



Annual Report

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
Program Year 2022
(July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022)

State Rehabilitation Council of Kansas

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Kansas Department for Children & Families (DCF)

Mission: To protect children, promote healthy families and encourage personal responsibility.

Kansas Rehabilitation Services (KRS)

Mission: Working in partnership with Kansans with disabilities to achieve their goals for employment, independence, and self-reliance.

Principles: The following core principles will be infused into VR operations:

- Competitive, integrated employment is key component to reaching self-reliance, independence, inclusion, economic equality, and integration into society for people with disabilities.
- All people with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, are presumed to be capable of engaging in gainful employment.
- KRS, its consumers, providers, and partners will be accountable for the achievement of employment and the effective use of resources.
- KRS expects and encourages meaningful involvement of people with disabilities, public/private partners, employers and other stakeholders in KRS programs, services, and activities.
- KRS promotes the use of evidence-based practices in VR service delivery to empower Kansans with disabilities to maximize employment and economic self-reliance.
- KRS emphasizes employer engagement activities that market the skills and abilities of qualified workers with disabilities have to contribute to the success of Kansas business and industry.



Unless otherwise noted, information in this report is based on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program Year 2022 (July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022)

Note from the Director – Dan Decker

The year 2022 brought a list of challenges to Kansas Rehabilitation Services and the State Rehabilitation Council. As we began the process of moving out of the pandemic, the long term effects started surfacing. The yearly summaries listed in this report help create the picture of the commitment to outstanding service shared by our staff, our management team, our partners, vendors, and the support provided through the SRC. Our agency has been adversely affected, as have many of our community partners in the shifting landscape of hiring and staffing concerns. The reduction in staff due to these factors has only strengthened the resolve of the counselors and specialists that work with Kansans with disabilities within our office located across the state. Inflation and other fiscal influences have created an even more strenuous environment for our vendors and partners to continue to provide the quality of service that has become an expectation and a valued constant. Through these difficult economic



times, we've continued to pursue opportunities to partner with other agencies, federal partners, and community resources to leverage funding and resources for our participants. The SRC has been a vital cog in the completion and execution of so many of our directives and policy initiatives that we've done in the last year. The feedback solicited and provided has added key stakeholder perspectives to help steer decisions in a way that will have the most impact in our communities and with our participants. As we look forward to 2023, we continue to solidify the SRC member list and continue to invite new perspectives and strive to have an increased presence of the private business employer sector. The contributions of these individuals will help shape policy to provide more employment opportunities for Kansans while providing valuable information for KRS staff and SRC members in the field of private employment. As Director of KRS, I am excited about not only the results that we have had in 2022, as referenced in this report, but the expansion of opportunities we are sure to experience in 2023 based on the hard work and commitment to excellence exhibited by KRS staff and partners on a daily basis.



State Rehabilitation Council Members

Name:	Representing:	Employer:	Email:	Term Start Date:
Mike Burgess (Chair for Year 2022)	CAP Representative	Disability Rights Center Director of Policy & Outreach	mike@drckansas.org	May serve more than two consecutive full terms.
Tami Allen (Co-Chair)	Families Together	Families Together (Program Director)	Tami@famielstogetherinc.org	01/01/2022
LaVonne Geiss	Community Rehab Program Service Provider	Program Manager DSNWK	Lavonne.geiss@mysnwk.org	01/01/2022
Angie Zimmerman	Disability Advocacy Organization	Living Independent in NW Kansas Director of LINK & Person w/Disability	angiez@linkinc.org	01/01/2022
Deb Scheibler	Labor	Workforce One Executive Director	deb@workforceone.org	01/01/2022
Stacy Fuller	Community Rehab Program & Disability Advocacy Group	Envision Inc. Director of Rehabilitation Service & Support Programs	Stacy.fuller@envisionus.com	01/01/2022
Tawnie Larson	Business Industry of Labor	Kansas AgrAbility Project Coordinator	Tawnie@ksu.edu	01/01/2022
Julia Connellis	Disability Advocacy Group & Person w/Disability	Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy Executive Director & Person w/Disability	juliat@kyea.org	01/01/2022
Damara Paris	Public Member	ESU Professor	dparis@emporia.edu	01/01/2022
Christi Reif-Fuhrman	Person w/Disability	N/A	Creif.fuhrman@rcec610.com	01/01/2022
Tom Page	Disability Advocacy Group	National Federation for the Blind	topage@swbell.net	01/01/2022
Sarah Cowen	VR-Tribal Representative	Prairie Band Pottawatomie	sarahcowan@pbpnation.org	01/01/2022
Stacie Martin	State Educational Agency	Education Program Consultant Special Education & Title Services	smartin@ksde.org	01/01/2020
Neelima Parasker	State Workforce Investment Board	Founder, President & CEO at SnapIT Solutions Co-Founder Lotus TMS	neelima@snapit.solutions	01/01/2022
Shanti Ramcharan	Statewide Independent Living Council	Adult System of Care Administrator Aetna Better Health of Kansas	ramcharans@aetna.com	01/01/2022
Stephanie West-Potter	Current/Former Recipient of VR	Individual w/Disability	Swestpotter@gmail.com	N/A
Kieru Miller	Current/Former Recipient of VR	Individual w/Disability	kierum@gmail.com	01/01/2022
Tony Maurer	Current/Former Recipient of VR	Individual w/Disability	tmaurer@tong464.org	01/01/2022
Eddie Walsh	Current/Former Recipient of VR	Individual w/Disability	GIMPRIDER@hotmail.com	01/01/2022
Toni Akins	Current/Former Recipient of VR	Individual w/Disability	Toni.martin2009@yahoo.com	01/01/2022
Victoria Donnelly	Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member	Dept. for Children & Families Counselor		8/1/2022
Dan Decker	Ex-Officio Non-Voting Member	Dept. for Children & Families Director of RS	Daniel.decker@ks.gov	01/01/2022

Tom Anderson (Chair -year 2021)	Statewide Independent Living Council			Cycle off Dec 2021
Ted Bryant		Wal-Mart, Topeka		Cycled off Dec 2021
Margo Chediak		Topeka		
Laurie Gerber	Families Together	Families Together		Cycled off Dec 2021
Carrie Greenwood	Disability Advocacy Group	KYEA, Topeka		Cycled off Dec 2021
Dawn Masqua	VR-Tribal Representative			Cycled off Dec 2021
JoRita Hill				Cycled off Dec 2021
Julie King	Ex-Officio Non- Voting Member	Dept. for Children & Families Counselor		Cycled off Dec 2021
Irma Ramirez	Current/Former Recipient of VR	Salina		Cycled off Dec 2021
Lisa Schuetz	Business and Industry Representative	Gardner		Cycled off Dec 2021
Roxanne Treece		Canton		Cycled off Dec 2021
Ranita Wilks		Lawrence		Cycled off Dec 2021
Deb Young	Individual with a Disability	Lawrence		Cycled off Dec 2021
Connie Zienkewicz		Wichita		Cycled off Dec 2021



Annual Summary

Review of Rehabilitation Services (RS)

At each quarterly meeting, one of the RS Regional Program Administrators for VR presents information about their operations. Among the topics are staffing, outcomes, challenges, business development in the region, unemployment, size of communities and success stories. These presentations give council members a better feel for how VR services are carried out at the local level. These presentations are also an opportunity for questions-and-answers about regional operations.

Data Report

Data Administrator: Deanna Lowe

RS provides a quarterly performance data report that hones in on key areas of interest to the council members. This report includes number of persons served, number of persons employed, average hourly wage, average hours worked per week, highest full-time hourly wage, percent of persons employed who report their own income as their primary source of support, number of transition youth served and employed, number of counselors, and average caseload size. The report also includes performance on timeliness of eligibility determination and development of Individual Plans for Employment. Finally, the report includes the number of persons rehabilitated by type of disability.

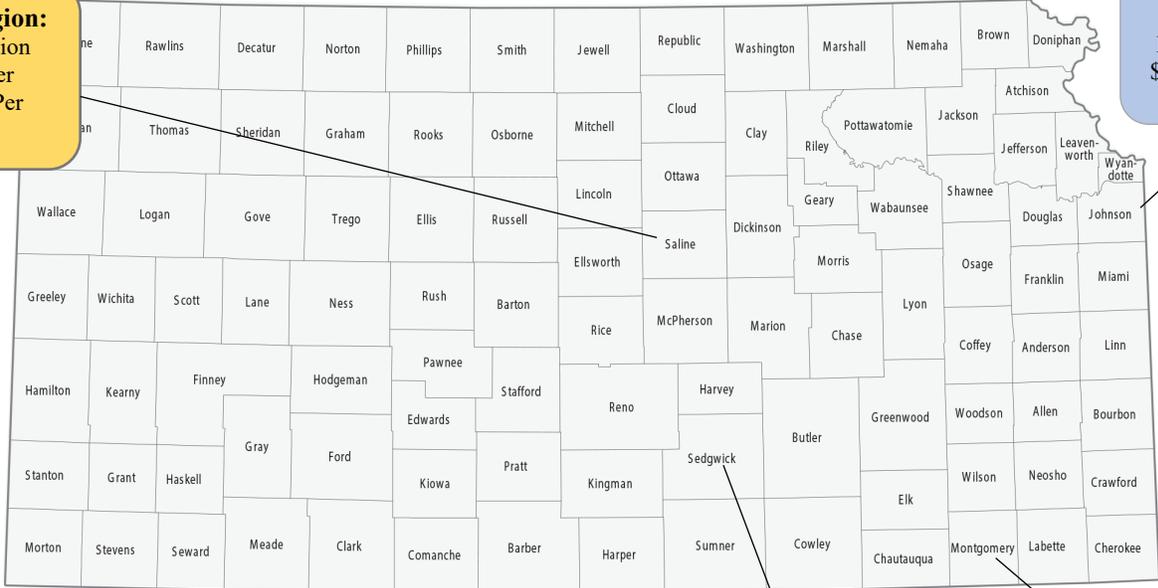
The regional presentations, data report and reports from administrative staff on key initiatives give council members the opportunity to stay informed about RS operations and to evaluate/guide the agency's performance.



VR staff statewide are working hard to facilitate timely access to services and this work is paying off. PY 2022 the average timeframe from application to eligibility is 28 days and the average timeframe from eligibility to IPE development is 50.

West Region:
Formulation Manager
\$62.02 Per Hour

KC Region:
Construction Project Manager
\$114.60 Per Hour



Kansas City Region Consists of the Following Counties:
Leavenworth, Wyandotte, Johnson, Douglas

Wichita Region:
Educational Administrator
\$54.38 Per Hour

East Region:
Self-Employed Farmer/Rancher
\$59.05 Per Hour

East Region Consists of the Following Counties:
Doniphan, Brown, Nemaha, Marshall, Pottawatomie, Jackson, Jefferson, Wabunsee, Shawnee, Osage, Franklin, Miami, Coffey, Anderson, Linn, Allen, Bourbon, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Crawford, Labette, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson, Woodson

West Region Consists of the Following Counties:
Cheyenne, Clay, Cloud, Decatur, Dickinson, Ellis, Ellsworth, Geary, Gove, Graham, Jewell, Lincoln, Logan, Mitchell, Morris, Norton, Osborne, Ottawa, Phillips, Rawlins, Republic, Riley, Rooks, Russell, Saline, Sheridan, Sherman, Smith, Thomas, Trego, Wallace, Washington, Barton, Chase, Clark, Comanche, Edwards, Finney, Ford, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Harvey, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearney, Kiowa, Lane, Lyon, Marion, McPherson, Meade, Morton, Ness, Pawnee, Reno, Rice, Rush, Scott, Seward, Stafford, Stanton, Stevens

Wichita Region Consists of the Following Counties:
Barber, Butler, Cowley, Elk, Greenwood, Harper, Kingman, Pratt, Sedgwick, Sumner

Youth with Disabilities

The Council maintains a strong focus on how to empower youth with disabilities to pursue post-secondary education, achieve employment and become self-reliant. Pre-Employment Transition

Services (Pre-ETS) are discussed at each meeting. The Pre-ETS program offers job exploration, counseling on post-secondary education, self-advocacy training and other services to help young adults prepare for employment and self-reliance.

A major area of emphasis is the provision of summer paid work-based experiences through which youth (second semester junior year and up) can learn the basic skills necessary to succeed in the workplace and experience the benefits of earned income. To carry out this component, Rehabilitation Services has established innovative partnerships with most KANSAS WORKS one-stop workforce centers as well as some Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and recently opened the opportunity to vendors/providers in an effort to serve more students, especially in rural areas. These partnerships leverage the expertise to provide work readiness training and develop opportunities for paid work experiences. The services are funded through Rehabilitation Services provider agreements. KRS is building service provider capacity to ensure statewide access for paid work-based learning experiences. Research published in the Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation shows that youth employment is a strong predictor of successful employment as adults, and therefore an important milestone toward self-reliance. This past summer Pre-ETS kicked off our first summer experience and it was a success! Students were able to participate in a greater number of work hours during the week and were able to focus on learning their new roles without having to juggle daily classes and homework. A lesson that was learned, is to start referrals sooner, around January, to get a jump start on paperwork, especially if the student requires additional supports from Vocational Rehabilitation such as job coaching.

In addition, Rehabilitation Services has established a partnership with the Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy (KYEA). “Empower Me” workshops are conducted statewide to help high school students plan for post-secondary education and employment. During the workshops, students participate in activities focused on job exploration, resume building, work readiness training, self-advocacy skill building, mock interviews and post-secondary educational options. An important aspect of each virtual event is a panel presentation by people with disabilities who discuss their life and employment experiences.

KRS and KYEA partnered to present ten Empower Me Workshops in PY 2022, with a total of 121 student participants. According to students, the workshops are a valuable experience, and they live up to the “empower me” goal.

Coordination with other Disability Organizations

One major purpose of the Council is to facilitate coordination among disability and service provider organizations. The Department of Education, the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, the client assistance program, the Parent Training and Information Center, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Kansas Advisory Committee for the Blind and Visually Impaired each have designated times on the agenda to present about their organizations. Other members representing service providers, VR consumers, advocacy organizations, business/industry and the workforce development board all have opportunities to share information, announce opportunities for collaboration, or raise issues to further consideration.

Training Department Highlights

Training Administrator: Lara Bowen

Training provides quarterly summaries to the Council regarding the variety of trainings offered to staff throughout each quarter. Summaries include information on trainings completed for new hires on our Pre-ETS and VR teams throughout the state. New hire trainings are provided as needed when new Pre-ETS Specialists, VR Counselors and Program Specialists start with KRS. We also train on updated policies and procedures as well as new trends in VR services nationwide. We rely on the expertise of Technical Assistance to make continued improvements to our trainings, and we tap into a variety of tools available to us such as online courses through YesLMS and Technical Assistance. We also highlight our ongoing, monthly trainings offered to all VR staff. This includes our monthly required Charting the VR Course trainings and our optional Lunch and Learns which cover a variety of topics and resources available to enhance the quality services we provide to all of our clients. We also update and enhance our trainings based on VR data reports and requests from management and staff in all regions across the state.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Highlights

Pre-ETS Program Administrator: Tracie Flowers

The Pre-ETS program empowers youth with disabilities to achieve their highest employment potential. Pre-ETS was authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and was designed to provide an early start at job exploration. Pre-ETS assist students with disabilities in making the transition from secondary to post-secondary education/training, competitive/integrated employment, and ultimately self-self-reliance.

In collaboration with local education agencies and qualified community partners, Rehabilitation Services will provide or arrange for the provision of Pre-ETS for students with disabilities who are in need of such services. Services include:

- **Job Exploration Counseling:** Provides students with disabilities the opportunity to explore how their skills and interest match with jobs available in the labor market.
- **Self-Advocacy:** Empowers students with disabilities to express their needs and goals in a variety of settings, such as school or work.
- **Workplace Readiness Training:** Supplies students with disabilities with the opportunity to learn skills necessary for success on the job, such as customer service, how to interact with co-workers, supervision, being on time, etc.
- **Counseling on Comprehensive Transition or Post-Secondary Education:** Provides a clear path to an employment future for students with disabilities.
- **Work-Based Learning Experiences:** Provides work-based learning experiences where youth can learn the skills necessary to succeed in the workplace and experience the benefits of earned income.

- **Requested Services: 951**
- **Students in Plan: 844**
- **Receiving Services: 991**
- **Moved into Receiving Services 815**
- **VR/Pre-ETS Cases to Date: 528**
- **VR/Pre-ETS Cases Currently Active: 212**
- **Total Services Provided: 7,328**
- **Most Provided Service: Workplace Readiness: 2,209**

Community Engagement and Provider Highlights

Community Engagement and Provider Manager: Chris Zuercher

Majority of SFY 2022 focus was on updating the Rehabilitation Services (RS) Provider Agreements which are completed and up to date for eighty-three providers. The provider agreements are updated to reflect personnel and services in line with office of grant and contracts requirements, which are now typically completed every three years. Approximately 340 provider personnel are documented on the agreements Rehabilitation Services / Office of Grants and Contracts track.

During this timeframe, thirty-nine provider amendments were also requested, reviewed, and approved. Majority of the amendments were requests to add services with many of the approved services adding Pre-ETS Summer Paid Work Based Learning and adding a new level of service to the Job Preparation service array.

Besides the current providers we work with there were approximately sixteen enquiries regarding how to become a new provider. Out of those sixteen, seven completed the process and were approved to become a “new” provider in SFY2022.

As for the provider data SFY 2022 shows the average wage worked was \$11.47 and the average weekly hours worked came to 25.02. Approximately 592 people were successfully closed in SFY2022 using Provider services.

In addition to, I have organized and provided four quarterly provider meetings across the state.

To end, I currently participate and represent Rehabilitation Services on the:

- Assistive Technology Council of Kansas (ATK)
- Governors Behavioral Health Services Planning Council -Vocational Subcommittee (GBHSPC)Su
- The National Employment Team (NET)

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

RS Management Staff

Under the WIOA, VR is a partner in the state’s workforce development system, along with adult basic education, labor exchange services, and workforce centers. As partners, these programs develop goals, strategies, and performance measures to address the needs of Kansas employers and job seekers. A combined state plan is updated every two years and submitted to the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education.

WIOA also incorporates significant changes to the VR program through amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. Pre-ETS, described previously, was established.

In addition, VR must provide Career Counseling, Information and Referral Services for the 1,484 Kansans with disabilities employed at subminimum wage in sheltered workshops. The goal is to provide information about competitive integrated employment options and the services available to help them secure such jobs in the integrated labor market.

Disability Determination Services (DDS)

DDS Director: Joshanna Stone

DDS makes medical disability determinations for the U.S. Social Security Administration on most Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) claims filed or reviewed in Kansas. DDS is responsible only for the medical adjudication, and the Social Security Administration determines whether to award benefits. DDS also works with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the KanCare Clearinghouse to assess medical documentation for Kansans who apply for medical assistance on the basis of disability. DDS is virtually 100% federally funded in that it receives only about \$100,000 in SGF.

In SFY 2022, 22,634 Kansans filed disability claims (all types). The Kansas DDS was responsible for processing 18,254 of those claims. The Kansas DDS is recognized nationally as one of the best for quality determinations. For SFY 2022 the Kansas DDS average claim processing time for combined SSI and SSDI claims is 121 days with an accuracy rate of 96.5%.

Independent Living (IL)

RS Independent Living Grant Manager: Charlene Johnson

RS administers the independent living program, which includes grants to a network for Centers for Independent Living (CILs). CILs provide information/referral, peer counseling, independent living skills training, advocacy, and deinstitutionalization services for people with disabilities.

In addition, RS oversees grants with community based organizations to carry out the independent living program for older (age 55+) individuals who are blind. Services include independent living skills training, assistive technology, and orientation/mobility training. Services are intended to help persons served live in their own homes and communities rather than more costly institutional settings.

RS is also required to provide support for the Statewide Independent Living Council, in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act and implementing regulations.

For SFY22, Centers for Independent Living provided services to 9,391 Kansans with disabilities in all 105 counties.

Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH)

Director: Robert Cooper

KCDHH is established in KSA 75-5391 and is overseen by a board of commissioners appointed by the Governor. KCDHH offers advocacy, technical assistance, information/referral, sign language interpreter registration and coordination of interpreting services.

- KCDHH staff receive between 500 and 800 contacts every month (mostly phone calls or email messages) involving many issues on services or specific resources for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH).
- KCDHH maintains a registration list of 403 sign language interpreters in Kansas. KCDHH hopes to expand this registration list to include communication access services, including captioning (CART) and support providers for persons who are deaf-blind (SSP).

- KCDHH provides an annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Day at the Capitol event every March attracting 250 to 300 visitors, including state legislators; although this event hasn't taken place the past 2 years, this is an activity that plans to resume in Spring 2023.
- KCDHH is continuing to monitor implementation of the Language Assessment Program for persons who are D/HH.
- KCDHH is celebrating their 40th anniversary as of July 1st; it was established in 1982.
- KCDHH had a successful legislative push with SB 62 which elevates interpreter registration to level equal to all other licensed professionals, provides authority for regulations of interpreters and other communication access services, and several statutory changes.

KCDHH looks forward to FY2023 as we will fill two new FTE positions and implementing SB 62 with initial rules-making process.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

Program Administrator: Matthew Miller

VR also includes a specialized program for persons who are legally blind. BEP offers them the opportunity to manage food service and vending operations in public/government facilities, including state office buildings, the State Capitol, military food service operations, highway rest areas and four private entities. BEP uses funds generated by its operations, rather than state general funds, to match Federal VR funds.

BEP has 11 certified or licensed blind operators at 106 sites across the state, including vending machines, snack bars, micro markets, and cafes/cafeterias. BEP also has contracts to operate dining halls on two military bases, Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth. COVID-19 was an overwhelming challenge for BEP in SFY 2020 with the program taking a 45% decrease in net profits. The median annual earnings of BEP blind participants in SFY 2022 was \$15,934. This is an improvement of 15.9% over SFY 2021.



Statewide: Successful Closures

	SFY 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)	SFY 2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)
Total Successful Closures	933	1113
Average Hourly Wage	\$10.36	\$13.19
Highest Hourly Wage	\$32.45	\$114.60

Statewide: Job Placement Successful Closures

	SFY 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)	SFY 2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)
Total Successful Closures	499	756
Average Hourly Wage	\$10.81	\$11.33
Average Hours Worked	26	25

Statewide: Supported Employment Successful Closures

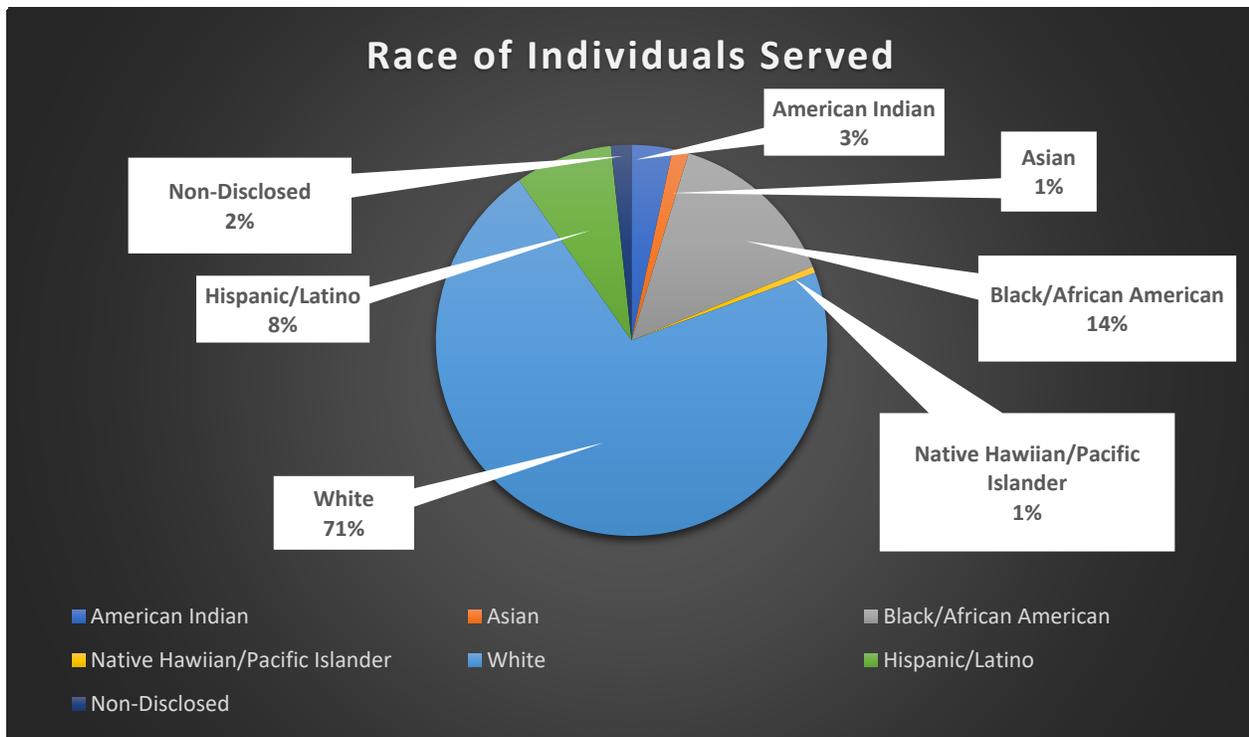
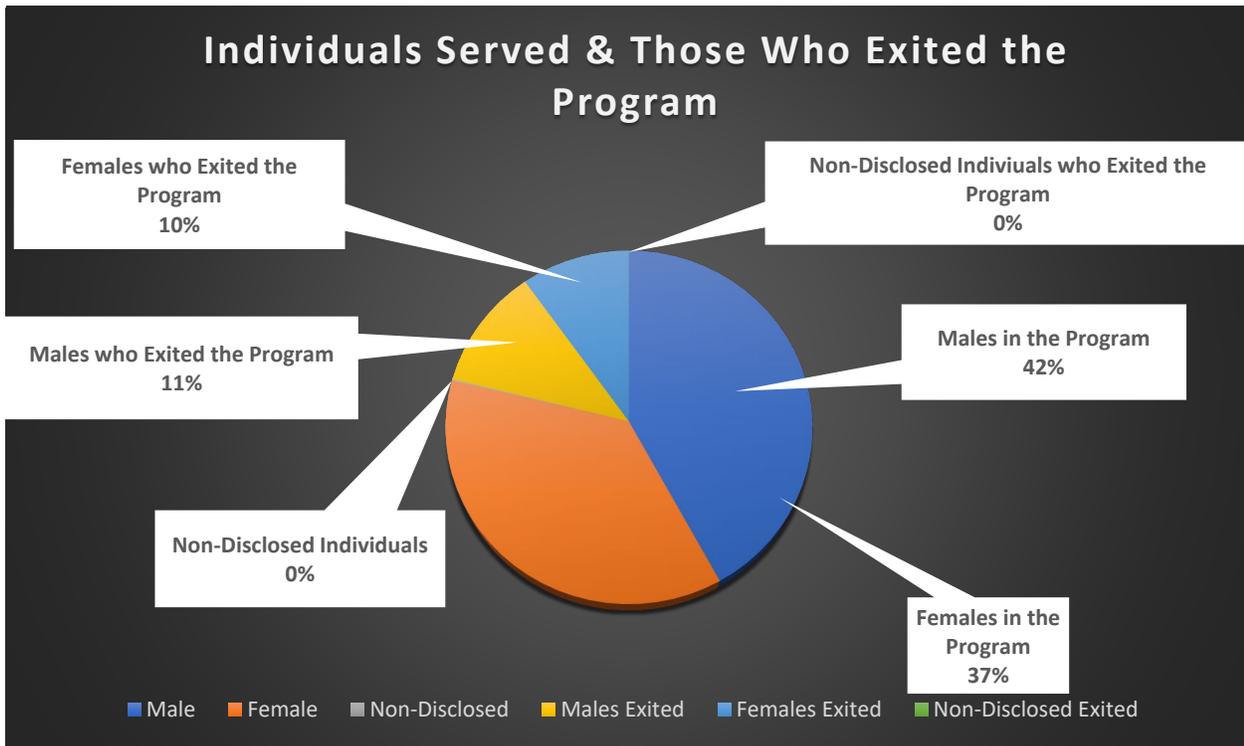
	SFY 2021 (July 1, 2020 – June 30, 2021)	SFY 2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)
Total Successful Closures	141	203
Average Hourly Wage	\$10.21	\$10.50
Average Hours Worked	21	19

Disabilities of Persons Rehabilitated

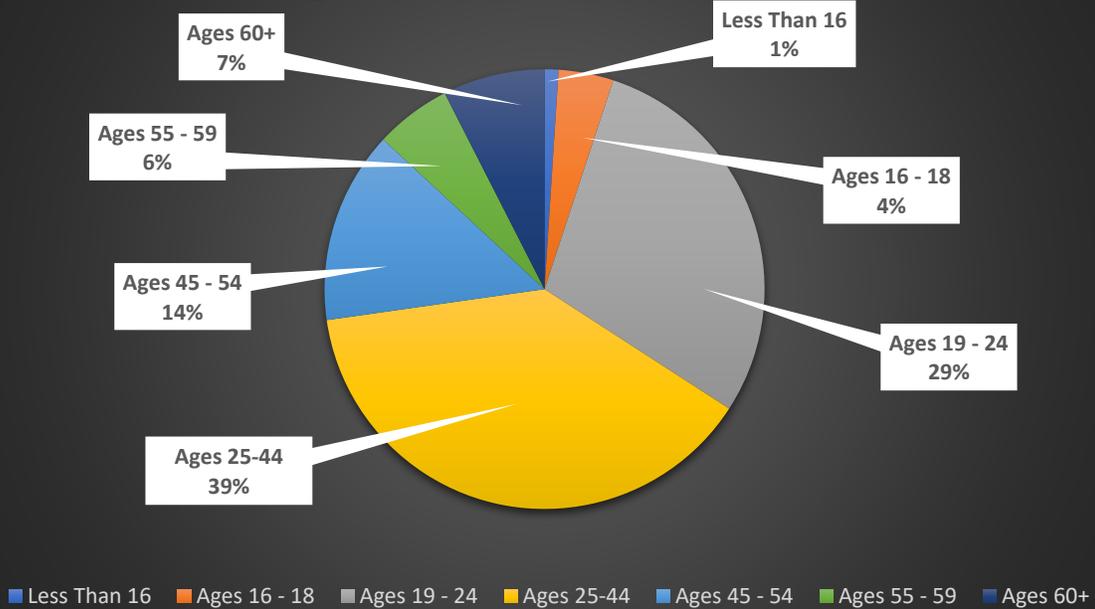
Impairment	SFY 2022 (July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)
Mental Illness	771
Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	140
Other Cognitive Impairments	391
Learning Disabilities	54
Intellectual Disabilities	149
Other Physical Impairments	55
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	116
Blindness and Other Visual Impairments	28
General Physical Debilitation	27
Other	78
TOTAL	1,809
TBI as the cause of disability	36
Autism Spectrum as the cause of the disability	156



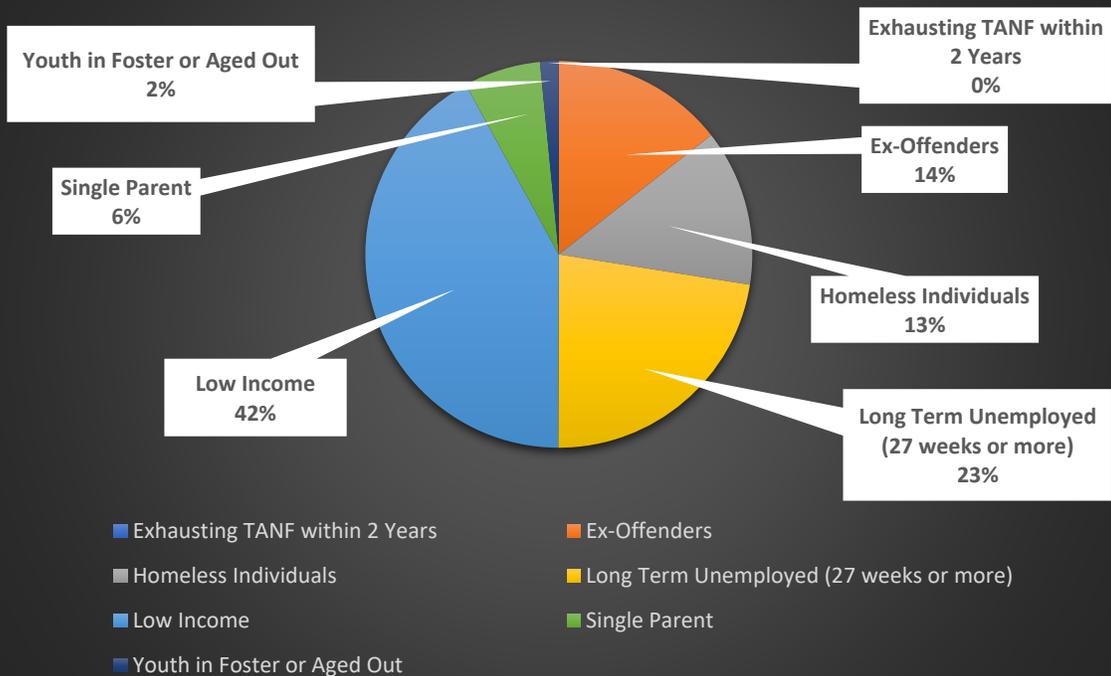
Demographics of Individuals Served



Ages of Individuals Served



Individuals Served



Regional Information and Highlights

KC Region:

The Kansas City Region consists of 5 counties with 5 service centers: Johnson, Wyandotte, Lawrence, Leavenworth, and Atchison. Counselors are in each office.

- County Population: JO: 615,223 (most populous county in Kansas) WY: 165,753, DG: 125,709, LV: 82,541, AT: 15,773
- Community Developmental Disability Organization: 5 (one for each county)
- Community Independent Living Centers: The Whole Person (Jo, Wy, and Lv), Independence Inc (DG), and Three Rivers (AT)
- MHC: 4: Bert Nash, The Guidance Center, Wyandot Mental Health, Johnson County Mental Health

Unique Demographics:

- Large population of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, large number of referrals from Kansas School for the Deaf, which serves ages 3-21. In 1866, it became the first school for the deaf established in the state of Kansas, and it is the only one in KS. Kansas State School for the Blind is in Kansas established in 1867.
- Diverse community with urban and Rural counties
 - Transportation difficulties for these counties.
- Total Number served: Currently at 1,756 consumers currently, up about 107 from this time last year.

Staff in KC Region:

- VRCS and Program Specialists: Average Tenure about 4 years
- VR Managers: Average Tenure about 6 months
- PA Tenure: 8 years
- Clerical: 3 support staff to support counselors with disabilities, 4.5 other clerical helping other offices in the region.

Outcomes in KC Region:

- The KC Region has achieved a total of 318 successful closures for SFY 2021 (July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022). The highest hourly wage for the region was \$114.60 – that individual worked as a construction project manager. There are a total of 457 individuals who are currently in employment (status 22).
- Average days from application to eligibility is 27 days. We are near the state average (24 days) and want to continue to decrease this number through our strategies to lower the time from application to service.
- Average days from eligibility to plan is 79 days. We have received training from technical assistance and will continue to address this area.
- Average wage for the region is \$13.53

Focus of KC Region :

- **Quicker Service Delivery:** The quicker an individual can receive Vocational Rehabilitation services, the more likely there will be employment success. Therefore, a major goal of RS is to facilitate expedited processes for applications, eligibility determination, development of individual plans for employment and delivery of services. A variety of actions will be undertaken. Counselors are scheduling initial interviews (intakes) as quickly as possible. We send letters to potential applicants (and/or providers with releases of info) to help them understand vocational rehabilitation eligibility. We encourage them to bring supporting documentation to their first appointments. Staff training will be provided on eligibility and assessments to assure that best practices are utilized. We are working with our active partners on this measure as well as developing new ones on our communities.
- **Provider Accountability** especially with Supported Employment Services and helping clients get connected to waiver services when possible.
- **Strengthen partnership** with our vendors, WIOA partners. Work Force center meetings at least once/year, sharing opportunities throughout programs, discussing how to apply, who is eligible. Statewide Quarterly meetings with providers and Chris Zuercher. Monthly meetings with most providers within region. Quarterly meetings with some community partners.
- **Continuing to build relationships** with referral sources including high schools, colleges trying to get into additional schools for informational meetings.
- **Reducing Status 08s** (closure before eligibility) and **Status 30** (closure before plan)
 - Case Closure Checklists are approved by managers.

East Region:

The East Region covers 25 counties with 11 Service Centers that are located in Marysville (population: 3,000), Hiawatha (population: 3,000), Topeka (population: 127,000), Ottawa (population: 12,000), Osawatomie (population: 4,000), Fort Scott (population: 8,000), Chanute (population: 9,000), Pittsburg (population: 20,000), Independence (population: 9,000), Parsons (population: 10,000), and Columbus (population: 3,000).

The East Region currently has 2 Managers one covers the Northeast and the other one covers the Southeast portion of my region. I currently also have 12 counselors, 1 Program Specialist, and 4 Support staff spread throughout the entire region. Currently I am sitting on about a 40% vacancy rate in my region with 13 open positions currently with one more coming at the end of June.

- Topeka: 1 Manager (Vacant as of 7/29/2022), 8 counselors (5 vacancies), 2 support staff (1 splits their time between Topeka and Hiawatha) (1 part-time support staff vacancy), & 2 Vacant program specialists positions.
- Hiawatha, 1 counselor (serves Brown, Doniphan, Nemaha, Jefferson, and Jackson)
- Ottawa: 2 counselors, 1 support staff (Franklin, Coffey, Anderson, and Miami)
- Fort Scott: 1 counselor vacancy (Linn, Bourbon)
- Pittsburg: 2 Counselors (Crawford & Cherokee), 1 support staff (Crawford, Cherokee)

- Independence: 1 current support staff and 1 Vacancy for Counselor (Montgomery and Chautauqua). This is also the office where I am based out of.
- Parsons: 1 Manager & 1 Vacancy for Counselor & 1 Vacancy for Support Staff.
- Chanute: 1 program specialist, 1 counselor (Woodson, Allen, Wilson, Neosho, Montgomery & Chautauqua)

Counselor Employment Rate with VR:

- 31% employed under two years
- 31% employed between 2-5 years
- 10% employed between 5-10 years
- 21% employed between 10-20 years
- 7% employed 20+years

The typical reasons for the higher turnover in our region this past year has been leaving for higher paying jobs, and relocation to other areas both within and outside of Kansas.

We currently have 1,294 open VR cases within our region. The average caseload right now is approximately 91 case. We do not have specialized caseloads in my region, rather, everyone works with a variety of clients with different diagnosis.

Outcomes Achieved:

- From July 1, 2021, to June 30th, 2022, our region has had 194 successful closures, with the average wage being \$14.11, the average cost per successful closure is \$7, 367.16, and highest wage was \$59.05. (Self Employed as a farmer/rancher). (The average wage is up from last year where it was \$12.47 dollars range last year)
- A few of our other high wage earner positions were an Assistant Professor at a University making \$51.25 per hour, an Attorney at an average of \$37.50 per hour (he bills \$100.00 per hour but we had to take into account his unbillable hours worked to get that average, a school social worker making \$38.80 per hour, a Registered Nurse making \$33.58 per hour, a Painter making \$27.32 an hour, Electrician at \$26.72 per hour, and a security guard making \$20.00 per hour. When looking at the services we provided for those individuals these included training, Assistive Technology Equipment, mental and physical restoration, and job placement services.
- I think the success for higher wage has been training and maximizing their potential. We have been shifting our focus from the quantity of successful closures to more quality closures over the last few years. I would also say that consumer engagement is a huge factor for success with our program. Teleworking has been highly successful for our staff, and they have really blossomed. We have grown as a team where in the past it seemed that the region was split into a more North vs. South mentality. We are working with our staff region wide to try to reach 100% monthly contact with quality engagements, outreaching for referrals, and meeting more regularly with our individuals in status 20 (ready for employment).

Employment outlook:

- Unemployment rate as of April 2022 for Kansas is 2.4%. 6 out of the top 10 counties with the highest unemployment rate are located within the East Region. Currently, Linn County sits at the highest rate with 3.1%, Neosho County is at 2.9%. Wilson and Woodson Counties are at 2.8%, Coffey County is at 2.7% and Bourbon County is sitting at 2.6%.

Upcoming Employment Opportunities throughout the region:

- In Montgomery County, there are currently two large employers that are projected to open within the next year. The first is a Fed Ex Distribution Center that will occupy a 195,500 square foot facility and has indicated that the \$24 million distribution facility will be a boost to the local economy by bringing “dozens” of new jobs to Independence. The 2nd is a soybean crushing facility that is projected to create at least 50 new jobs.
- In Crawford County, there is currently also a Fed Ex Distribution center slated to open this Fall which will be approximately 250,000 square foot and is expected to employ a mix of full and part-time team members.
- More than 60 new business opened in Shawnee County in the last year alone and Shawnee County also saw a 30 year low for unemployment rates with only 2.3 percent of residents out of work.

West Region:

The West region covers 65 counties and is broken down for other programs into Southwest and Northwest regions. There are 8 service centers in each region for a total of 16. Vocational Rehab has staff in 10 of those 16 offices. We have 23 staff currently and 12 vacancies in our program.

Staffing numbers for the past year.

- 1 PA with 2 years tenure
- 2 Managers with an average of 4 years
- 17 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors with an average of 9 years. 5 vacancies currently
- 1 Program specialist with 1 year of experience. 2 vacancies
- 2 Support staff with an average of about 15 years. 5 vacancies

Statistics:

The West had 420 successful closures for the last year with a high wage of \$62.02 in a supervisory role with a manufacturing company.

- Our average wage per closure was \$13.02 for the year.
- We served 2,014 individuals for the year which was up 254 from the previous year total.
- We completed eligibilities in an average of 14 days and IPE’s in an average of 64 days.

Challenges and goals:

We are continuing to recruit staff and hoping to increase our presence in more of our service centers to decrease the amount of remote work we are having to do. We continue to partner with our local Workforce Centers and Centers for Independent Living. We have recruited several new

providers in the last year and will strive to increase that number in the coming year as well. We are seeing increases in referrals and the job outlook in the West region is very strong. We have lots of jobs in manufacturing, CDL driving, and the other trades as well. We are also working on how to more “holistically” serve our clients through increased awareness and communication with our other DCF programs.

Wichita Region:

The Wichita Region consists of 10 counties with four service centers:

- Counties: Sedgwick, Butler, Cowley, Sumner, Greenwood, Elk, Barber, Harper, Kingman and Pratt
- Service Centers are located in Sedgwick, Butler, Cowley and Pratt
- Region population is around 665,000 with over half in Sedgwick County
- The region has both a large urban and a large rural population
- Other than the Wichita Metro area, transportation is a significant barrier for VR clients

Staff in Wichita Region:

- One Program Administrator (PA) – Tenure 8 years
- Two Program Managers and Two Pre-ETS Managers – Avg. tenure 5 years
- Sixteen VR Counselor positions – Avg. tenure 7 years (4 vacancies)
- Two Program Specialist positions – tenure 1 year (1 vacancy)
- Five Support Positions – Avg. tenure 2.5 years (2 vacancies)
- Eight Pre-ETS Specialists – Avg. tenure 1 year (3 vacancies)

The Wichita Region has the largest city in Kansas the largest industries include:

- Aircraft
- Health Care
- Agriculture
- Transportation and Logistics

The unemployment rate in the region has dropped to 3.2%, down from 6.2% the previous year, but there are still many jobs available in the area.

The Wichita Region has served 1381 clients this past year, from 7/1/21 through 6/30/22 there have been 181 successful closures, a slight increase over the previous year with an average wage of \$12.71 which is over \$2.50 higher than the average wage the previous year. Some of the higher wage jobs Wichita VR clients have obtained this past year are:

- School Administrator - \$54.38/hr
- Industrial Engineer - \$50.72/hr
- Special Education Teacher - \$45.43/hr
- Mechanical Drafter - \$37.83/hr
- Production Manager - \$30.45/hr

Since the slowdown that accompanied COVID, the Wichita Region is gradually increasing the number of applications coming into the office and the number of successful closures. Before COVID, Wichita averaged over 80 applications per month. This past year Wichita averaged 51

applications per month, but in the last five months of the state fiscal year the average was 59. More clients are feeling comfortable coming into the office and meeting face to face. We still offer to serve them in whatever way they are most comfortable with, such as phone, email, virtual, etc. We are increasing our outreach efforts in the community in an effort to bring more VR applications into the office.

Success Stories

KC Region VR Success Stories:

Success Story #1: When Ashley applied for VR services she was working as a C N A at Valley Hope. She wanted to maximize her employment and pursue LPN and then RN. Ashley entered the LPN program at Highland Community College. We supported her with tuition, books, supplies, a laptop and IV therapy training. She became certified as an LPN 7/19/2019. She continued to work at Valley Hope and moved to an LPN position. Ashley wanted to pursue her RN. She found an accelerated program; the majority of work was on line and she could complete in 9 months. (This was during the height of the pandemic, and she needed to stay home as much as possible so her children were safe.) She became a registered RN 06/10/2021. She continued to work at Valley Hope but was now in an RN position. Right before she closed successfully, she was promoted to charge nurse.



Ashley brought so many strengths to the table!! She was able to over come her addiction and had been “clean” for two years when she entered our program. She was a single mother working full time and was expecting another child. She is focused, resilient, kind, compassionate and determined to be a successful working mother. She was able to complete her goals thru the height of the pandemic, which in and of itself is a feat, and continues to move forward in her career...what an AMAZING person!!!!

This statement below was an email to the VR Staff from Ashley.

Doing good!

I actually got promoted to a Charge Nurse position beginning of September!

Kids are doing great in their new school. God has been so good to me. Blessed is an understatement! .. I know you enjoy photos, so here our last "incredible" family photo.

I hope you are doing well!

Thank you for all you've done for us 😊

Success Story #2: “In July I was in a car accident that ended with my van being totaled. I was now in need of a new van with the wheelchair conversion and additional equipment. I contacted KS VR to see if I could get their assistance in paying for the conversion and additional equipment so I could continue to have transportation to get to and from work, doctor’s appointments, etc.

My case manager - Jennifer and I completed an IDP and proceeded to go through the process of getting me approved for services. United Access was also part of this process as they helped determine the specific equipment, I would need in order for me to drive the van and would also be the one that would install the equipment.

I am now driving again and have my independence back.”

KC Region Pre-ETS Success Story:

Hello. My name is Dee Brehaney. My son, Jared Brehaney, is assisted by Stephanie Pascua in the Pre-ETS Program. Jared just started working at Monarch’s Baseball Club on June 29, 2022. He worked June 29 & June 30 when his job coach tested positive for Covid. Jared was scheduled to work 3 hour shifts on July 1, July 2 & July 3, 2022.



In the early morning hours of July 1, 2022, around the time I had heard “Take Me Out to the Ballgame” for about the 50th time, sung by Jared through his Karaoke Music Machine that serves as entertainment for the entire house, I received the email about his job coach. My heart sank because this job has turned his world around. He has been very depressed for months and the positive changes we saw in him in just 2 days of work were so wonderful that we knew our son was happy again and he was going to be okay.

I know job coaches are very hard to employ, and I knew finding another for that Friday evening and Saturday evening and Sunday afternoon on a holiday weekend would be next to impossible, which I explained to Jared. To my surprise, Jared had already received a text from Stephanie about the situation, which I considered very professional on Stephanie’s part. Jared has a Traumatic Brain Injury and Stephanie is the one adult Jared trusts to confide in and Stephanie has always been able to communicate with Jared in ways he understands, and the mutual respect is genuine.

The next home game stretch wasn’t until July 14, and we figured that would be Jared’s next opportunity to work, but Stephanie was hard at work behind the scenes preparing to jump in as Jared’s job coach for the holiday weekend. I’m fairly certain Stephanie had already put in a 40-hour week at her actual job, so this was way above and beyond the call of duty and her job description and something she did not have to volunteer to do. The Legends Ballpark is a long drive and very costly with gas prices. Stephanie also deserves lots of kudos for taking on this job coaching, knowing she would be outside in the excessive heat for the entire shift.

I felt it necessary to find out Stephanie’s boss’ name to let you know what a valuable and dedicated and kind employee you have in Stephanie. This unbelievably selfless act came straight from the heart and touched us in ways she will never know. It taught Jared valuable life lessons he can remember back to forever. It made Jared feel valued and important at a time he needed it most. It made Jared feel mature since Stephanie was texting updates to him.

We hope you take the time to let Stephanie know how appreciative the Brehaney family is that she stepped up like she did. It meant the world to Jared. This job opportunity with the Monarch's has given Jared a whole new outlook on life, a purpose, a responsibility that he is taking seriously, a newfound confidence, and a reason to feel very important and proud of himself, and a job in a field perfect for Jared because he loves sports, plays many and is very athletic, and even gifted in some sports. So, Stephanie did way more than simply volunteer her time, gasoline, and energy so Jared could work his hours. She is the reason he is no longer depressed, has a reason to go on and be happy, realizes people besides his parents care about him, and that he is valuable and valued. Please honor your employee and don't let this good one get away. She is a true gem in a world filled with a lot of rocks. (Dee Brealey, Jared's Mom)

East Region VR Success Stories:

Success Story #1: I am a blind individual and I started working with Vocation Rehabilitation (VR) when I was in high school. The individuals at VR worked alongside my team of teachers and staff while plans were made and put into place for the transition after high school. I planned to attend Wichita State University in Wichita, KS. After graduating high school and before starting at WSU, I was provided an Assistive Technology consultation to determine what technology would be necessary for my success in college. I was provided Assistive Technology devices that would allow me to access materials, complete assignments, and to help navigate my environment. I was also provided Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services to help me navigate the WSU campus by learning routes to and from classes. O&M was necessary because I was prepared to travel in my new environment when college started. I am now attending WSU Tech in Wichita, KS. When I decided to change colleges, VR provided me O&M services again for my new campus environment. I am currently working toward my degree in Information Technology with an emphasis in Cybersecurity. My plan for employment after college is to obtain a job in the field of Information Technology. Vocation Rehabilitation has helped with the fees for college tuition and books. All of the services that VR have provided helped prepare me for the transition between high school. These services will continue to be a tremendous support throughout college until I obtain my goal of being gainfully employed in the field of IT.

Success Story #2: I've truthfully had such a wonderful experience with the VR Program, and I'd hate to think where I'd be right now if I hadn't been accepted into it. I was urged to apply by a relative and at the time I just assumed the program would throw me into any available job in the area and call it a day. What I found was a counselor who wanted to know my interests and aspirations; someone who took the time to explain what the program was, how it worked, and what was expected of me. Instead of being pushed into a job I didn't care for, I was given the opportunity to finish my bachelor's degree in Psychology without any looming debt. My counselor cheered me on every step of the way and after I completed my degree, I was given another gift; the chance to go for my master's degree. In one more year, I will have my Masters of Rehabilitation and Clinical Counseling so that I can be a rehabilitation or clinical counselor and help others the way I was. I still struggle with my mental illness, but the anxiety and stress is so much less knowing that I'm connected with people and resources that don't just have the ability to help, but they genuinely want to help. Please make that first step and reach out, who knows, I could be the counselor ready to pay it forward!

East Region Pre-ETS Success Story:

Ash will be a Senior this coming school year and started with Pre-ETS in March of 2022. She chose to participate in our Workplace Readiness Training and Work Based Learning Experience services. Ash chose to participate in our Summer Paid Work Based Learning Experience that is new to Pre-ETS this summer. This experience is set up for students to help them obtain and maintain a job for up to 240 hours of work. Our goal is to provide students with a successful work experience, not only to put on a resume, but for the experience alone that working gives them. We work closely with our students and a provider who helps find placement for the student – and we always aim to stay within their area of interest if possible.



Ash is interested in working with Animals and has a long history of volunteering with the humane society, assisting a trainer there with dogs, and has fostered rabbits. We are close to securing a placement that will let Ash continue her work with animals! The process for participating in this experience can be lengthy due to the nature of it, it requires a lot of paperwork that not all students know how to do, and Ash has succeeded with being able to fill out the on-boarding paperwork mostly independently which is a huge undertaking. They have put in the work necessary to have a successful experience and their efforts are absolutely something to celebrate! We cannot wait to continue watching Ash grow and succeed in everything she puts her minds to. (Sara Andres, Pre-ETS Specialist)

West Region VR Success Story:

Consumer: Jessica Brockway
Position: Data Manager
Company: Kansas Department of Commerce
Wage: \$22.60 Hrs/Wk: 40

Jessica was referred to VRS by her therapist last spring because of her difficulty in retaining employment due to Narcolepsy and mental health diagnoses. She was looking for VR to assist her with “providing a different pathway” and to be her advocate. In the first couple of months, her mental health was quite unstable. She went through so many changes, including being kicked out by her family, and relocating to Manhattan to couch surf.



Restoration was required, and she pressed in and pushed forward towards stability.

Jessica is a smart, compassionate, ambitious, and personable young lady who is motivated to help others. She has her bachelor’s degree in Technology Management with a Business major and Pre-Pharmacy and Leadership Studies minors. She had worked as a Certified Pharmacy Technician, but this field was not proving to be accommodating of her need for flexible and understanding employment which could appreciate her unique strengths and needs. Additionally, she was looking for employment that capitalized on her desire to help others.

By July, she was feeling stable and ready to seek employment. She was an ideal client – active participation, prompt, responsive, responsible, persevering.

On October 13 she called me to let me know she was offered a job that she was so excited about! We took time to savor & celebrate this accomplishment, and then she began to work with her job placement specialist, Sheri Shultz, in setting up accommodations. She began November 1 and is doing so well that they are using her as a speaker at conferences.

Services/Comparable Benefits:

VRS helped Jessica with psychotherapy services, medication support services, an urgent doctor visit, bus passes, and customized placement services. Jessica had insurance while she was on unemployment, so most of her services were covered up to her deductible and her co-pays. Eventually her mental health was fully covered by insurance.

Partners:

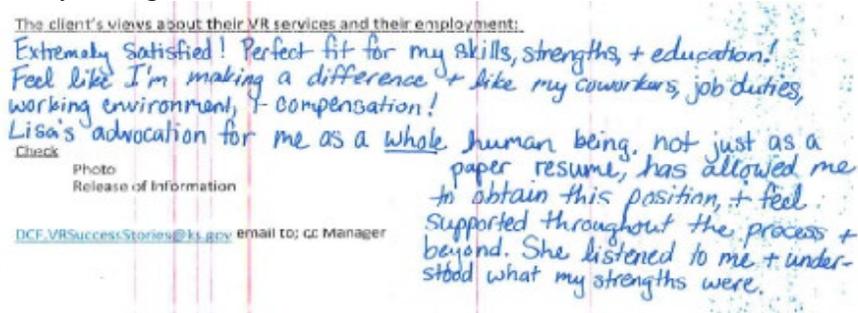
Sheri Shultz partnered with Jessica and VRS to provide customized placement and follow along services to help screen for employers who are known to work well with people with disabilities, to ensure accommodations were in place, and to assist Jessica with self-advocacy as needed.

Courser Lapo partnered with Jessica and VRS to provide mental health services to Jessica, and they are continuing their services privately.

Flint Hills ATA bus services partnered with Jessica and VRS to assist with transportation to her appointments and interviews.

The client's views about their VR services and their employment:

“Extremely satisfied! Perfect fit for my skills, strengths, & education! Feel like I’m making a difference & (I) like my co-workers, job duties, working environment, & compensation! Lisa’s advocacy for me as a whole human being, not just as a paper resume, has allowed me to obtain this position & feel supported throughout the process & beyond. She listened to me & understood what my strengths were.”



West Region Pre-ETS Success Story:

Referred in December 2017, when Pre-ETS was still a very new program, and staying with Pre-ETS while he attended post-secondary education at Dodge City Community College, Evan continued with Pre-ETS until he turned 22. Evan Wilds has shown growth, patience, and the ability to adjust to change that many people never achieve. During his time with Pre-ETS, Evan worked with five different Specialists and a manager. Through all the personnel changes, Evan stayed with the program and adjusted well each time. He stayed friendly and open, giving each person the chance to work with him in their way.



Evan participated in the Paid Work-Based Learning Experience and was a panel member for the west region’s Transition Talks presentation on post-secondary education. Evan completed his associate degree at Dodge City Community College and was accepted at Fort Hays State, where he’ll work toward a bachelor’s degree. Ultimately, Evan’s goal is to achieve a master’s degree in social work and work in an office where he can provide help and guidance to other people. (Angelia Frazier, Pre-ETS Specialist)

Wichita Region VR Success Stories:

Success Story #1: Harry came to VR in March 2020 just a few day before the shut down for the pandemic. He reported the he had worked in a workshop for about 3 years and he quit because he hoped to work in the community. Harry lived in a group home and because of the group homes response to the pandemic his case was put on hold a couple of times.



Harry was able to engage in a CBWA in March of 2021. This CBWA came to an end because Harry did not feel like he could complete the work tasks. Harry wanted to continue to move towards employment so I

asked him if he would be willing to try another work assessment with a different provider. I provided counseling and guidance regarding communicating with the JPS regarding areas that he might be having trouble with, meaning I encouraged him to ask for help instead of giving up. I also explained that I would provide job coaching for the CBWA if needed to help Harry learn work tasks. Harry chose to work with a new provider for this next CBWA. He was able to complete his second CBWA in July of 2021.

In November Harry was offered a job as a courtesy clerk at Dillons. He was not able to start the job as scheduled as someone in his group home tested positive for Covid. His new employer was willing to accommodate him and he was able to start 12/3/2021.

When I spoke to Harry about how he felt that VR helped his situation he stated “it was good, it helped me get a job.” He also reported that he was moving out of his group home into an apartment. He acknowledged that moving into an apartment was also made possible because he

has been able to save some money with his new job. He explained that he really liked his job and the people that he works with.

Harry's start was slow with many stops and starts because of the pandemic. He was patient with the process however he continued towards obtaining his goal and he was able to reach his employment goal.

Success Story #2: Chloe has been with VR since February of 2020 and completed the program Project Search and graduated from Dunlap at Chisholm Life Skills in May of 2021. Chloe completed her Project Search program at Via Christi St. Theresa and was able to work in different areas within the hospital. Some of these areas include: Sterile Processing, working in the kitchen, and using the xenex machine that disinfects rooms after they have been used. After completing Project Search and graduating from high school, Chloe started working with Starkey for job search services. Chloe obtained employment working at Sodexo in Wesley Medical Center where she is part of the Kitchen Utility Staff. Chloe's supervisor reported that Chloe was reliable, works hard, works well with others, and is a great addition to their team. Chloe reported that working makes her feel good, makes her proud of herself, and that her favorite part of her job is getting to know people and making new friends. Chloe's mom/guardian reported that Chloe really enjoys going out and working in the community because she always comes home happy from work. As I continue to work with the students throughout Project Search and after, I always enjoy watching them grow and am proud of the hard work they do.



Wichita Region Pre-ETS Success Story:

Alexis Backer's first service was the virtual Empower Me Workshop. A few months after she attended, I received an email from the workshop's hosts - Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy- asking for assistance in tracking the student down. They wanted to recruit her for the Kansas Youth Leadership Forum summer opportunity! That day, I text Alexis and called her mom and reached out to her teachers. I sent flyers, application forms, deadline info and more to keep all informed. After talking to mom and student about it, all were on board! Alexis believed that it would be a cool opportunity and wanted to take advantage of whatever she could. Alexis had to complete an application, collect references, go through an interview process, and wait several months to determine whether she was accepted to participate in the forum. During this time, she worked with Pre-ETS on prepping for interviews, identifying strengths and weaknesses, learning about patience, and accomplishing other cool things. During her time of waiting to hear back from KYEA, Alexis graduated from Heights High and was accepted into a 18-21 transition school, for the fall. Alexis also started the process for the Summer Paid Work Based Learning



Experience. She went through a job prep course with PYXIS, completed onboarding employment paperwork for the first time and started her dream paid work-based experience at a local bakery – La Galette. With all this going on, Alexis received word that she was accepted as a 2022 KSYLF participant! Over the summer, she will attend a 5 day, all expenses paid camp at Washburn University where she will engage youth with disabilities across the state and further develop her leadership skills.

Things have been moving very quickly for Alexis over the past few months. Alexis acknowledges that she's a bit anxious about it all but is very happy about the outcomes. Alexis shared that the forum opportunity will be the first time she's been away from her mom for so long in 14 years! She's very proud of herself and is looking forward to the experience at the bakery and learning new things through the forum.

Alexis began working with Pre-ETS at the beginning of the 2021-2022 school year. Her plan currently consists of self-advocacy, workplace readiness, counseling on post-secondary education options and work-based learning. Alexis is slated to continue her services with Pre-ETS while attending Chisholm Life Skills Center, next year. (Veronica Kelly, Pre-ETS Specialist)



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