

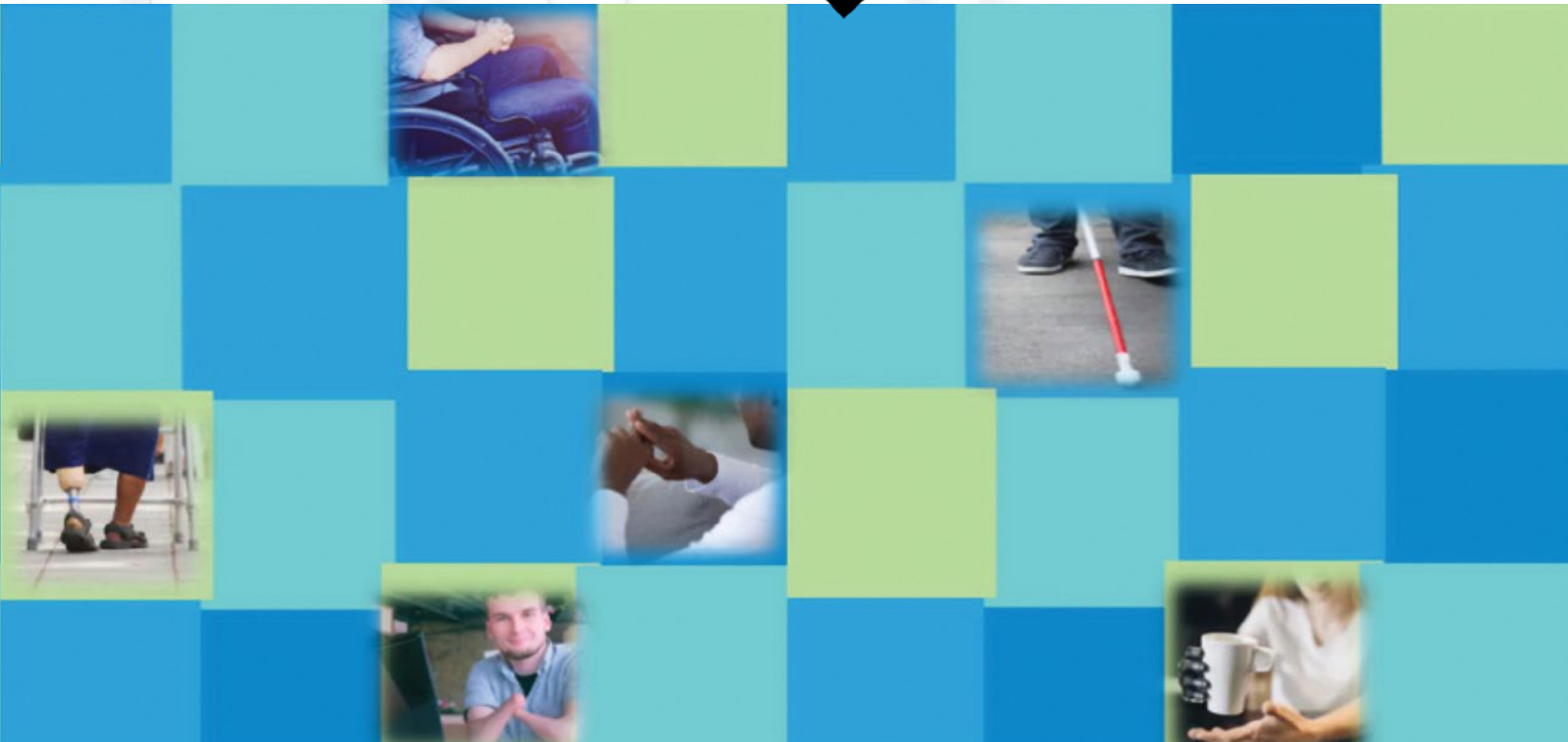


FFY 2022

ANNUAL REPORT



Indiana
VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION
Empowering People. Changing Lives.



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GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

Dear Hoosiers,

As 2022 ends, I would like to take a moment to reflect on the work the Indiana Commission on Rehabilitation Services has done for the year. The commission has worked with multiple state agencies including the Management Performance Hub to create a dashboard for Indiana's progress in implementing and executing the Employment First plan which was adopted and finalized in September 2020.

Vocational Rehabilitation has worked with leaders of the disability community such as the Work to Include coalition to define what barriers continue to prevent those with disabilities who want to work the opportunity to do so. VR also continues to navigate the challenges that have come from a public health crisis which still impacts many in the disability community.

The commission continues to reflect the larger community by seeking ways to ensure that all Hoosier voices are represented. Our recruitment committee has also ensured there are no barriers to having members of the community feel they can express an interest and apply to become a member of the commission.

With 2023 fast approaching, I look forward to once again celebrating the hard work of the VR staff. I know from my time on the commission and as the chair of the awards committee, that we have many talented and dedicated people working across the state in many roles throughout VR. I also look to continue to find ways for Indiana to move from Order of Selection, so all eligible Hoosiers can receive VR services in a timely manner.

As you look towards 2023, I invite you to please reach out with input about how to continue to improve vocational rehabilitation services in Indiana. Our commission meetings are open to the public and we take public comments at each meeting. Comments, concerns, suggestions or questions may also be sent to the commission via email at VRCommission.VR@fssa.in.gov. If you are interested in becoming a member of the commission, please fill out an application on [our website](#).

Sincerely,



Michelle Oja
Chair, Indiana Commission on Rehabilitation Services

MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR



During 2022, we completed an updated Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. The CSNA development process included distribution and analysis of a survey to identify barriers to employment and VR program areas of improvement. Nearly 2,000 individuals responded to the survey (a 44% increase from the prior survey) with approximately 30% of the respondents identifying as individuals with disabilities (compared to 9.2% of prior survey respondents). VR performance and service data for the past three years was also analyzed to identify potential gaps. Additionally, feedback from staff, the Commission on Rehabilitation Services and stakeholders was also collected.

The resulting CSNA outlines five overarching priority areas for the VR program for the next three years:

- ◆ Improving employment outcomes by implementing strategies to raise expectations, providing increased opportunities for work experience, revisiting employer engagement strategies, identifying and implementing key strategies to improve the quality of outcomes and providing more robust benefits and work incentives counseling.
- ◆ Addressing employment services capacity.
- ◆ Increased collaboration, including revisiting practices in transition school to work and collaboration with local schools; and improving collaboration with Indiana Workforce programs.
- ◆ Improving service access and service effectiveness to underserved or unserved populations through diversity, equity, inclusion and accessibility initiatives that promote inclusive service delivery and implementing strategies to improve the effectiveness of services to specific populations, e.g., individuals with mental health diagnosis.
- ◆ Continued progress with serving more individuals through regular releases from the order of selection waitlist, while sustaining VR staff capacity.

The full CSNA can be viewed on [the VR website](#).

The Indiana VR program saw improved performance this year compared to the prior year, in four of five federal common performance measures, including employment rate both second and fourth quarter after

exit, median earnings and credential attainment rate. Performance on the fifth element, measurable skill gains, closely mirrored previous year performance, dropping by just .02 percentage points. More details about program performance can be viewed in the Additional Program Highlights section of this report.

We ended federal fiscal year 2022 with the exciting news that the Indiana VR program was awarded a \$13.9 million grant to support individuals working in or contemplating subminimum wage employment to transition to competitive integrated employment. This five-year project begins with one year of planning, which will include recruiting and onboarding project staff, executing contracts with key partners, designing a supported employment fidelity tool and developing and implementing training to project pilot sites and other stakeholders. This model demonstration project, called Supported Employment +, will be piloted across four providers with seven subminimum wage employment sites and will include several key components:

- ◆ Fidelity of implementation of the supported employment process, plus:
- ◆ Use of peer supports;
- ◆ Expanded benefits information counseling;
- ◆ Family education and awareness training and mentoring;
- ◆ Training, technical assistance and coaching to build local capacity of case managers, Vocational Rehabilitation, providers, schools, family members and others, and;
- ◆ An integrated resource team approach to wraparound services tailored to the job seeker's unique needs.

As has become tradition over the past several years, we are honored to once again feature individuals who achieved employment success in this year's annual report. Thank you to Alex, Noah, DeShawn and Laurie for helping to articulate the importance of employment for all, including those with disabilities, by sharing some of your experiences. Thank you also to our staff, leadership, stakeholders and members of the commission on rehabilitation services for your continued partnership. We have a lot to look forward to and to keep us busy in 2023!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Theresa" followed by a stylized monogram or initials.

Theresa Koleszar, MS, CRC
Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

BRS VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services includes Blind and Visually Impaired Services, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, Centers for Independent Living and Vocational Rehabilitation.

BRS VISION STATEMENT

All Hoosiers are encouraged and empowered to pursue opportunities that promote their independence.

VR VISION STATEMENT

To partner with individuals with disabilities to explore career pathways to achieve their employment success.

VALUES STATEMENT

VR VALUES:

1. **Quality:** To support an effective, skilled and engaged team as the most valuable asset in achieving person-centered services that produce quality outcomes.
2. **Purposeful:** To engage in thoughtful, intentional actions that drive progress toward each individual's employment success.
3. **Empowerment:** To entrust staff to think and act creatively, foster hope and empower individuals to take ownership of their path to employment success.
4. **Strengths-based:** To focus on each individual's unique abilities and interest as the foundation for employment success.
5. **Inclusion:** To uphold the belief that each individual's contributions have value and, with access to a broad range of opportunities and appropriate supports, all Hoosiers can achieve employment success.



In the Spotlight

Each year, the annual report spotlights outstanding individuals who were able to achieve their employment goals with the assistance of VR and other local partners. A special thanks to Alex Gilland, Noah Upchurch, DeShawn Coleman and Laurie Hayn.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: ALEXANDER (ALEX) GILLAND



Alex Gilland feels grateful to be able to apply his own lived experiences and what he has learned from Vocational Rehabilitation so that he can help his own participants achieve employment success. Alex first came to VR back in 2007 with a diagnosis of congenital blindness and wanted VR assistance with obtaining employment. While a VR participant, Alex was invited by his VR counselor, Jamie Walter, to a regional quarterly VR counselor meeting to share his experiences. His session at the meeting was a highlight for many. Since then, VR helped Alex earn a bachelor's degree in telecommunications from Ball State University. He went on to graduate school for a semester but decided to return home and look for employment. Jamie suggested VR counselor as a potential opportunity, but at the time Alex was hesitant.

VR welcomed Alex as an intern from September through November of 2020 through the Gregory S. Fehribach Center at Eskenazi Health. Unfortunately, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Alex had to complete this internship virtually. He completed online training modules and learned as much as he could during this time. Fortunately, VR was able to bring Alex back for a second internship for two months in 2021, this time at the Clarksville VR office, Area 25. After getting to know more about the VR counselor role and experiencing it firsthand, Alex decided he wanted to pursue employment as a rehabilitation counselor. Alex was officially hired as a VR counselor in May 2021 and relocated to Clarksville as a result. He recently transitioned to serve as a VR counselor for the Blind and Visually impaired with Clarksville Area 26. "Alex was always such a pleasure to work with," Jamie said.

Alex has worked very hard to learn how to navigate the Aware case management system with JAWS, a screen-reading software. His adaptability has allowed him to serve as a resource for others using JAWS, as well. Ima Abbott, Area 25 Supervisor who worked with Alex during his second internship and eventually hired him was impressed. “Alex is very determined and resilient. He isn’t afraid to put himself out there and face challenges whatever they may be. He has certainly become a member of the Clarksville VR family. VR is his first job, and he has grown so much since he has been with us,” Ima said.

Alex’s current supervisor, Denise Loaring, commented that Alex has been working on how to provide the best services possible and getting necessary information in place, and is eager to participate in trainings that will enhance his knowledge and make him a better VR counselor. Denise also spoke to Alex’s determination. “He has been resilient in times when technology has not been his friend but does not seem to get overly frustrated. Alex continues to teach me so much and is willing to listen to my questions. He has a passion to serve the participants especially those who have visual impairments. We are fortunate to have Alex in our office and as a VR counselor.”

There is no doubt that Alex will continue to grow professionally with VR. His drive and determination set a great example for the participants he serves.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: NOAH UPCHURCH



Noah was diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder and specific learning disabilities just after finishing elementary school. In early childhood, he was diagnosed with attention deficit disorder due to difficulties in school. As is typical with an ASD diagnosis, nothing with Noah was typical. Each individual with ASD exhibits different symptoms. Noah was always very verbal. “My Mom said I came out of the womb talking.” He also enjoyed writing and found himself writing fictional short stories. He got along with everyone at school but wasn’t particularly social. Noah recounts that as a child, he really didn’t want to play with kids his own age. “Kids in my neighborhood would come over and ask my parents if I could come out and play,

and I would be around the corner signaling ‘no’ to my parents,” Noah said with a chuckle. Noah always preferred the company of adults. “My parents say I am an old soul.”

During the first week of the seventh grade, Noah found himself transitioning from a single classroom in elementary school to switching classes and trying to work a locker in middle school. Before the second week was out, Noah and his parents were meeting with the school’s guidance counselor. Noah was doing anything to avoid going to class. “It was a real struggle,” his mother said, recalling an instance where she was trying to get him on the school bus while he was kicking and screaming. The family decided to remove Noah from a brick-and-mortar school and enroll him in a virtual public school, Indiana Connections Academy. “They were very accommodating,” said Noah’s mother. “We asked about psycho-educational testing and they were completely on board.” The assessments did indicate specific learning disabilities and a high likelihood of the presence of an ASD. The school put Noah on an Individualized Education Plan and provided relevant and needed accommodations.

As high school progressed, Noah became more withdrawn, even to the point of not wanting to leave his home. He also developed obsessive-compulsive behaviors which significantly impacted his daily functioning. “At that point, we weren’t able to conceive of Noah being able to work,” his parents shared.

Noah's family physician prescribed medication that helped with some of these symptoms, but the prospect of him being able to live a productive life seemed almost impossible. Noah's father scheduled an intake appointment with Vocational Rehabilitation for Noah, and after he was made eligible, discussed the possibility of Noah attending the Erskine Green Training Institute's front desk hotel program. "My mom is a travel agent, and has worked for Marriott before, so I thought it sounded like a good idea." Noah was hesitant to move out of his comfort zone but trusted his parents to do what is best for him.

"Noah came out of his shell when he started at EGTI," said his mother. "He was like a completely different person!" Noah excelled while at EGTI, not only learning valuable job skills, but also gaining independence and community living skills. The hardest hurdle for Noah was passing the public transportation test. "I kept failing and just wanted to give up." But Daniel, one of Noah's instructors, encouraged Noah to continue. "If you don't try again, you will always wonder if you could have succeeded," Noah recalls Daniel saying to him. On the third attempt, Noah succeeded his public transportation test. His confidence soared.

Noah was asked to speak at his graduation from EGTI. In his speech, he shared how EGTI had impacted him so profoundly. It instilled within him a passion for work. The first application Noah submitted for employment garnered him an interview the next day, where he was hired on the spot. Nearly three years later, Noah is still working at that same hotel, the Renaissance Indianapolis North in Carmel, where he now serves as night auditor/night manager on duty. He has done so well on the job, earning himself raises and a promotion.

Recently, Noah was invited to attend the Self-Advocates of Indiana leadership training and has since joined the SAI and the SAI Speakers bureau. Noah recently spoke on a panel of EGTI graduates in front of a large Indiana employer about hiring individuals with disabilities. "I think I've found my passion now," Noah said. "I want to work with people with disabilities. I want to advocate for them." True success for Noah is not just a paycheck, but a calling to help others with disabilities achieve the same good life he has gained. "It's what I want to do," he said.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: DESHAWN COLEMON



DeShawn Colemon began a new chapter in his life in September when he was hired by the Public Consulting Group as an apprentice business analyst. Stephanie Whelchel, Supervisor for the Marion VR office, was DeShawn's VR counselor. DeShawn came to VR in April 2017 for assistance with career preparation. VR assisted DeShawn with attending Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, where he studied organizational leadership, securing his bachelor's degree in May 2021. "DeShawn was the first to graduate from college in his family," said Stephanie. "He is the oldest of his siblings, and really wanted to be a role model for them." Prior to obtaining his position with PCG, DeShawn worked for FedEx, Apple and Verizon, but was not completely fulfilled. "I think he was settling," said Stephanie. "He had so much more potential."

When Stephanie learned of the opening with PCG, she immediately thought of DeShawn and discussed the opportunity with him. "I was excited when they offered him the position." DeShawn is handling a lot of the communications for PCG's Indiana Vocational Rehabilitation Training and Technical Assistance contract, communications with VR Employment Services providers and administrative support for training events and setting those up. He is also maintaining certain PCG websites. Faith Thomas, DeShawn's supervisor at PCG, said that "he has really worked effectively with Stephanie to get the assistance he has needed to be effective in this position." She also adds that DeShawn is eager to learn, very willing to reach out for help, "which is a really good thing," she said.

Stephanie describes DeShawn as “a people-person, very caring, with a strong work ethic.” She adds that he has a drive to succeed at whatever he does. “He was very resourceful finding his own way, advocating for himself.” Stephanie mentioned one instance where there was a mix up about DeShawn’s meal plan at IUPUI. He was going without a meal plan for quite some time, when fortunately, she was able to intervene and get the meal plan mix-up resolved. “He has overcome a lot of adversity to achieve what he has achieved.”

When asked about his VR experience, DeShawn said, “VR wasn’t a program for me. It was authentic.” He said that his experience with VR was all about his relationship to Stephanie as his counselor. “Stephanie is family to me. Someone I could go to with any question and it be solved effortlessly,” he said. He recalled a story about his case being transferred to a different counselor when Stephanie was being promoted to the VR office Supervisor. “Absolutely not. Stephanie is the only option for me.” DeShawn said. Stephanie said that DeShawn called her and asked if he could remain working with her. Of course, she was more than happy to keep that relationship with DeShawn. “I think of him like family, too,” she said.

IN THE SPOTLIGHT: LAURIE HAYN



Laurie Hayn came to VR after she was injured by a combine in a farming accident that resulted in the loss of her arm and leg, inhibiting her abilities to perform her responsibilities on the family farm. She came to VR with a goal of wanting to return to performing her previous work. What Laurie endured did not inhibit her tenacious spirit. When I first met Laurie, it was evident that her resiliency would aid in her success to overcome any obstacle she faced.

We took it one step at a time and utilized vocational guidance to assist with identifying exactly what her responsibilities on the farm were and what tasks she had challenges with since the accident, and then we identified ways to overcome those challenges, to enable her

to maintain the operations of her family farm. We started with personal tasks such as her getting herself ready for work, and then examined technology that might be helpful, and then focused on obtaining and modifying farm equipment she would need to perform her job duties.

We completed an AT evaluation, to assist Laurie with maintaining the operational needs of the farm from bookkeeping, farm inventory, paying bills, ordering supplies, grain, chemicals, fertilizer, etc., and to better equip her with supportive technology to communicate with her family and others who are working in the fields or in other outbuildings and barns, and performing email communications to order and track supplies.

VR completed a seating and positioning evaluation to identify minor adjustments to make her wheelchair more user friendly for her needs and to improve her mobility. We completed a home modification evaluation, and made her home more accessible, allowing her to get up in the morning and get ready for work safely and independently. Her home modifications included adding a stair lift, garage lift, converting a small cabinet in the kitchen to provide a prep area for cooking, and offsetting hinges on the doors throughout her house to allow more space to move through door openings while utilizing her wheelchair. Carpet was removed throughout the house, so she could easily roll through the house in her wheelchair without overextending the use of her head, neck and shoulder. A floor-to-ceiling pole was installed at the head of her bed with an attached swing arm to assist her with getting in and out of bed.

Bathroom modifications were also made so she could shower safely and access the sink and cabinets. I will forever remember the call I received from Laurie after she took her first independent shower in her new bathroom. She cried tears of joy and said it was the first time she felt safe taking a shower since before the accident.

We also conducted a farm modification through AgrAbility. VR purchased a Kubota so Laurie could drive to and through the fields to plant, harvest and work. Laurie is now able to safely access the tool shed and the farm from her home during all kinds of weather. VR installed a back-up camera to limit the overextended use of her head and neck while driving the Kubota.

Laurie’s VR case was complex and presented unique challenges. We had to take many steps to find out what was necessary for her to accomplish her farming responsibilities, and this required a lot of referrals, evaluations, quotes and updates to plans and tons of patience. AgrAbility created [a video](#) that features Laurie and VR employee Bobbie Milliken. AgrAbility continues to be a valued partner of VR and we appreciate their expertise in helping individuals like Laurie to continue to successfully work.



Laurie’s fortitude has assisted her with overcoming the many life altering challenges she’s experienced and will allow her to continue to conquer anything she sets her mind to. This is evident in the recent vacation pictures Laurie shared, conquering new mountains!

“Voc Rehab has been such a help to me. I feel you all have been part of my journey and triumphs!” Laurie said.



RECOGNIZING MODEL EMPLOYERS IN INDIANA

Over the years VR leadership, the Business & Community Engagement team and local offices have worked with employers who consistently do an exceptional job employing and retaining persons with disabilities. Very often, they are asked to speak at national conferences on this topic and this year, they presented to our own Commission on Rehabilitation Services. Both Conner Prairie and Toyota are always willing to share specific information on how they built and are growing their disability hiring programs and why they think what they are doing works. The information they share is valuable for other employers interested in creating their own disability hiring initiatives. We appreciate the long-term partnership with these model employers and recognize them as leaders in including qualified individuals with disabilities as part of their workforce.

TOYOTA (TMMI), PRINCETON

Ted Brown, Vice President of Administration

Years ago, the VR team met with Ted and his team as he began a project aimed at hiring people with disabilities at the Toyota manufacturing plant in Princeton. Today, through the continued partnership with VR and the community rehabilitation provider in the area, The Arc Southwest Indiana, the hiring program continues to expand into different areas of the facility. One key takeaway from when Ted shares his experience is a story he tells about modifying a work process for an individual with a disability that eventually was picked up by the entire team because it saved exceptional time for everyone who used the modification on the line. Innovation at its best! “At Toyota, it’s not an accommodation, it’s kaizen. It’s continuously improving the processes so everyone can be successful,” says Ted.

“Toyota Indiana, and specifically Ted, are champions in opening the doors for employment of individuals with disabilities. They are setting the bar high and people are succeeding. People’s lives are better because of the relationship between Toyota Motor Manufacturing of Indiana and The Arc Southwest Indiana.” —*Stan Keepes, Executive Director The Arc Southwest Indiana*

CONNER PRAIRIE, INDIANAPOLIS

Shelby Slowik, Associate Vice President of Human Resources

Conner Prairie, Indiana's living history museum in Fishers, works hard to ensure their dedicated team of professionals working at the museum reflect the diversity of the communities they serve. Not only do they work to ensure that everyone in the community can access the museum, but the organization also works just as hard to ensure that their employees are working in a truly inclusive organization. Shelby Slowik says, "Conner Prairie has partnered with local community disability support providers and the local high school over the years to continue to recruit employees with differing abilities." She reminded us that job descriptions can be changed to better align with the specific value and potential that each individual can bring to Connor Prairie, an approach that can better meet the needs of both the employee and employer. "The goal is not to simplify the job description, but instead clearly define specific roles that support the strengths of each unique individual as they perform their job," Shelby said.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

Pre-Employment Transition Services are available to students with disabilities age 14 through age 22 who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR. Pre-ETS activities include job exploration counseling; work-based learning experiences, counseling on enrollment in post-secondary training opportunities, workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living, and instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring.

Pre-ETS are available in all 92 counties statewide. An updated listing of providers, counties and schools can be found on the Indiana Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services Pre-ETS [website](#).

Robust partnerships with providers, schools, VR offices, businesses and other stakeholders are essential for ensuring Pre-ETS students receive the best possible assistance. Our youth counselors statewide are vital in helping to build and maintain those partnerships. For example, Christy Skie, a youth counselor from Evansville, who covers multiple counties in the southern part of the state, assisted a local provider in finding a work-based learning opportunity for a student, Koen Rauls, who was interested in working at a radio station. She reached out to Kat Mykals at WGBF-FM in Evansville and arranged a tour. Koen was also able to sit in on a live show and assist with an on-air giveaway!



Other partnerships include:

Easterseals Crossroads partnering with Community Hospital South for the Community Hospital Internship Program for Students program, an innovative, embedded Pre-ETS program at the hospital.

BRS partnering with DWD on pre-ETS funding for Jobs for America's Graduates. This allows more students with disabilities to enroll in JAG and increase opportunities for work-based learning activities and self-advocacy training for JAG students.

Christy connecting a student who was interested in flight school to Ryan Hobby, a pilot with Southwest Airlines. They met at Tri-State Aero in Evansville, where the student was able to do a tour, learn about flight classes, conduct an informational interview and take a plane flight. That student is now enrolled at Ivy Tech as well as taking flight classes.

BRS partnering with the Department of Education and Pre-ETS providers on making Pre-ETS part of the required graduation pathways for students.

LaToya Allen, a youth counselor who works in northern Indiana, teaming with her Pre-ETS providers and local businesses to build a strong summer program which included farm to table cooking classes, running a coffee cart and doing tours of McMillen Health and GiGi's Genesis Health Bar.

Additionally, the use of stipends to pay Pre-ETS students in work-based learning activities expanded greatly during the summer of 2022. This assisted BRS to reach their 15% required federal spend on Pre-ETS and, more importantly, encouraged more students with disabilities to participate in work-based learning activities.

BUSINESS AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

The Business and Community Engagement team works to increase awareness and share resources around the VR program to employers and stakeholders. Some of the resources provided include disability awareness and best practices for creating a more inclusive workplace environment when recruiting, hiring and retaining individuals with disabilities.

This year's National Disability Employment Awareness campaign held in October speaks to the economic conditions with their slogan of "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion." Individuals with disabilities represent a large pool of qualified candidates with many skills and abilities that employers are seeking.

KEY ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- ◆ Coordinating and facilitating employer panels at conferences has been a great way to share successful and innovative ideas around disability employment to large numbers of people from around the state. This year, Conner Prairie, Toyota and our own VR leadership shared experiences on successful hiring and retention of employees with disabilities.
- ◆ The social media accounts for VR continue to be a valuable tool to share information on how to access VR Services, general disability awareness and current news around employment of persons with disabilities.
- ◆ The Business and Community Engagement team provides ongoing administrative support for the Indiana Commission on Rehabilitation Services and 1102 Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities Task Force Force.

See the employer spotlight for more information about these model employers.

EMPLOYMENT FIRST

In September 2020, the Commission on Rehabilitation Services members approved Indiana's Employment First plan.

In May 2021, a convening of state agencies took place where agencies were informed of the required data collection and implementation of Employment First within their agencies to be able to report out on progress toward moving the plan forward.

The commission's Employment First committee has met throughout the year to determine how best to share information with the public on the various information collected by state agencies. This helped determine what steps need to be taken; ensuring competitive, integrated employment is the first and preferred option regardless of level of disability. Several barriers and challenges in gathering the data elements outlined in the Employment First plan have been encountered, however the committee has partnered with Indiana Management Performance Hub to support the effort. MPH is working to create a dashboard for Employment First, which is anticipated to be available in early 2023. Once the dashboard is up and running, the commission and the public will be able to see where efforts need to be made to ensure Employment First is the first thought for all individuals with disabilities moving forward.

The Employment First chair and BRS director also initiated ongoing dialogue with the Office of the Chief Equity, Inclusion and Opportunity Officer to share information about Employment First efforts. Support from this team has been appreciated as we work to ensure that employment of individuals with disabilities is integrated into diversity and inclusion hiring efforts.

At the state level, several important actions were implemented in 2022 to support Employment First efforts. The Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services, the division that houses BRS, awarded funding to numerous organizations to support transition from subminimum wage to competitive integrated employment. Additionally, BRS received a large grant to support individuals in moving from subminimum wage to competitive integrated employment. DDRS also joined the State Employment Leadership Network, a membership-based network of state intellectual and developmental disability agencies committed to making changes in their service systems to improve integrated employment outcomes. BRS also continued its partnership with the Indiana Division of Mental Health and Addiction to implement Individual Placement and Support, an evidence-based employment model for individuals with mental health conditions at two pilot sites.

ADDITIONAL HIGHLIGHTS

During 2022, Indiana VR negotiated performance levels for federal common performance indicators for the next two years. The table below reflects performance during performance year 2021, which ended June 30, 2022. The table also outlines performance levels for PY22 and PY23. PY21 performance exceeded established PY22 levels in four out of five areas.

Indicator	PY21 achievement	PY22 negotiated level	PY23 negotiated level
Employment rate (second quarter after exit)	56%	51.3%	53.3%
Employment rate (fourth quarter after exit)	51%	48.3%	50.3%
Median earnings (second quarter after exit)	\$3,447.55	\$3,431	\$3,534
Credential attainment rate	34.5%	20.0%	21.0%
Measurable skill gains	63.5%	63.8%	64.8%

- ◆ The total number of VR participants exiting with employment increased by 30% from the prior performance year, from 1,200 to 1,570.
- ◆ Indiana VR has released more than 2,000 individuals from the order of selection waitlist and plans to continue with regular releases in 2023.
- ◆ Indiana VR leadership staff were selected to present at both the 2022 spring and fall Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation national conferences, as well as two pre-conference sessions.
- ◆ VR staff exceeded federal timeliness standards for the determination of eligibility and development of service plans at 94%.
- ◆ VR staff were selected to serve on national workgroups and committees. BRS director Theresa Koleszar was invited to co-chair CSAVR's Performance and Accountability Committee. Additionally, Theresa is one of six state VR agency directors selected to serve on the Rehabilitation Services Administration Monitoring Protocol workgroup. Steve Upchurch, VR training director, was invited to participate on the Advisory Council for the Center for Innovative Training in VR through The George Washington University Center for Rehabilitation Counseling Research and Education in conjunction with San Diego State University and CSAVR. Steve also serves on the Career Pathways Learning Community Toolkit project with the VRTAC-QE in conjunction with the University of Wisconsin-Stout, and as the Indiana VR representative on the CSAVR Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Accessibility Professional Network.
- ◆ Indiana was awarded a \$13.9M grant to support a five-year model demonstration project to support the transition of individuals from subminimum wage employment to competitive integrated employment.

COMMISSION OUTREACH



The Commission on Rehabilitation Services recognizes the importance of outreach activities throughout the state, which includes networking with governor-appointed boards, councils and commissions, as well as other agencies and organizations.

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services welcomes your opinion about how VR is meeting your needs and employment goals. The information collected will help the commission and VR to improve services and expand employment opportunities for all Hoosiers with disabilities.

Please contact us if you would like to:

- ◆ Learn more about the commission.
- ◆ Share your ideas.
- ◆ Attend a commission meeting.
- ◆ Be considered for appointment to the commission.

For more information, including how to join upcoming commission meetings, [check out the commission webpage](#).

COMMISSION MEMBERS

The Rehabilitation Act requires the state VR agency to establish a State Rehabilitation Council. Council members are appointed by the governor and serve no more than two consecutive full terms. No terms can exceed three years. Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services is comprised of the following individuals representing specific categories outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations Section 361.17. The following individuals served during federal fiscal year 2022.*

Greg Bedan, Indianapolis Mayor's Office

Brian Carnes, INARF

Jennifer Diaz, INSOURCE

Shawn Fulton, The Arc of Indiana

Melissa Keyes, Indiana Disability Rights

Theresa Koleszar, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

P.J. McGrew, Governor's Workforce Cabinet

Danie'l Mize, Self-Advocates of Indiana

Amber O'Haver, Indiana Statewide Independent Living Council

Michelle Oja, Department of Education

Richard Propes, Bureau of Developmental Disabilities Services

Mark Ruiz, Oak Partners, Inc.

Stacey Smith, Prairie Quest Consulting

David Spradley, National Alliance on Mental Illness

Willaine St. Pierre Sandy, Vocational Rehabilitation

Michael Thibideau, Invest Hamilton County

**There are several additional pending membership appointments.*

“WHY I SERVE ON THE COMMISSION”



As a state of Indiana employee with a disability, serving on the commission gives me the opportunity to tangibly support other Hoosiers with disabilities in pursuing the career pathway of their choice.

Richard Propes



In our culture, identity and employment are intertwined. The commission seeks to make employment, and the dignity of feeling useful, available to all Hoosiers. I am proud to be on the Commission.

David Spradley



I serve on the VR Commission because I believe work and employment help complete the whole person. When all of us are able to serve other people through employment and work it challenges us to be the best version of ourselves. By serving on the commission, I can impact policy and culture in our great state to help facilitate the expansion of employment for individuals with disabilities, which in turn promotes more opportunity for all members of our communities to grow and share with each other.

Marc Ruiz



Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services

About the commission

Appointed by the Governor, members of Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services are knowledgeable of and have concern for rehabilitation and disability issues. A majority of the members are people with disabilities.

Commission members represent the disability community in matters pertaining to the quality and effectiveness of Indiana's Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Serving in an advisory capacity, the commission provides oversight of VR programs, policies and procedures by:

- ◆ Partnering with VR to develop goals and priorities.
- ◆ Making recommendations on program policies.
- ◆ Reviewing and providing comments on the state plan for VR.
- ◆ Collaborating with other governor-appointed councils.
- ◆ Increasing public awareness of disability issues such as employment, education and independent living in the community.
- ◆ Assisting VR staff in the administration of a consumer satisfaction survey.
- ◆ Monitoring and evaluating the VR program.
- ◆ Producing an annual report that addresses the effectiveness of VR services.



Get involved

- ◆ Attend commission meetings and share your views.
- ◆ Ask a member to contact you so that you can share your views.
- ◆ Tell a member that you would like to join the commission.
- ◆ Share information about the commission with others.

Commission meetings

The commission has at least four business meetings each year. We invite you to share your comments about VR services during the open forum which is scheduled during each meeting. If you would like information about the meeting dates, times and locations, please [contact us](#) or [visit our website](#).

You may also request that a commission member contact you. Your name and contact information will be forwarded to a commission member in your area upon your request.



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**VOCATIONAL
REHABILITATION**
Empowering People. Changing Lives.

Contact us

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**Division of Disability and
Rehabilitative Services**