-ee) as the new Statewide Coordinator for Deaf Services.

Noe obtained a BS at Rochester Institute of Technology and earned a MA degree in Sign Language Education at Gallaudet

University. Currently, he is in the Doctor of Education program, in Higher Education and Adult Learning, at Walden University.

He is interested in inclusive practices and the intersectionality of Deaf and multiple identities. Among his goals in the Statewide Coordinator role are to provide accessibility and resources for all Deaf plus multiple identities, and contribute back to the Deaf community.

Since joining DORS, Noe has been working on improving DORS online presence for Deaf/Hard of Hearing consumers, including working on the development of several new ASL videos.

Contact Noe at [noe.turcios@maryland.gov](mailto:noe.turcios@maryland.gov), or videophone 410-405-7054.

## **MARYLAND DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES (DDS)**

2021 found the Maryland Disability Determination Services (DDS), like the rest of DORS, continuing to adjust operations in the new COVID-19 normal.

While DDS staff returned to the office full time in July, some functions remained primarily virtual, including community outreach. The DDS Medical Relations Office 2021 outreach included:

- Focusing on collaborative efforts with the Maryland State Department of Education's (MSDE) Early Intervention and Special Education Services, and working with MSDE to identify school jurisdictions with centralized locations for psychological assessments.
- Promoting the Electronic Records Express Initiatives by reaching out to individual school jurisdictions to establish contacts and streamline school records process. These efforts

are designed to help DDS adjudicate claims in a timely manner.

- Conducting presentations with the Social Security Administration (SSA) Public Affairs Specialist to Montgomery County School Transition Support Staff, and with Charles County Public Schools as part of their Transition Support Expo.
- Presenting at NAMI Maryland's Annual Conference at Sheppard Pratt Hospital on the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) program.

DDS also worked with the SSA's [Components](#) to present webinars to third-party groups/advocates that assist individuals who are facing barriers and access to services and benefits, during the COVID-19 pandemic. More info at [Outreach Materials for People Facing Barriers](#).

Sixteen new DDS staff were hired and the new Disability Examiners completed two training classes during 2021.

DDS transitioned to the new SSA Disability Case Processing System (DCPS). Staff training for this system was completed virtually. Benefits of DCPS include:

- Ease of sharing disability processing workload across state and federal disability processing sites.
- More case analysis tools to support disability examiners in making consistent decisions based on SSA Disability Policy.
- Reduced maintenance and infrastructure costs.
- Reduction in the technological complexity of system support.
- Ability to implement software enhancements and modifications as required by changing laws, regulations, and policy more efficiently and consistently.

**Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Rehabilitation Services: A proud partner of the American Job Center Network.**

- Larry Hogan, Governor
- Clarence C. Crawford, President, Maryland State Board of Education
- Mohammed Choudhury, 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 / 410-405-7054

[dors@maryland.gov](mailto: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% of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For Federal fiscal year 2021, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$46,881,489. The remaining 21.3% percent of the costs (\$12,668,382) were funded by State appropriations.