

# VR

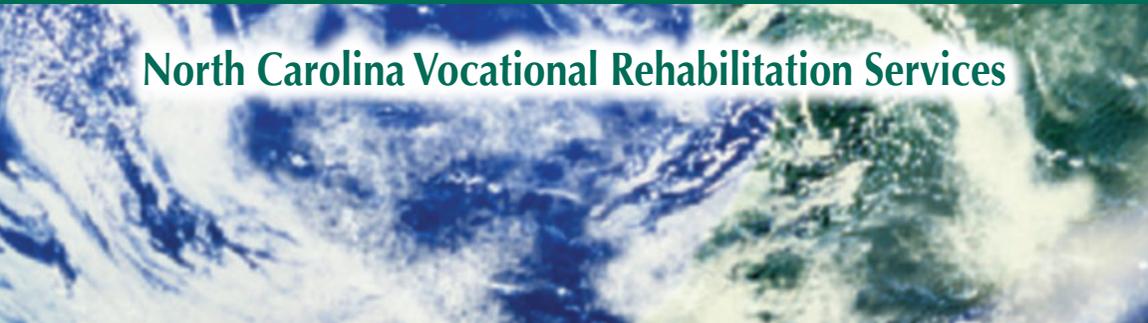


## Images of Success

A photograph of three people smiling. On the left is a woman with blonde hair wearing a light blue shirt and a necklace with a cross. In the center is a man with short dark hair wearing a blue and yellow striped polo shirt with a dark strap over his shoulder. On the right is a woman with dark hair wearing a black scarf and a light-colored top. They are all looking towards the camera against a background of a globe showing the Americas.

VR's Year in Review 2011-12

North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services



*Our cover photos are of VR consumers on the job – (l to r) Carrie Scott, marketing/programs coordinator at Covenant Case Management in Charlotte; Chris Tyson, training/documentation supervisor at Big Rock Sports in Hamlet; and Allison Butler, marketing assistant at Optimum Tax & Accounting Services in Greensboro.*



# VR

## **Images of Success**

VR's Year in Review 2011-12

## The Year by the Numbers

- VR assisted 6,758 North Carolinians in achieving successful employment outcomes.
- Independent living objectives were achieved by 1,782 Independent Living program participants.
- Assistive Technology provided 6,737 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations.
- Disability Determination closed 225,219 cases involving Social Security Disability, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid Disability benefits.

## VR in 2012: A Cost-Effective Path to Independence and Employment



**Elizabeth Bishop**  
**Acting Director**

**North Carolina Vocational  
Rehabilitation Services**

In federal fiscal year 2012, our division stayed true to a 92-year history of providing among the most cost-effective of any government services.

Through VR's employment services, 6,758 consumers either obtained employment or were able to stay on the job despite a disability. State to state, people for whom VR services lead to obtaining or maintaining jobs are able on average to "pay back" the cost of their services in two to four years through taxes on subsequent employment.

Last year, after receiving independent living services, 1,782 people with disabilities began to take a bigger part in the lives of their families and communities. Many of these individuals might otherwise have had to move into nursing homes with a potentially heavier dependence on public assistance.

The breadth of services our division provides to North Carolinians with disabilities is exemplified by two programs:

- Our N.C. Assistive Technology Program provides services statewide to children and adults who, because of disability or age, are having difficulties with activities of daily living. Services are provided in assistive technology centers and satellite offices, as well as in workplaces, homes, schools and communities. Assistive technology includes everything from: walkers for greater mobility, talking alarms and hand-held magnifiers to the higher-tech computer hardware and software, communication devices, and speech-recognition systems. Last year, the program provided 6,737 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations.
- Two years ago, the division committed to expanding supports for people who sought self-employment opportunities. We retained a self-employment program specialist, updated our small-business policies and conducted statewide staff training. To date, 23 small businesses have received state-level approval. Their goods and services include roof and window replacement, auto transport, photography, videography, lawn care, floor maintenance, life-coaching and hand-made handbags. While one start-up had to close due to illness, most continue to do well — and last year, four reached "successful outcome" status.

The number of our consumers' successful outcomes, as with general employment, tends to rise and fall with economic conditions. But last year, the news for VR consumers was much better than for the general population: From October 2011 to September 2012 – while the state's employment rate rose by one percentage point from 89.4 percent to 90.4 percent – the number of VR's employment outcomes rose by 7.2 percent, from 6,303 to 6,758.

These outcomes, our program's cost-effectiveness and our progress overall are attributable to a professional, committed staff across the state. It's also made possible by a range of VR's stakeholders: our consumers and their families, our partner agencies and policymakers, and our legislators and administrators at both state and federal levels. We're grateful to them all.



## Evaluation and Counseling

VR provides services to people with disabilities to assist them in getting or keeping a job. Rehabilitation begins with an assessment of the consumer's strengths, skills and experience. Jointly developed by the consumer and counselor, each individual's plan for employment is carefully monitored and, if needed, adjustments are made. Plans may include: diagnostic services; physical and mental restoration; assistive technology; transportation; modifications to vehicle, home, job and worksite; and others.

Among consumers who completed their rehabilitation plans in FFY 2012, VR provided:

- Assessment services to 11,902 individuals;
- Diagnosis and treatment of impairments to 7,096;
- Counseling and guidance to 3,881.

Categories of services offered beyond the assessment stage include: employment services, rehabilitation technology, training, and personal assistance services.



**Carrie Scott**  
Charlotte

## Benefits Counseling

In North Carolina, the federal Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach initiative operates under the name Making Employment a New Success (MEANS). Program specialists offer counseling to recipients of Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance to help them understand how going to work may affect their benefits payments. For recipients of traditional VR services, the counseling has helped remove disincentives to seek employment.

- VR's work incentives program specialists are available in all 100 counties of North Carolina.
- Benefits specialists have served more than 14,828 Social Security beneficiaries since the program's inception in 2000.

## Deaf/Hard of Hearing

VR provides services to individuals who are Deaf, hard-of-hearing, or late-deafened to assist them in preparing for, obtaining, or maintaining employment. Counselors work with consumers to help them make informed choices about their job goals and what, among a range of specialized services and equipment, is needed to help



1.4  
EXPLOSIVE  
B  
1

NON-FLAMMABLE GAS  
2

THIS SIDE UP  
HANDLE WITH CARE

1.4  
EXPLOSIVE  
G  
1

FLAMMABLE GAS  
2

THIS END UP

1.4  
EXPLOSIVE  
S  
1

POB 9  
POB 9

CHRIS  
TYSON

POT3140

meet those goals. Based in 12 of VR's local offices, specially trained counselors assist citizens with hearing loss across North Carolina. In FFY 2012, VR:

- Provided services to 2,653 consumers with hearing loss.
- Assisted 359 consumers with hearing loss achieve successful employment outcomes.
- Continued to equip local offices with advanced technology to improve consumers' access to services and their employment outcomes.

## School-to-Life Services

VR has partnered with local schools across the state to assist students in making a successful transition from their school life to jobs and careers. Services are designed to assist individuals with disabilities – physical, mental or learning-related – who require assistance to prepare for, locate, or maintain employment compatible with their interests, skills and potential. For eligible students, VR offers vocational guidance and assistance with training, job placement, and other services. Referrals may be made by a parent, teacher, social worker, school counselor or nurse, or an individual may refer himself or herself.

- In FFY 2012, VR served 17,147 youth, 22 and under, with disabilities.
- VR counselors provided services to 11,385 high school students in 356 high schools across the state.

## Employment Services

Getting or keeping a job is the main goal of the partnership between the consumer and VR. The process begins with evaluation of the consumer's interests, abilities and aptitudes for different kinds of jobs. The employment plan may include college or vocational training, on-the-job training, job coaching, or supported employment. VR staff often provide information on résumé preparation, interviewing, developing job leads, and assistance in locating a job. After employment, the VR counselor and consumer stay in contact to help make sure the job is a good match.



**Chris Tyson  
Hamlet**

- In FFY 2012, VR assisted 6,758 North Carolinians in achieving a successful employment outcome.



- Consumers' weekly earnings before receiving services averaged \$45. After employment, the average – reflecting a range of earning levels and full- and part-time jobs – increased to \$282.
- Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned a combined total of \$1.89 million per week.



**Allison Butler  
Greensboro**

## Services to Employers

Crucial to VR's mission are North Carolina's businesses who each year hire thousands of individuals served by VR. Because each of our referrals is screened, employers can feel more confident that they are a good prospect for their company, and they benefit from services like customized follow-up and on-the-job training that can help make sure the new employee remains a good match for the job. For more than 90 years, VR has been the state's premier resource on issues related to disabilities in the workplace.

- Screening, job-matching and training can reduce employers' recruitment time and costs.
- Employers can benefit from on-site consultations by professionals like our rehabilitation engineers who help ensure that the physical workplace is a good fit for the new employee.
- Employers can benefit from these services at no cost. They may also enjoy tax incentives for hiring a VR referral.

## Community Rehabilitation

VR is able to extend its services for people with disabilities through programmatic partnerships with community rehabilitation programs across the state. These programs are equipped to offer a range of job-placement and support services to VR consumers with specialized needs. Community rehabilitation services include: vocational evaluation; job development; job coaching; individual or group supported employment; and work adjustment activities designed to help individuals improve work skills, work behaviors, and emotional/physical tolerances for a range of jobs.

- In FFY 2012, 10,399 consumers received services from community rehabilitation programs that have partnered with VR.
- Of that number, 2,502 achieved their employment objectives and many others continued to progress toward theirs.
- VR directly administers two community rehabilitation programs – WorkSource East in Goldsboro and WorkSource West in Morganton.

## Supported Employment

Because of varying levels of readiness for work, many consumers benefit from more intensive support services to become acclimated to new employment or remain on the job. After placement, supported employment can mean job training at the worksite for as long as needed or a job coach to assist the employee on a longer-term basis – perhaps with daily, weekly or intermittent visits.

- In FFY 2012, 4,382 consumers received supported employment services.
- Of that number, 1,023 achieved their employment objectives and many others continued to progress toward theirs.
- Supported employment services may be supplemented by or directly provided by a local, VR-approved community rehabilitation program.

## Rehabilitation Engineering

With technology and a commitment to creative problem-solving, VR's rehabilitation engineers help consumers overcome physical barriers in a number of areas, including education, transportation, employment, independent living and recreation. Services can cover: adaptive computer access; augmentative communication; seating/mobility; and home, vehicle, and worksite modifications. Engineers often consult with employers to assist in removing architectural barriers so that new employees with disabilities or current employees who've acquired disabilities may be accommodated.

- In FFY 2012, 1,145 barrier removal projects at consumers' residences were successfully completed, allowing them to remain independent and avoid moving to a care facility.
- During the same period, vehicle modification projects were completed for 74 consumers.
- Rehabilitation engineering projects completed for consumers exceeded \$4.28 million in cost.

## Independent Living

Independence can often mean living in the home and community of choice. To help its consumers achieve that end, the Independent Living program offers evaluation and counseling, vehicle modifications, peer counseling and advocacy, rehabilitation engineering, prosthetics and orthotics, personal assistance services, and assistance with leisure activities. Independent living counselors and program participants jointly plan how to achieve a viable, cost-effective alternative to institutional living.

- In FFY 2012, 4,273 individuals received services under an Individualized Plan for Independent Living
- IPIs were completed by 1,782 program participants.
- Personal assistance services were provided to 312 individuals at an average cost of \$12,901 per year.

## Assistive Technology

For people of all ages and disabilities, assistive technology devices can make everyday living more independent. Offering access in all 100 counties, VR's Assistive Technology (AT) staff demonstrates how assistive technology can improve computer use, daily living activities, mobility, communication, education, leisure, alarm systems, and environmental controls. AT offers short-term loans for trying out devices, information/referral services, rights advocacy for individuals and families, and financial resource information. During 2012, the Assistive Technology Program:

- Provided 6,737 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations.
- Provided training and information to 26,165 individuals.
- Hosted, with the N.C. Rehabilitation Association, a joint conference/exhibit exposition with 600 attending.

## Disability Determination

Under an agreement with the Social Security Administration, Disability Determination Services receives applications from SSA offices across the state and adjudicates Social Security disability and Supplemental Security Income disability payments. Disability Determination Services performs the same function with Medicaid claims received from the state's county departments of social services. In FFY 2012:

- DDS closed 225,219 cases involving Social Security Disability Income, Supplemental Security Income and Medicaid disability benefits.
- The average time for processing SSDI cases – from receipt to closure – was 93 days.
- The average time for processing Medicaid claims – from DDS receipt to closure – was 30 days.

## Client Assistance Program

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federally funded program that serves anyone seeking information, applying for services or receiving services from agencies receiving federal monies under the Rehabilitation Act. These include the Division of Vocational

Rehabilitation Services, the Division of Services for the Blind, the independent living rehabilitation programs within those divisions, and the state's centers for independent living. Services include bridging gaps that may occur in accessing rehabilitation services, assisting with the appeals process and providing information and referral. In FFY 2012, CAP:

- Increased its information and referrals to individuals by 9.4 percent
- Distributed printed information to more than 18,755 consumers and professionals and
- Delivered oral presentations to 1,805 individuals.

## Small Business Award Results from Hard Work and Determination



A mental-health diagnosis continued to block Timothy Dingle's way into the workforce. With no income and living out of his car, Timothy made a little money hauling scrap metal and wrecked cars with an old truck and trailer.

During this time, he began working with VR counselors while taking classes at Lenoir Community College's small business center.

He began to think about starting his own auto-hauling business. But his VR advisers didn't think the time was quite right — and his formal business plan was rejected.

But a year later and undeterred, Timothy presented a new plan undergirded by additional knowledge gained in his scrap-hauling business, his classroom experience and his time spent with his VR counselors.

This time his plan was approved. With VR assisting in the purchase of trailers and other equipment, Dingle's Transport was launched in early 2012. Forging good working relationships that led to consistent business, he saw his first year profits exceed his goals.

Now he's planning to buy a second truck and hire his first employee. In March 2013, VR presented Timothy Dingle the award for "Small Business of the Year."

# North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Data Summary: Federal Fiscal Year 2011-2012

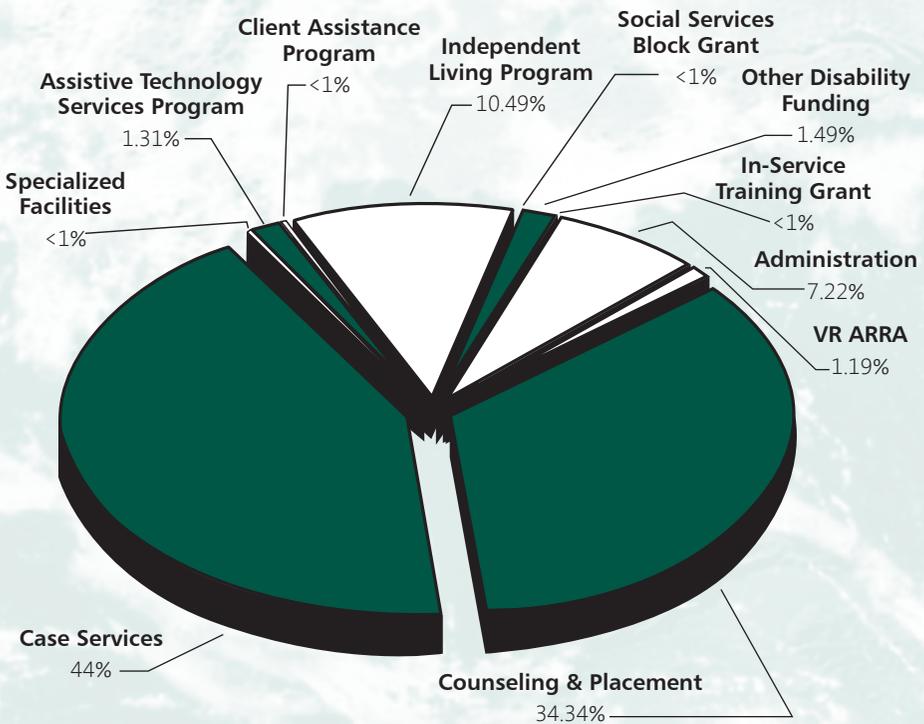
<b>Overview: Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Services</b>	
<b>Consumers Served in FFY 2012</b>	<b>60,450</b>
Consumers still developing an Individualized Plan of Employment at the last day of the FFY	5,220
<b>Consumers Served through Individualized Plans of Employment</b>	<b>47,341</b>
Consumers still receiving services at the last day of the FFY	35,297
Successful employment outcomes	6,758

<b>Earnings for Consumers with Successful Employment Outcomes</b>			
Average Earnings	Weekly Earnings	Monthly Earnings	Annual Earnings
At Case Opening	\$45.34	\$196.48	\$2,357.72
At Case Closure	\$281.84	\$1,221.32	\$14,655.75
Average Increase	\$236.50	\$1,024.84	\$12,298.03
<b>Total Increase</b>	<b>\$1,592,359</b>	<b>\$6,900,222.33</b>	<b>\$82,802,668</b>

<b>Consumers by Disability: Vocational Rehabilitation / Independent Living</b>		
Primary Disability	VR Eligible Served	IL Eligible Served
Sensory/Communicative	2,807	243
Physical	16,312	4,815
Cognitive	18,607	3
Mental Illness	16,202	3
Other Mental Disabilities	6,521	2
Major Impairment not yet recorded	1	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>59,349</b>	<b>5,311</b>

<b>Statewide Overview: Independent Living Rehabilitation Program</b>	
<b>Consumers Served in FFY 2012</b>	<b>5,069</b>
Consumers still receiving services at the last day of the FFY	2,065
<b>Independent Living Plans of Services Completed</b>	<b>1,782</b>
<b>Individuals Receiving Personal Assistance Services</b>	<b>312</b>
Average per person cost for personal assistance services	\$12,901.05

### FFY 2012 Program Expenditures



Administration	\$10,397,285	VR ARRA	\$1,719,259
Counseling & Placement	\$49,440,365	Case Services	\$61,858,977
Specialized Facilities	\$659,492	Client Assistance Program	\$317,223
Assistive Technology Services Program	\$1,890,824	Social Services Block Grant	\$250,983
Independent Living Program	\$15,108,187	In-Service Training Grant	\$174,986
Other Disability Funding	\$2,146,784		

## VR “All-Stars”

North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services has honored staff members in Goldsboro, Raleigh and Wilmington with its 11<sup>th</sup> annual, statewide “VR All-Star Awards.” The categories and winners are:



**Amanda Cummings**



**James Fountain**



**Ja Medicott**

- **Leadership** – Amanda Cummings, a case manager with the division’s WorkSource East facility in Goldsboro, was cited for outstanding achievement in leadership. The award praises Cummings for her “ability – characterized by professionalism and a caring heart – to discuss issues with her consumers while leading them to make better choices for themselves.”
- **Customer Service** – Honored for customer service was James Fountain, a computing consultant in the Raleigh central administrative office. The award cites Fountain for his patience, knowledge and flexibility in providing “an excellent level of support” to fellow staff members “in an unusually fast and efficient manner.”
- **Creativity** – Cited for creativity was Ja Medicott, an assistive technologist in the agency’s Wilmington assistive technology service center. The award honors Medicott for “always looking for new ways to make something work and bringing assistive technology to the everyday lives of people with disabilities.”

The three were chosen from 12 recipients of the division’s regional “Superstar Awards.” Employee volunteers manage the awards program in which agency staff nominate and vote on their co-workers.

“To be named All-Stars by their peers reflects a commitment to people with disabilities that benefits all North Carolinians,” said Division Director Linda Harrington. “We are fortunate to have such stellar public servants among us.”

Former acting Health and Human Services Secretary Albert A. Delia told the recipients that the work of the division “is an integral, important part of the department’s mission to serve the people of North Carolina, most especially those with disabilities. The contributions for which you’ve been recognized are indispensable in carrying out that work.”

## State Rehabilitation Council: 2011-12

Davan Cloninger – Chair  
Dennis Troy – Vice Chair  
Doreen Byrd  
Charles DesLaurier  
Robert Gilmore  
Ping Holt Miller  
Celeste Hunt  
Horace Hunt  
Trish Hussey  
John Marens  
Stephanie Lusk  
Laurie Ray  
D. Jason Reynolds  
Keely Roberts  
Brenda Savage  
Carol Walker  
Lisa Ward Ross

### **Ex Officio:**

Linda Harrington, Director  
Jacqueline Tetterton

### **Counselor Advisory Council**

#### **Representatives:**

Kenny Gibbs, Statewide  
Melanie Harrington,  
Central Region  
Collis Niro, Eastern Region  
Bret Philbeck, Western Region

## State Independent Living Council: 2011-12

Keith Greenarch – Chair  
Rene Cummings  
Kimlyn S. Lambert  
Sandra McMillan  
Cornell Turner  
Sandi Sinnott  
Kay Miley  
Jeffery McCloud  
Teresa Staley  
Sierra Royster  
Gloria Bellamy  
Dorothy Frye  
Zachariah D. Commander  
Ping Holt Miller  
Joshua J. Kaufman  
Oshana Watkins

### **Ex Officio:**

Vicki Smith  
Cynthia Temoshenko  
Holly Riddle  
John Marens



# Images of Success



## North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services

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[www.ncdhhs.gov/dvrs](http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dvrs)

State of North Carolina | Pat McCrory, Governor

Department of Health and Human Services | Aldona Z. Wos, M.D., Secretary

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