

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services
2025 Annual Report

Director's Message

It is my privilege to share this year's Annual Report for the Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS). As we reflect on our progress, I remain committed to listening, learning, and building, ensuring that DORS continues to provide the highest level of support for individuals with disabilities in achieving their employment and independent living goals.

Over the past year, we have deepened our partnerships, expanded opportunities, and strengthened our commitment to innovation. Through meaningful engagement with our stakeholders, including individuals we serve, families, staff, and community partners, we have gained valuable insights that inform our work and drive continuous improvement.

We have also worked diligently to learn from our experiences, analyzing data, identifying obstacles, and implementing solutions that enhance our programs and services. Whether through expanding pre-employment transition services, streamlining processes, or leveraging technology, we remain focused on building a stronger, more inclusive future for all Marylanders with disabilities.

As we look ahead, I am excited about the opportunities before us. Together, we will continue to listen to those we serve, learn from our successes and challenges, and build on a system that is responsive, equitable, and impactful.

As we close 2025, I want to especially thank the more than twenty DORS staff who retired this year, notably, Jody Boone. After 25 years of service, with roles including vocational rehabilitation counselor, businesses services representative, program manager,

Director of Field Services, Acting DORS Director, and finally, Senior Executive Director for Planning, Operations, and Field Services, Jody retired in September and began her next chapter of life. Thank you ALL - for everything - you will be missed.

And, many thanks as well to all our dedicated staff, partners, and community members for your unwavering commitment to our mission. I look forward to another year of progress and collaboration.

Dr. Erik D. Bonner

DORS Director, Maryland State Department of Education, Assistant State Superintendent for Rehabilitation Services

DORS Retirees

- Lynnette Alexander, VR Technical Specialist, OFS Bel Air/Elkton
- Lee Armstrong, Staff Specialist Supervisor, WTC
- Richard Ashmen, Disability Claims Examiner, DDS
- Leonard Ballentine, Operations Staff Specialist, DDS
- Wanda Bentley, Office Secretary, OFS Owings Mills
- Jody Boone, Senior Executive Director, HQ
- Susan Carey-Powell, Office Secretary, OFS Cumberland
- Jacqueline Coleman-Blake, Building Services Worker, HQ
- Diane Craig, Computer Network Specialist, DDS
- Kimberly Davis, VR Specialist, OFS Lanham
- Wanda Dewitt, VR Specialist, OFS Baltimore
- Joan Dier, Disability Claims Examiner Supervisor, DDS
- James Evans, Program Manager, WTC
- Robin Griffin, Staff Specialist, WTC
- Walter Hawkins, Building Services Worker, HQ
- Matthew Jackson, Regional Director, OFS Central MD
- Vivian McClinton, Disability Claims Technical Examiner, DDS

- Catherine Meadows, Disability Claims Examiner, DDS
- Ricky Meadows, IT Technical Support Specialist, DDS
- Deborah Noble, VR Technical Specialist, WTC
- Tami O'Connell, VR Technical Specialist, OFS Bel Air/Elkton
- Remona Phillips, Administrative Aide, EDU
- Samuel Pope, Office Secretary, OFS Lanham
- Scott Rittler, Disability Claims Technical Examiner, DDS
- Julie Smith, Psychologist, DDS
- Deborah Thompson, Management Associate, OFS Annapolis
- Deborah Thompson-Smith, VR Technical Specialist, OFS Baltimore

THE NUMBERS

**Federal Fiscal Year 2025/Program Year 2024
(July 1, 2024 to June 30, 2025)**

Source of Funds

Total: \$153,941,059

- Federal Matching Funds: \$75,601,296
- Federal Non-Matching Funds: \$58,016,932
- State Funds: \$17,333,718
- Special Funds: \$2,989,113

Expenditure of Funds

Total: \$153,941,059

- Disability Determination Services: \$49,706,714
- VR Client Services Program: \$34,703,103
- Case Services: \$25,535,364
- Pre-Employment Transition Services: \$12,243,004
- Administration: \$18,994,834
- Workforce & Technology Center: \$9,769,263
- Business Enterprise Program for the Blind: \$2,988,776

Top Employment Categories

Number Rehabilitated

- 110 Building & Grounds - Cleaning/Maintenance
- 51 Customer Service Representatives
- 44 Retail Salespersons
- 41 Stock Clerks – Stockroom, Warehouse, or Storage Yard
- 39 Stock Clerks and Order Fillers
- 37 Combined Food Preparation and Serving Workers, Including Fast Food
- 33 Building Cleaning Workers, All Other
- 32 Childcare Workers
- 28 Office and Administrative Support Workers, All Other
- 26 Dishwashers
- 25 Stock Clerks, Sales Floor
- 21 Food Preparation and Serving Related Workers, All Other
- 19 Security Guards
- 18 Cashiers
- 17 Dining Room and Cafeteria Attendants and Bartender Helpers
- 17 Social and Human Service Assistants
- 15 Food Preparation Workers
- 15 Maids and Housekeeping Cleaners
- 14 Laborers and Freight, Stock, and Material Movers, Hand

Total 1,082

Services to Youth with Disabilities

- 52.6% of DORS consumers were young people between the ages of 14 and 24.

- Prepared 8,804 students with disabilities to move from high school to employment, higher education or career training through vocational rehabilitation (VR) services.
- 4,905 unique individuals received Pre-ETS services.
- 8,756 potentially eligible students were served.

Office for Blindness & Vision Services (OBVS) Changes People's Lives

VR Employment Services

During calendar year 2025, OBVS worked with 1,358 job seekers whose primary disability is vision loss. As part of the path to employment, OBVS vocational rehabilitation (VR) staff provided career guidance, worked with consumers to grow their blindness and technical skills, and assisted them with advancing their education or job training. Many of these individuals achieved their employment goals in occupations ranging from records clerks and information technology managers to cooks and mental health counselors, with an average wage of \$26.05 per hour.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

OBVS provided Pre-ETS for 48 transition-aged students with vision loss. These services include training in self-advocacy and workplace readiness, exploration of post-high school educational opportunities, and work-based learning experiences.

Student highlights include:

- 17 students graduating from OBVS' partnership with Blind Industries & Services of Maryland's (BISM) intensive residential summer programs.

- 13 students attending Navigating Our Vocational Aspirations (NOVA), another OBVS-BISM partnership, where students visit and explore Maryland colleges and learn about areas of study and how these relate in the world of work.

Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB)

ILOB served over 1,200 seniors 55 and older with vision loss, helping them achieve their independent living goals. Services include Braille instruction, training on how to manage personal care and household tasks such as labeling and organizing personal care items, clothing, appliances and medications, and safe cooking techniques, as well as referral to community resources and peer support groups.

These supports help seniors who are blind to maintain their independence. The impact of this was recently demonstrated in a response to this question to the ILOB satisfactory survey: “What was the best part of the services you received.” A respondent said: “I am better prepared to go out in the world with confidence.”

Dr. Victor Biligan lost his vision from macular degeneration. When OBVS Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) Rehabilitation Teacher, Marilyn Ward-Tluszczy, first met with him, he was depressed because he felt that he would not realize his retirement dream of traveling.

An Orientation and Mobility specialist worked with him and helped him to become independent again. Marilyn and another teacher worked with him to help him learn Braille. He also acquired an eBraille that reads Braille out loud. As part of the rehabilitation process, Marilyn worked with him and got him to think about the parts of traveling experiences that he could still enjoy, like the food and the culture. He then took cooking classes and learned to cook and got a pair of Metaglasses AI glasses. Users say, “Hey Meta, what is in front of me?”

Since working with ILOB, he has taken several trips, one was with a group that specializes in travel for people who are blind! Marilyn: "Dr. Biligan's accomplishments are amazing. He is a retired dentist, and he thought his life was over when he had sudden vision loss. His case is closed, although I continue to see Dr. Biligan and his wife at our low vision support group. He recently wrote a Braille letter to me. I wanted to share his kind words."

Business Enterprise Program for the Blind (BEP)

BEP had a busy year. The federal government's Return-to-Office initiative meant that a number of BEP facilities were reopened or reimagined. BEP has food service facilities, which include coffee shops, cafeterias, Military Troop Dining operations, and Micro Markets, in many government buildings. There are BEP sites at Walter Reed Hospital Naval Support, Social Security Administration, National Institute of Health, the Food and Drug Administration, the National Emergency Training Center, and Fort Meade Army Base.

Thanks to the efforts of BEP staff and blind entrepreneurs, BEP:

- Reopened a cafeteria and a concession stand at the Social Security Administration.
- Opened two food service facilities in federal buildings.
- Modernized and reopened three Micro Markets.
- Opened one new cafeteria and one new coffee shop.

Partnerships

OBVS works with multiple partners and advocates to ensure provision of quality services. The National Federation of the Blind and the American Council of the Blind communicate regularly with staff and are valuable members of the State Rehabilitation Council Subcommittee for Blindness & Vision Services.

Disability Determination Services (DDS)

During 2025, The DDS Team remained focused on providing quality customer service to the citizens of Maryland who filed for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI).

2025 – DDS Accomplishments

- Adjudication of 52,896 claims
- Maintained an accuracy rate of 94%.
- Reduction of staged claims by 15,000 claims.
- Initial claims were reduced, with an average processing time of six days.
- Reconsideration claims dropped, with an average of nine days.
- Working collaboratively with SSA resources and automation enhancements.
- DDS staff has adapted to utilizing IMAGEN: 92% of claims were processed using IMAGEN.
- 75% of DDS Examiners are utilizing DEDA (Disability Examiners Decisional Authority).
- DDS mentored and trained five new Disability Claims Examiners before the SSA hiring freeze.
- Partnered with the Office of Inspector General to prevent fraud in the Social Security Administration Title II and Title XVI programs. These cooperative Investigations resulted in savings to SSA's Disability Program in the amount of \$804,443 and savings of \$862,906 to the state of Maryland.
- Successfully hosted two separate meetings with new SSA Executive Staff, providing an overview of the disability adjudication business process.

- Adapted to the Social Security Administration's changes in technology and business processes.

Office of Field Services (OFS) Success Stories

CSAVR Presentations

Beginning in the summer of 2025, the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) launched an initiative entitled 100 Stories in 100 Days to highlight the unique role and impact that public vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs like DORS have on the nation's workforce and economy.

The campaign featured one success story daily from VR programs across the U.S. highlighting diverse individuals overcoming barriers to find meaningful employment. Three DORS consumer success stories were selected! Two were featured on CSAVR social media and all three were included in CSAVR's nationally distributed presentation.

Slide from CSAVR presentation: A young black man with close-cropped hair and beard in a suit . Samuel. Maryland. Associate Accounting Specialist. "I am truly grateful. It allowed me to focus on my studies and prepare for my future career."

Slide from CSAVR presentation: An older Hispanic man in glasses and a uniform polo shirt with the logo of a car dealership. Ray. Maryland. Mobility Manager. "Don't give up hope. DORS will help you move forward in ways you won't know until years later."

Slide from CSAVR presentation. A young black woman with long hair wearing a white blazer. Tinille. Maryland. Physician Associate. "DORS definitely open up doors for people with disabilities. It was tremendously helpful to me having fewer battles to fight. I think DORS is amazing."

Technology Integration

DORS now uses a communication platform that is integrated into our case management system. This digital assistant, called Sara, was developed by SaraWorks LLC. It is an electronic tool DORS staff use, along with conventional case management methods, to improve communication between counselors and consumers.

Sara allows staff to securely communicate with consumers via text messaging and emails. Sara can also be used to schedule and host appointments, as well as to send out automatic reminders.

Over the past year, more counselors have integrated Sara into their daily tasks that support consumers, including contacting new consumers within two days of receiving a request for services, securely sending and receiving consumer documents, hosting virtual meetings, and giving consumers the opportunity to select meeting times that work with their schedules. These and other automated Sara communications help staff and consumers maintain contact and share information, which helps ensure that casework continues and job seekers with disabilities progress on their path to employment.

Office of Community Engagement

The Office of Community Engagement was created in 2024 based on feedback from the State's Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitation Services and from the Parent's Place of Maryland. It is managed by the Individual & Community Liaison, Samantha McGinley. In this role, Ms. McGinley serves as the ombudsman for DORS consumers in the VR employment and Independent Living Older Blind programs. She works closely with individuals with disabilities, professional disability-related organizations, elected officials, and DORS staff to address consumer and provider needs. In addition to assisting with conflict resolution, the Office provides outreach and information about DORS to stakeholders.

Since July 2024, the office has processed and resolved over 240 inquiries from consumers, legislative officials, and the Governor's office. Approximately 10% of the inquiries were attributable to Disability Determination Services, 79% were associated with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services consumers, and the remaining 11% came from individuals who were not participants in either program. Additionally, since November 2024, Community Engagement has supported over 246 stakeholders through information sharing and resource coordination, with 76% of these inquiries related to VR. During 2025 Community Engagement processed and resolved over 169 inquiries from consumers, legislative officials, and the Governor's office. Approximately 14% of the inquiries were attributed to Disability Determination Services. An additional 12% came from individuals who were not participants in either program while the remaining 74% were associated with Vocational Rehabilitation Services consumers.

One important role of this office is to actively engage and seek feedback from the various disability communities that DORS serves. The feedback is documented and analyzed to determine areas of improvement, such as training, policy changes, or customer service. In 2025, a review of the feedback resulted in enhanced case documentation requirements and implementation of additional customer service training.

RSA Disability Innovation Fund Grant

The five-year Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Grant was awarded to DORS by the U.S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in October 2023. The grant supports increased collaboration and partnership between the public VR program (DORS) and local education agencies, centers for independent living, and disability advocates. The resulting Maryland Pathways to Partnership Initiative (MPPI) now focuses on preparing

individuals aged 10 to 21 who have disabilities, and their families, for a smooth transition from school to the world of work.

The MPPI partners are:

- Maryland State Department of Education, Division of Early Intervention & Special Education Services
- Maryland Department of Disabilities
- University of Maryland Center for Transition & Career Innovation
- Parents' Place of Maryland
- Bay Area Center for Independent Living
- Resources for Independent Living
- Southern Maryland Center for Independent Living
- Independence Now
- Abt Associates, Inc.
- Caroline County Public Schools
- Charles County Public Schools
- Washington County Public Schools

In 2025, MPPI increased outreach and enrollment of youth and young adults with disabilities in services across the partner agencies, including through special events. In Caroline County Public Schools, staff connected with families and students by offering a Lunch Bunch group to elementary school students. Charles County Public School Career Navigators participated in a number of transition fairs and community outreach events to make local families aware of MPPI services.

Services to participants enrolled in this grant include career interest assessments, career exploration, coordinated career planning, peer mentoring, financial literacy education, self-advocacy training, family tools and resources, family assistance and support, participation in the Youth Leadership Forum and Youth Leadership Forum Jr., and internships. Going forward, MPPI will introduce

information about Pre-Employment Transition Services, as well as community college and apprenticeship workshops.

DORS Workforce & Technology Services

Community-Based & Workforce Services Highlights:

- The Workforce & Technology Center (WTC) in northeast Baltimore worked with Anne Arundel County Public Schools to connect WTC Food Service training graduates with jobs in the school system. Food Service graduates have been hired and more are being interviewed.
- Community-Based & Workforce Services began an onsite food service and warehouse internship partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools. The internships function as on-the-job interviews and have already resulted in hires by the school system.
- Sodexo at Morgan State University (MSU) began an internship with the WTC Food Service training program. Approximately 80% of the first class were hired by Sodexo.
- Sodexo at MSU also entered into a training and internship partnership with the WTC Environmental Services training program.
- A dedicated Deaf/hard-of-hearing behind-the-wheel driving program began in the community. This program includes an evening class and a class for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) students. Autism and general driving class sizes were doubled at WTC. All the classes were filled, and 100% of the students passed the course.
- Three CVS Retail Academies ran concurrently for the first time, including one at WTC, one at Wor-Wic Community College in Salisbury, and one at Prince George's Community College (PGCC) in Laurel.

- Employ Prince George's was added as a CVS Retail Academy partner at the PGCC location, resulting in more support services for students and more business connections for WTC Employment Specialists.
- The College of Southern Maryland became a Pathways partner, increasing the number of Maryland community colleges collaborating with DORS to seven. The Pathways program provides educational
- support services for community college students with Autism Spectrum Disorders.
- Five new Pre-ETS programs were launched during the summer of 2025.
- WTC enrollment increased by more than 20% for rehabilitation technology services and by more than 30% for workforce services, with more students taking advantage of dormitory services.
- Work Readiness class capacity was doubled, resulting in an approximately 60% drop in wait time for the program.
- Work Readiness 2 was enhanced with new, onsite, four-day-per-week workplace internships.
- Community-Based & Workforce Services began planning with Wor-Wic Community College, Sodexo, and Salisbury University to implement a food service training program, with a path towards apprenticeship.
- Two summer Pre-ETS open house events held at WTC attracted more than 500 attendees, 65% of whom came from more than 20 miles away.

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- Wes Moore, Governor
 - Joshua L. Michael, Ph.D., President, Maryland State Board of Education

- Carey M. Wright, Ed.D., State Superintendent of Schools, Maryland State Department of Education
- Erik D. Bonner, Ed.D., Assistant State Superintendent, Division of Rehabilitation Services, Maryland State Department of Education

Division of Rehabilitation Services

DORS Headquarters and Workforce & Technology Services are located at:

2301 Argonne Drive, Baltimore, Maryland 21218-1696
Phone: 410-554-9442
Video Phone: 410-405-7054
dors@maryland.gov

DORS Field and Office for Blindness & Vision Services

DORS counselors are located in more than 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 2024, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$51,885,242. The remaining 21.3% of the costs (\$15,395,878) were funded by State appropriations.