



Vocational Rehabilitation Services
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Innovative Project Developments

In federal fiscal years (FFY) 2014 and 2015, our division's record of service to people with disabilities was advanced by a new case management system and innovative project developments.

In FFY 2014, through VR's core employment services, 6,310 consumers either obtained employment or were able to stay on the job despite a disability. On average, people for whom VR services lead to employment are able to "pay back" the cost of their services in two to four years through



Elizabeth Bishop *Director*N.C. Division of Vocational
Rehabilitation Services

taxes. Further, their employment generates big savings for the federal treasury in the cost of no longer needed benefits.

In FFY 2014, after receiving Independent Living services, 1,550 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, but our agency has become increasingly involved in helping people move out of these institutions through initiatives such as Money Follows the Person.

BEAM, the new case management system shared with Services for the Blind (DSB), went live on

July 1, 2014. The division's staff and our service providers all went through number of challenges and learning curves with it, and there is still more work needed to improve overall system performance and other enhancements for improved automation. Our BEAM management committee, working in collaboration with the system developer, database and networking teams, continues to make the system more efficient and user friendly. We have made the development of this project as responsive as possible for field users. Incorporating their feedback and survey responses, we are actively working with subject matter experts and the vendor to resolve those issues and concerns. Many thanks for the patience and understanding of those who have joined us on this journey!

Meanwhile, funding, training, and collaboration were the keystones to VR's role in the implementation of Individual Placement Support (IPS) and Supported Employment (SE) services for people with severe mental illness in 2014. IPS SE-specific contracts were developed for SE providers authorized to provide this service through their local management entity/ managed care organization (LME/MCO). We partnered with providers and the Division of Mental Health/Developmental Disabilities/Substance Abuse Services (DMH/DD/SAS) in trainings and learning collaboratives on both a local and statewide level. Staff became a part of the international learning community sponsored by Dartmouth's IPS Supported Employment Center. These efforts laid the foundation for growing our commitment to serving those with severe mental illness.

In FFY 2014, VR became increasingly involved in Project SEARCH. Project SEARCH is a model of supported employment in which a transition-aged youth engages in a year-long educational program at a host business site, including participation in job-related coursework and three 8-10 week internships. Project SEARCH is a braided-funding, collaborative model which involves schools, VR, community rehabilitation programs, long-term support providers, and the host business. In FFY 2014, VR provided training and job placement services to participants in two Project SEARCH sites and expanded to seven sites in FFY 2015.

Meanwhile, on July 22, 2014, President Obama signed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (the "Opportunity Act"), designed to help job seekers access employment, education, training and support services to succeed in the labor market and to match employers with the skilled workers they need to compete in the global economy. In FFY 2015, VR joined with our core partners in the Opportunity Act, including the Department of Commerce, the Community College System, the NC Works Commission and the Office of the Governor, to form a cross-agency steering council and develop NC's Unified State Plan. The steering council hosted summits across the state to educate stakeholders and gather input on implementation of the key elements of the Opportunity Act. Eight workgroups were designated to draft strategic and operational components of the document, which were incorporated into a draft version of the Unified State Plan and submitted to the Office of the Governor for review.

VR continues to work internally to revise and update our policies and procedures in compliance with new federal regulations, which include setting aside at least 15 percent of federal VR program funds to pre-employment transition services (PETS) and dedicating half of the federal Supported Employment program funds to youth with the most significant disabilities. Through coordination with our workforce partners, youth with disabilities will have more opportunities to practice and improve their workplace skills, to consider their career interests, to receive advanced training in STEM and other technical professions, and to get real world work experience. We look forward to the challenges that lie ahead as we work to maximize achievement of competitive, integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.

NC's agricultural industry employs 17 percent of the state's workforce, with more than 50,000 working farmers across the state. The USDA grant-funded NC AgrAbility Program provides educational and networking opportunities to agricultural workers with disabilities, as well as on-site farm assessments and recommendations about the equipment, devices, work practices and other adaptive solutions to help reduce disability-related limitations. During FFY 2015, VR's partnership in AgrAbility program expanded when our Assistive Technology Program (NCATP) was contracted to provide the assessments and training that enable farmers and their families to stay engaged in agriculture-related occupations. After conducting an AgrAbility assessment, NCATP can refer the individual to VR for assistance in purchasing recommended assistive technology. VR continues to develop and implement policies and procedures to

support the mission of the AgrAbility program, while educating our employees across the state about the services available. We anticipate serving many more farmers... in the coming year and are making a special effort to reach out to veterans who are interested in farming-related occupations.

Individuals with brain injury can be challenging to serve, as they have unique needs and often don't exhibit disabling conditions in the same way as other disability groups. In order to effectively provide services to this population, Brain Injury Support Services (BISS) altered their program model in FFY 2015, moving from an hourly fee-for-service to a milestone-outcomes system. In this comprehensive model, experienced vendors support consumers to achieve a series of goals and objectives, and are paid upon completion of each of five milestones. This model incorporates elements of cognitive rehabilitation, counseling, case management, career exploration, as well as job placement and elements of supported employment. As we continue to provide high-quality brain injury support services to our consumers, plans are under way to expand both the number and geographical coverage of these services in the future.

Our overall progress is attributable to a professional, committed staff across the state and also made possible by the agencies and policymakers we partner with – and the administrators and legislators who provide the leadership we will need to continue to assist North Carolinians with disabilities in reaching their full potential.

VR SERVICES IN FFY 2014 - FFY 2015

North Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) assists individuals with disabilities with obtaining, retaining or maintaining employment. Rehabilitation begins with an assessment of the consumer's strengths, skills and experience. Developed jointly by the consumer and counselor, each consumer's Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) is carefully monitored and adjusted as needed.

An IPE may include: diagnostic services; physical and mental restoration; assistive technology; transportation; modifications to vehicle, home, job and worksite; and others.

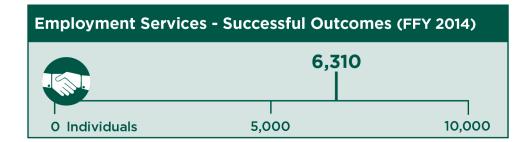
In FFY 2014, VR:

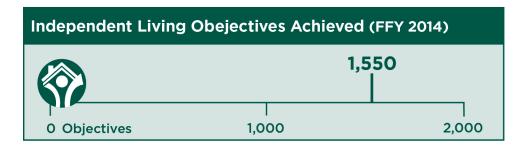
- Served 54,795 total consumers
- Provided diagnosis and treatment services to 9,993 individuals with physical and/or mental impairments
- Helped 6,310 North Carolinians achieve successful employment outcomes

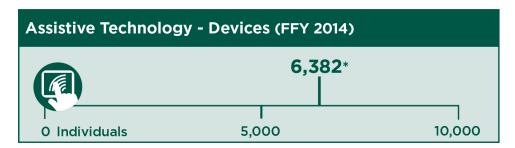
in FFY 2015:

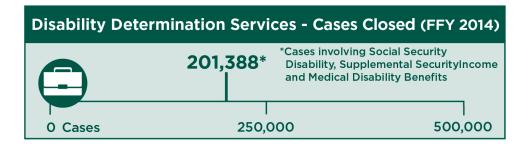
- Served 53,976 total consumers
- Provided diagnosis and treatment services to 12,391 individuals with physical and/or mental impairments
- Helped 6,317 North Carolinians achieve successful employment outcomes

Federal Fiscal Year 2014





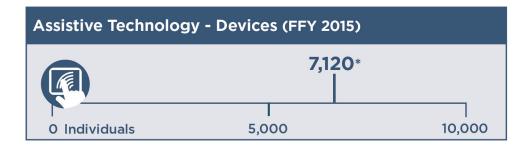


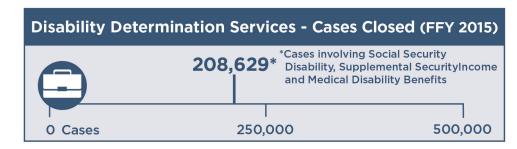


Federal Fiscal Year 2015









CATEGORIES OF SERVICES

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

Benefits Counseling

Under a system of work incentives, eligible individuals with disabilities can look for work, get a job and continue to receive SSI or SSDI benefits until they are able to support themselves. These incentives help remove barriers to work so that beneficiaries can find the right job and succeed in the workplace. Benefits counseling is available to VR clients throughout North Carolina.

In FFY 2014, VR:

• Helped 1,538 Social Security beneficiaries achieve employment

In FFY 2015, VR:

 Helped 1,738 Social Security beneficiaries achieve employment

Deaf and 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 meet those goals.

Based in 12 of VR's local offices, trained counselors assist consumers with hearing loss across North Carolina.

In FFY 2014, VR:

- Provided services to 2,745 consumers who were deaf or hard of hearing
- Assisted 420 consumers with hearing loss to achieve successful employment outcomes

In FFY 2015, VR:

- Provided services to 2,470 consumers who were deaf or hard of hearing
- Assisted 381 consumers with deafness or hearing loss achieve successful employment outcomes

School-to-Life Services

VR has partnered with local schools statewide to assist students in making a successful transition from their school-life to jobs and careers. Referrals may be made by a parent, teacher, social worker, school counselor or nurse, or an individual may self-refer. Services are designed to assist individuals with physical, mental or learning-related disabilities who require assistance to prepare for, locate or maintain employment compatible with their interests, skills and potential.

For eligible students, VR offers guidance and assists with training, job placement, and other services. VR services are provided to students in more than 350 high schools across the state.

In FFY 2014, VR:

- Served 23,834 individuals with disabilities,
 age 24 and younger, representing approximately
 44 percent of all VR consumers
- Provided services to 13,416 high school students

In FFY 2015, VR:

- Served 21,707 individuals with disabilities, age 24 and younger, representing approximately 40 percent of all VR consumers
- Provided services to 12,752 high school students





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 IPE may include college or vocational training, onthe-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.

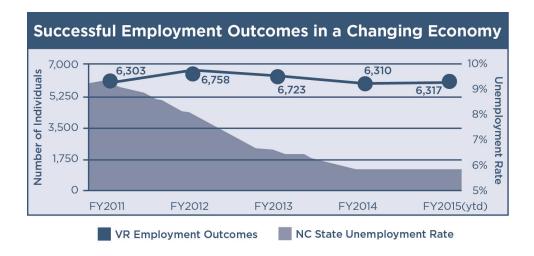
Individuals employed after receiving VR services averaged \$275 per week, for a combined total of \$1.74 million in weekly earnings.

In FFY 2014, VR:

- Assisted 6,310 North Carolinians in achieving a successful employment outcome
- Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned an average of \$278 per week, for a combined total of \$1.75 million per week

In FFY 2015, VR:

- Assisted 6,317 North Carolinians in achieving a successful employment outcome
- Individuals employed after receiving VR services earned an average of \$275 per week, for a combined total of \$1.74 million in weekly earnings



Services to Employers

Crucial to VR's mission are the North Carolina businesses that hire thousands of individuals served by VR each year. Because our consumers are screened before referral, employers can feel more confident that they are a good prospect. Further, employers benefit from services like customized follow-up and on-the-job training that can help ensure 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. Employers benefit from these services at no cost and may also enjoy tax incentives for hiring a VR referral.

Additional employer benefits include:

- 1. Screening, job-matching and training that reduce employers' recruitment time and costs
- 2. On-site consultations by professionals like our rehabilitation engineers, who help ensure that the physical workplace is good fit for the new employee

3. 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 offer a range of job-placement and support services to VR consumers with specialized needs. VR directly administers two community rehabilitation programs – WorkSource East in Goldsboro and WorkSource West in Morganton.

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, as well as emotional and physical tolerances for a range of jobs.

In FFY 2014:

- 6,869 consumers received services from community rehabilitation programs that have partnered with VR
- Of that number, 2,325 achieved their employment objectives and many others continued to progress towards theirs

In FFY 2015:

- 7,241 consumers received services from community rehabilitation programs that have partnered with VR
- Of that number, 2,804 achieved their employment objectives and many others continue to make progress towards theirs

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, with daily, weekly or intermittent visits.

Supported employment services may be supplemented by or directly provided by a local, VR-approved community rehabilitation program.

In FFY 2014:

- 3,217 consumers received supported employment services
- Of that number, 939 achieved their employment objectives and many others continued to progress towards theirs

In FFY 2015:

- 2,960 consumers received supported employment services
- Of that number, 1,110 achieved their employment objectives and many others continue to make progress towards theirs

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 and mobility; as well as 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 have acquired disabilities may be accommodated.

In FFY 2014:

- 1,383 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 79 consumers
- Rehabilitation engineering projects completed for consumers exceeded \$6.68 million in cost

In FFY 2015:

- 968 consumers were provided residential barrier removal projects at their residences, allowing them to remain independent and avoid moving to a care facility
- During the same period, vehicle modification projects were completed for 31 consumers
- Rehabilitation engineering projects completed for consumers exceeded \$4.74 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 2014:

- 4,830 individuals received services under an Individualized Plan for Independent Living (IPIL)
- IPILs were completed by 1,550 program participants
- Personal assistance services were provided to 268 individuals at an average cost of \$13,250 per year

In FFY 2015:

- 2,989 individuals received services under an Individualized Plan for Independent Living (IPIL)
- IPILs were completed by 1,381 program participants
- Personal assistance services were provided to 247 individuals at an average cost of \$13,250 per year

Assistive Technology

For people of all ages and abilities, 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 and referral services, rights advocacy for individuals and families, and financial resource information.

In FFY 2014, AT:

- Provided 6,382 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations
- Provided training and information to 13,743 individuals
- Reached an estimated 121,000 North Carolinians through public awareness efforts, including conferences, transition fairs and news reports

In FFY 2015, AT:

- Assisted 232 individuals purchase previously owned devices for a total cost saving of \$118,005
- Provided 7,120 individuals with equipment loans or demonstrations

Disability Determination

Under an agreement with the Social Security Administration, Disability Determination Services (DDS) receives applications from SSA offices across the state and adjudicates Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments.

DDS performs the same function with Medicaid claims received from the state's county departments of social services.

In FFY 2014, DDS:

- Closed 158,772 cases involving SSDI and SSI benefits
- Processed 42,616 Medicaid claims, with an average processing time of 29 days from receipt to closure

In FFY 2015, DDS:

- Closed 169,026 cases involving SSDI and SSI benefits with 95.5% accuracy
- Processed 39,603 Medicaid claims, with an average processing time of 43 days from receipt to closure

Client Assistance Program

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

In FFY 2014, CAP:

- Fully or partially resolved issues favorably for 81 percent of CAP consumers
- Distributed printed information to more than 12,420 consumers and professionals
- Received evaluations indicating that 91 percent of consumers were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with CAP services

In FFY 2015, CAP:

- Fully or partially resolved issues favorably for 81 percent of CAP consumers
- Distributed printed information to more than 15,000 consumers and professionals
- Received evaluations indicating that 88 percent of consumers were 'very satisfied' or 'satisfied' with CAP services



Project Search Graduates are Ready to Work

Project Search is a service model to meet the needs of those with the most significant disabilities by extending vocational preparation over the course of an academic year and exposing individuals to workplaces and activities that are complex yet generalizable beyond a particular business.

With a focus on transition-aged youth, Project Search provides a means for growing community connections and developing employability skills early. By engaging in these activities, students build momentum towards employment and access employment supports while they leave the consistency and security of a school setting.

Inadditiontofillingauniqueneedforatraditionally underserved population, Project Search services are consistent with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 which emphasizes pre-employment transition services as a priority for Vocational Rehabilitation agencies. Project Search services are vital to providing training in employability and independent living skills to help youth with significant intellectual/developmental disabilities make a successful transition from school to competitive employment.

VR "All-Stars"

The division honored staff members from Morganton, Charlotte and Monroe with its 13th "VR All-Star Awards." The categories and winners are:



Pink Moore

Leadership-

Pink Moore, Adjustment Services Director at WorkSource West/ in Morganton, was recognized for outstanding achievement in leadership. He received accolades for his professionalism, positive atti-

tude, team spirit and, above all, his compassion. His commitment to closely monitoring and timely reporting on consumer outcomes allows WorkSource West to maintain a rating of service excellence with accreditation and oversight organizations. He has earned the admiration and respect of colleagues and supervisors, who believe that he "exemplifies the essence of VR's mission statement every day."



Benny Polk

Customer Service-

Benny Polk, Casework Technician in the Charlotte office, was honored for his outstanding achievement in customer service. Citing his patience, tact, grace and willingness to always lend a helping hand,

Benny has received glowing reviews from a wide array of colleagues, who call him their "go-to guy," "superstar" and "medicine man." He is never too busy to help and demonstrates his commitment to VR by volunteering for additional responsibilities, serving on a number of committees, as a Beam Tester, and as the public face of VR at community events.



Margaret O'Shita

Creativity/Innovation-

Margaret O'Shita, Business Relations Representative at the Monroe and Albemarle offices, was endorsed for her outstanding achievement in creativity/innovation.

She devised several unique approaches to relationship-building that have resulted in productive and cooperative partnerships with area employers. Her keen insight into barriers to successful employment outcomes for consumers has improved VR's knowledge and understanding of the regional labor market and facilitated active, ongoing communication between VR and hiring managers at local companies. Her creative thinking continues to bring benefits for counselors, consumers and employers.

The three were chosen from the division's regional "Superstar Awards." Employee volunteers manage the awards program in which agency staff nominate and vote on their co-workers.

Data Summary

Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2014

VR Employment Services	
Consumers Served in FFY 2014	54,795
Consumers still developing an Individualized Plan of Employment at the last day of the FFY 2014	4,989
Consumers Served through Individualized Plans of Employment	43,756
Consumers still receiving services at the last day of the FFY 2014	36,844
Successful employment outcomes	6,310

Earnings for Consumers with Successful Employment Outcomes			
Average Earnings	Weekly Earnings	Monthly Earnings	Annual Earnings
At Case Opening	\$41	\$177	\$2,121
At Case Closure	\$278	\$1,205	\$14,456
Average Increase	\$238	\$1,027.94	\$12,335
Total Increase	\$1,151,649	\$4,990,480	\$59,885,748

VR Consumers by Disability		
Primary Disability	VR Eligible Served	
Sensory/Communicative	2,785	5.1%
Physical	13,710	25.0%
Cognitive	17,198	31.4%
Mental Illness	15,356	28.0%
Other Mental or Emotional Disability	5,611	10.2%
Major Impairment not yet recorded	135	0.2%
Total	54,795	100.0%

Statewide Overview: Independent Living Rehabilitation Program		
Eligible Consumers Served in FFY 2014	4,830	
Independent Living Plans of Services Completed	1,550	
Individuals Receiving Personal Assistance Services	268	
Average per person cost for personal assistance services	\$13,250	

Data Summary

Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2015

VR Employment Services		
Consumers Served in FFY 2015	53,976	
Consumers still developing an Individualized Plan of Employment at the last day of the FFY 2015	4,542	
Consumers Served through Individualized Plans of Employment	43,048	
Consumers still receiving services at the last day of the FFY 2015	33,823	
Successful employment outcomes	6,317	

Earnings for Consumers with Successful Employment Outcomes			
Average Earnings	Weekly Earnings	Monthly Earnings	Annual Earnings
At Case Opening	\$41	\$178	\$2,132
At Case Closure	\$275	\$1,192	\$14,300
Average Increase	\$234	\$1,014	\$12,168
Total Increase	\$1,480,502	\$6,415,509	\$76,986,104

VR Consumers by Disability		
Primary Disability	VR Eligible Served	
Sensory/Communicative	2,642	4.9%
Physical	13,112	24.3%
Cognitive	17,199	31.9%
Mental Illness	15,301	28.3%
Other Mental or Emotional Disability	5,722	10.6%
Total	53,976	100.0%

Statewide Overview: Independent Living Rehabilitation Program		
Eligible Consumers Served in FFY 2015	2,989	
Independent Living Plans of Services Completed	1,381	
Individuals Receiving Personal Assistance Services	247	
Average per person cost for personal assistance services	\$13,250	

NC State Rehabilitation Council 2014

Members:

Doreen Byrd, Chair John Marens, Vice-Chair Dr. Margaret "Meg" Ackley Stephen "Mark" Baker Dr. Quintin Boston Cynthia "Cindy" Dixon Wavne Giese Robert Gilmore Michael Hobbs Celeste Hunt Trish Hussey Clare "Ping" Miller Laurie Rav Baldwin "Keith" Renner Brenda Savage Lisa Ward-Ross Sharon Weddington

Will Miller (Adhoc Member)

Non-Voting Members (Ex-Officio):

Elizabeth Bishop-DVRS Director Raleigh, NC

Counselor Advisory Committee (CAC) Representatives:

Kenny Gibbs, Statewide Collis Niro, Eastern Region

NC State Rehabilitation Council 2015

Members:

Doreen Byrd, Chair
John Marens, Vice-Chair
Dr. Margaret "Meg" Ackley
Stephen "Mark" Baker
Dr. Quintin Boston
Wayne Giese
Robert Gilmore
Cynthia "Cindy" Harrell
Michael Hobbs
Kimlyn Lambert
Clare "Ping" Miller
Laurie Ray
Baldwin "Keith" Renner
Brenda Savage

Non-Voting Members (Ex-Officio):

Elizabeth Bishop-DVRS Director Raleigh, NC

Counselor Advisory Committee (CAC) Representatives:

Kenny Gibbs, Statewide Collis Niro, Eastern Region

Vacancies:

(2) Disability Advocacy Groups, Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)

State Independent Living Council 2014

Members:

Rene E. Cummins Kimlyn S. Lambert Sandra Hicks Sandi Sinnott Kay Miley Mitzi Y. Kincaid Teresa Staley Sierra Royster Keith Greenarch Gloria Bellamy Zachariah D. Commander Jennifer M. Overfield Sandy Oaburn Clare "Ping" Miller Sandra L. McMillan Joshua J. Kaufman

Oshana M. Watkins

Ex Officio Members:

Mark Steele Deidre L. Dockery Vicky Smith John J. Marens Stephanie Johnson

State Independent Living Council 2015

Members:

Lisa Ward-Ross

Rene F. Cummins Kimlyn S. Lambert Sandra Hicks Deia Barber Kay Miley Teresa Stalev Barry Washington Keith Greenarch Garv Rav Tavonne Enoch Gerald Green Sandy Ogburn Clare "Ping" Miller Paul LaVack Joshua J. Kaufman Oshana M. Watkins

Ex Officio Members:

Pamela Lloyd-Ogoke Patricia Sikes Vicki Smith Steve Strom John J. Marens Jan Withers



Vocational Rehabilitation Services
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

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State of North Carolina | Pat McCrory, Governor

Department of Health and Human Services | Richard O. Brajer, Secretary

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