

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)
2022 ANNUAL REPORT

COVER PHOTOS:

- Casey's PAWS work experience at Hawks Hollow Farm
- Farryl's Child Care work experience at Perry Hall Christian School
- Shyana's Food Service work experience at Weis Super Market
- Finn & Bryce in the DORS CVS training classroom.

D: DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

Initiative: A beginning or introductory step; an opening move.

Two significant initiatives changed the Maryland State Department of Education's Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS) during Program Year '22. Each are expected to have a long-term and positive impact on our ability to provide quality services to Marylanders with disabilities.

The first was the creation of the new Eligibility Determination Unit (EDU).

During the pandemic, DORS counselors who performed in-person Career Assessment evaluations were not able to perform their usual duties. Instead, DORS put these counselors to work helping with the consumer intake and eligibility decision-making process. The resulting feedback from DORS vocational rehabilitation counselors in the Office of Field Services (OFS) and Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS) was very positive. With this part of the process removed from their duties, the OFS and OBVS counselors in the field statewide could focus their time on working with each consumer to provide appropriate individualized services.

As a result, DORS made the decision to create a permanent EDU. The counselors staffing the EDU are now DORS' eligibility experts who accurately place individuals into the correct service category ("Pre-Employment Transition Services," "Most Significantly Disabled," "Significantly Disabled" or "Not Significantly Disabled"). The long-term goal of the EDU is increased efficiency resulting in a higher number of DORS consumers getting on a path to long-term employment more quickly.

The second initiative was a salary study championed by Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) Superintendent Mohammed Choudhury.

Upon learning that the starting salaries for DORS counselors were well below regional standards, Superintendent Choudhury directed that a comprehensive salary study be conducted to determine a competitive salary structure. As a result, MSDE was able to increase the starting salary for the counselor position, as well as the salaries of current DORS counselors, by approximately 20%. This change stabilized existing DORS counselor positions and allowed DORS to successfully recruit to fill numerous vacant positions. We expect this to help with moving consumers off the Waiting List and into service.

The close of a program year provides an opportunity to appreciate and celebrate our accomplishments and to imagine the possibilities for the next year. Accordingly, I want to recognize and thank DORS staff for their incredible dedication and hard work in 2022, and every year, assisting Marylanders with disabilities.

Scott Dennis, Assistant State Superintendent

Graphic: DORS Director, Scott Dennis, was honored at Maryland Works 2022 Annual Meeting.

O: OUTSTANDING TEAMWORK

Ticket to Work is a Social Security Administration (SSA) program for people with disabilities age 18 to 64 who receive either Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits. Tickets are assigned to a public (like DORS) or private organization that contracts with SSA to provide free employment support services to federal disability beneficiaries. These organizations then link them to services that help them to find jobs, maintain their health benefits and increase their self-sufficiency.

When Ticket participants have been employed for a specific period of time and receive wages above a certain earnings level, DORS can file a claim with SSA to seek reimbursement for the costs of direct services that were provided by DORS staff or community rehabilitation providers contracted by DORS.

On average, DORS provides services to more SSA disability beneficiaries than other states of similar size. Maryland is 18th in population size (6,177,224) but is consistently in the top ten for reimbursements. Maryland ranks third in percentage of available Tickets assigned, behind only DC (population 689,545) and Utah (population 3,271,616), which have substantially smaller populations.

In 2022, DORS received reimbursement for 527 cases, totaling more than \$7 million, a total that surpasses all other U.S. states of comparable size. This is the highest amount of reimbursement DORS has received to date. Most of those dollars go directly back into DORS' budget to provide services to DORS consumers through Vocational Rehabilitation services, the Independent Living Older Blind Program, and Maryland's Centers for Independent Living.

Graphic: DORS Social Security Programs Team (Kyle Beeson, Jeff Baran, Thomas Scheurich, Eric Schmidt) received DORS' Impact Award for bringing in a record \$7.126M.

R: REJUVENATED PROGRAM

Since the Middle Ages, apprentices have trained in a trade or profession by working under a certified expert. To this day, apprenticeships offer people opportunities to work, earn a wage, and learn a skilled trade, all at the same time.

DORS has worked with its Maryland workforce partners, including the Maryland Department of Labor, since 2017 to improve apprenticeship opportunities for Marylanders with disabilities.

In 2022, DORS rejuvenated and expanded its Apprenticeship Services by adding Youth Apprenticeship Support services, Apprenticeship Academic Assessment and Instruction, and Apprenticeship Exploration services. These new services help DORS consumers pursue apprenticeships and navigate the complex apprenticeship application process.

This program expansion was made possible by the hiring of two new staff: an Apprenticeship Coordinator and an Academic Instructor for Apprenticeship Services. These staff are also working on strengthening workforce partner connections and planning a return of the Maryland Apprenticeship Think Tank workgroup.

All of these service enhancements have been made with the goal of improving the representation of individuals with disabilities in apprenticeship opportunities throughout Maryland.

Graphic: Apprenticeship Coordinator, Sam Grimsley, with Governor Larry Hogan's November 14-20, 2022, National Apprenticeship Week proclamation

SOURCE OF FUNDS 2022

- Federal Matching Funds: \$39,243,710
- Federal Non-Matching Funds: \$37,750,699
- State Funds: \$15,408,460
- Special Funds: \$2,059,837

GRAND TOTAL: \$94,462,706

EXPENDITURE OF FUNDS 2022

- Disability Determination Services: \$31,021,585
- VR Client Services Program: \$22,931,527
- Case Services: \$13,801,996
- Administration: \$10,000,046
- Workforce & Technology Center: \$8,075,801
- Pre-Employment Transition Services: \$6,626,463
- Business Enterprise Program for the Blind: \$2,005,289

GRAND TOTAL: \$94,462,706

TOP EMPLOYMENT CATEGORIES

1. Office and Administrative Support
2. Food Preparation and Serving
3. Related Building & Grounds Cleaning/Maintenance
4. Sales and Related
5. Personal Care and Service
6. Production
7. Community and Social Service

SERVICES TO YOUTH CONTINUE TO INCREASE, UP 5% SINCE LAST YEAR, AND UP 14% SINCE 2016

- 50% OF DORS CONSUMERS AGES 14 - 21

- 6,815 YOUTH RECEIVED DORS SERVICES
- 2,567 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES RECEIVED PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

S: SERVICES UPDATE!

DORS Autism Services staff provides specialized services to DORS consumers with autism throughout Maryland. This includes individual and group support services in the community and services for consumers with autism participating in the DORS Workforce & Technology Center's (WTC) work readiness, career training, and training partnership programs. In 2022 Autism Services served 195 consumers.

Autism Services expanded in 2022. In addition to longtime Autism Services Supervisor Lee Armstrong and Autism Specialist Janine Ross, three new faces joined the team: Ruth Kibe, Necole Whitby, and DeAndre Johnson.

The Pathways Program provides educational and support services for community college students with autism at Anne Arundel Community College, Howard Community College, the Community College of Baltimore County (CCBC), and Montgomery College.

VCAMP is a virtual college support program for both two- and four-year college students with autism and now serves students at Towson University, Stephenson University, McDaniel College, Prince George's Community College, University of Maryland Baltimore County (UMBC), and University of Maryland College Park.

Ruth Kibe has helped with the expansion of VCAMP and is the Pathways Autism Specialist for Montgomery College. She also works with students with autism in DORS' career training and training partnership programs, including the CVS Retail and CVS Pharmacy Tech programs.

Necole Whitby is the newest VCAMP facilitator. She runs the Autism Services Work Readiness group at WTC and serves as the Pathways Autism Specialist at Howard Community College and the three CCBC locations.

DeAndre Johnson works with both DORS' consumers and community rehabilitation partners. He assists consumers with autism in securing and maintaining employment and also works with businesses to help them develop strategies and techniques for working with employees on the autism spectrum.

Graphic: Autism Services Staff: DeAndre Johnson, Janine Ross, Ruth Kibe, Necole Whitby & Lee Armstrong

MARYLAND DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES

Despite staffing and workload challenges, the Maryland Disability Determination Services (DDS) team continued to find ways to get their jobs done and provide quality service to Marylanders with disabilities filing claims for Social Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) benefits.

During federal fiscal year 2022, DDS:

- Adjudicated 38,709 Social Security disability claims.
- Maintained a quality rate of 97.9%.
- Partnered with the Office of the Inspector General to prevent disability fraud in the Social Security Administration's (SSA) Title II and Title XVI programs. These Cooperative Disability Investigations resulted in savings to SSA's disability programs of \$1,167,646 and savings of \$1,629,346 to non-SSA programs.
- Participated in the SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) project, with the team of nine Maryland DDS SOAR claims examiners receiving the SOAR Values in Action Award.

- Staff adapted well to SSA's new national Disability Case Processing System and are managing the evolving upgrades to operate the system efficiently.

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 Headquarters and Workforce & Technology Center are located at:

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Phone: 410-554-9442 • Toll-free: 1-888-554-0334

Video Phone: 1-866-371- 3614 / 410-405-7054 •

dors@maryland.gov

DORS Field and Office for Blindness & Vision Services counselors are located in over 20 field offices throughout Maryland. To find the nearest one, contact DORS headquarters or visit 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

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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 the Federal fiscal year 2022, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$48,610,998. The remaining 21.3% percent of the costs, \$13,156,470, were funded by State appropriations.