



**2014 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE  
NORTH DAKOTA STATE  
REHABILITATION COUNCIL**



About the cover: The only design of its kind in the nation, the stunning steel and glass Northern Lights Atrium welcomes visitors to the North Dakota Heritage Center.

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# LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR OF DVR & THE CHAIR OF THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

The 2014 Annual Report of the North Dakota State Rehabilitation Council summarizes the Council's activities for the year and provides information regarding the North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.

The most important goal for the Council and the Vocational Rehabilitation program is obtaining successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. The professionalism and dedication of the VR staff, collaboration with community providers, Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Centers for Independent Living are key factors to the success of the VR program.

VR staff are honored and humbled to engage with clients in their personal journey toward achieving their rehabilitation goals and competitive integrated employment. It is through the hard work of individuals with disabilities that the VR program is able to provide data that demonstrates last year's success.

The driving force behind the Vocational Rehabilitation program is the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973 which provides the funding and direction for Vocational Rehabilitation. This federal law was amended on July 22, 2014, as part of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). The changes under WIOA will strengthen the program's partnership with businesses and enhance pre-employment service to students with disabilities as they prepare to leave secondary education. VR is excited to work with the State Rehabilitation Council in implementation of these new program requirements.

Vocational Rehabilitation is appreciative of the support provided by the State Rehabilitation Council in our work to support the employment of individuals with disabilities. This report proudly reports the success of the VR program.

Sincerely,

Russ Cusack, ND Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Director  
Scott Burlingame, ND State Rehabilitation Council Chair



**Russ Cusack**

North Dakota Division  
of Vocational  
Rehabilitation Director



**Scott Burlingame**

North Dakota  
State Rehabilitation  
Council Chair





**DIVISION *of***  
**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

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*State of North Dakota*

## **VISION STATEMENT**

North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation is the leader in disability-related solutions.

## **PURPOSE STATEMENT**

We assist individuals with disabilities to be successfully employed.

## **GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

Serving our consumers is the primary focus of everything we do.

Collaborative partnerships with employers are essential to our success.

All people have value regardless of age, race, creed, color, gender, or disability.

Good communication is essential to delivering quality rehabilitation services.

Quality outcomes are a result of the commitment of consumers and qualified staff working together towards mutually agreed upon goals.

Change is inevitable and provides opportunities for innovation and creativity.

Effective partnerships are critical in achieving results for consumers.

Informed choice is central to sound decision-making and allows decisions to be based on all relevant information, options, and consequences.

When all things are equal, legal, and based on good rehabilitation counseling, decisions will be made in favor of the consumer.



# Building Partnerships

# PURPOSE OF DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION

## Empowering Individuals and Businesses

### SCOPE OF SERVICES

#### **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) services include:**

**Professional Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling & Guidance** – evaluation of strengths and how a client’s disability may affect their ability to work, a comprehensive assessment of rehabilitation needs, planning and implementing strategies to overcome barriers and helping one adjust to and live with a disability.

**Employment** – identification of an employment goal that is consistent with a client’s strengths, resources, abilities, capabilities, priorities, concerns, interests, and informed choice.

**Accommodations** – adaptive aids, assistive technology, accessibility, and work site evaluations to assist in achieving employment goals.

**Training** – tailored to meet individual rehabilitation needs and attain employment goals. This may include on-the-job training, internships, job mentoring, job coaching, and/or academic training.

**Job Placement** – develop resume writing skills and interview strategies, job referral, placement, and follow-up services.

Through a “dual client” approach, the division also assists business owners and employers through a variety of business and disability-related services, including:

- Staff Retention
- Accessibility and ADA Consultation
- Recruitment Source
- Financial Incentives
- Disability Consultation
- On the Job Training/Job Coach Services
- On Site Consultation and Recommendations

These services are available to a legally operated and registered North Dakota business, non-profit organization, or government agency. There are no costs associated with services except for those accommodations or modifications chosen as a result of DVR recommendations.



VR helped me decide which type of employment is most suitable for me. My VR Counselor was courteous, congenial, and sensitive to my needs.

CLIENT COMMENT



# STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL OVERVIEW

FFY 2014

**The purpose of the North Dakota State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is to advise the North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) on issues concerning policy and program, delivery of services, and methods for reaching potential consumers.**

## THE COUNCIL

- Informs and advises DVR on the effects its programs may be having on North Dakota communities and consumers
- Facilitates public input into the Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan
- Advocates for consumer rights and services
- Communicates to public and community leaders the purpose and need for vocational rehabilitation

The council members are selected to serve on the SRC by the Governor of North Dakota. They are selected to serve based on their interest, knowledge, and understanding of the needs of individuals with disabilities. Members are advocates for equal opportunities for persons with disabilities in their communities and throughout North Dakota.

**The Council must have at least 15 members representing:**

- 4 Business, industry and labor sectors
- 1 Statewide Independent Living Council
- 1 Parent Training & Information Center
- 1 Client Assistance Program
- 1 Disability advocacy group advocate
- 1 Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider
- 1 State Workforce Investment Board
- 1 Current or former VR applicant or recipient
- 1 American Indian VR program
- 1 Department of Public Instruction
- 1 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- 1 Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Director

## SRC COMMITTEES

- Planning/Evaluation Committee
- Resource Committee
- Membership/Public Relations Committee

## SRC RECOMMENDATIONS

- DVR should maintain the Order of Selection structure within the State Plan.
- The SCR supports the professionalism of the North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation counseling staff and their efforts to obtain certified rehabilitation counseling credentials.

“  
Very good program.  
It was exactly what  
I needed. My DVR  
Counselor was great  
to work with.  
CLIENT COMMENT  
”

# ND DIVISION OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Membership as of September 30, 2014

**Scott Burlingame, Chair**

Independence, Inc. CIL  
Minot, ND

**Pat Anderson**

Job Service North Dakota  
Bismarck, ND

**Christina Coughlin**

Minot, ND

**Russ Cusack, Director**

Division of  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
Bismarck, ND

**Tim Davenport**

BEK Communications  
Steele, ND

**Harley Engelman**

KAT Communications  
Bismarck, ND

**Rodney Gillund**

Statewide Independent  
Living Council  
Crosby, ND

**Vickay Gross**

Client Assistance  
Program  
Bismarck, ND

**Deborah Jendro**

Fargo, ND

**Marshall Longie, Director**

Spirit Lake Vocational  
Rehabilitation  
Fort Totten, ND

**Kevin McDonough**

Department of  
Public Instruction  
Bismarck, ND

**Darren Moos**

New Salem, ND

**Darcy Severson**

Pride, Inc.  
Bismarck, ND

**Sherry Shirek**

Fargo, ND

**Kelly D Smeltzer**

Cando, ND

**Sheri Wilson**

Division of  
Vocational Rehabilitation  
Bismarck, ND



(L-R) Back Row:  
**Rodney Gillund**  
**Harley Engelman**  
**Tim Davenport**  
**Darcy Severson**  
**Pat Anderson**  
**Scott Burlingame**  
**Russ Cusack**

(L-R) Front Row:  
**Vickay Gross**  
**Sheri Wilson**  
**Darren Moos**  
**Deborah Jendro**

# COMMITTEE ON EMPLOYMENT OF PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES

The purpose of the Committee on Employment of People with Disabilities is to further the goal of considering competitive and integrated employment as the first option when supporting individuals with disabilities who are of working age to obtain employment.

The Committee was reconstituted through 2013 Senate Bill 2271, which expanded membership and placed a greater emphasis on competitive and integrated employment for people with disabilities.

The Committee must have the following members:

## **Five Ex Officio Members – Director or Designee of:**

- Department of Commerce
- Department of Human Services - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- Department of Public Instruction - Special Education
- Protection and Advocacy Project
- Department of Human Services - Developmental Disabilities

## **Four members of the public appointed by the governor:**

- North Dakota Association of Community Providers
- One community employer representative
- One individual with a disability
- One family member of an individual with a disability

Activities of the Committee have included: drafting bylaws, receiving appointments to the Committee from the Governor’s Office, and coordinating activities with other entities involved in improving the employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

The Committee spent the last year building its organizational foundation and simultaneously learning about the priorities and plans of other workgroups that are promoting integrative employment.

## COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

### **Tina Bay**

Division of Developmental Disabilities  
Bismarck, ND

### **Vickay Gross**

Client Assistance Program  
Bismarck, ND

### **Chad Kourajian**

Lee Enterprises  
Bismarck, ND

### **Barb Murry, Chair**

ND Association of Community Providers  
Bismarck, ND

### **Gerry Teevens**

ND Department of Public Instruction  
Bismarck, ND

### **Paul Vardanega**

Mandan, ND

### **Ryan Volk**

ND Department of Commerce  
Bismarck, ND

### **Cheryl Wescott**

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Bismarck, ND

### **Eric Wittliff**

Minot, ND

## 2014 DIRECTOR'S AWARD FOR EXCELLENCE

**Cathy Bryce** of Devils Lake was honored with the Director's Award for Excellence. Cathy was nominated for this prestigious award by her peers for demonstrating dedication, productivity, and dependability to the service of individuals that are sight impaired to enhance their independent living and employment skills.

### Quotes from the 2014 Director's Award for Excellence Nomination Letter:

"Cathy has been the most influential mentor for new employees, affecting their job performance such that their case reviews result in almost 100% accuracy."

"Cathy is very creative in her work with her clients. Where there would appear to be a barrier to reaching a client's goal, she is willing to go the extra mile to find any and all solutions that will help the client achieve what they desire."

"Cathy tells everyone, 'I LOVE my clients'."



**Russ Cusack**, DVR Director and **Cathy Bryce**, Vision Rehabilitation Specialist.

“

I really liked the VR Counselor's concern about my health and how my job was going. It was nice to know someone cared.

CLIENT COMMENT

”

## 2014 NORTH DAKOTA STATE DVR

### Employer of the Year Award: Edgewood Senior Living, Minot

The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) announced that Edgewood Senior Living of Minot has been named the recipient of the 2014 North Dakota State DVR Employer of the Year Award.

The award honors North Dakota business owners and employers for their continued work with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and for their work within their communities to support, develop, and inspire individuals with disabilities to achieve their full potential.

The division and the North Dakota State Rehabilitation Council selected Edgewood Senior Living from eight regional employer award recipients.



**EDGEWOOD VISTA**



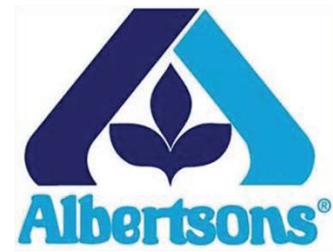
**(L-R) Scott Burlingame**, State Rehabilitation Council Chairperson; **Peter Yung**, Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator - Minot; and Edgewood Senior Living staff **Shannon Kranz**, Marketing and Move-In Director; **Denise Christianson**, Director of Nursing; and **Alan Thomas**, Dining and Environmental Services Manager

## REGIONAL EMPLOYER AWARD RECIPIENTS

The other regional employer award-winners include Albertsons, Williston; Applebee's, Devils Lake; Bergstrom Electric, Inc., Grand Forks; Jordahl Custom Homes, Inc., Fargo; Coborn's Inc., Jamestown; Herberger's, Bismarck; and Elks Lodge #1137, Dickinson.

"This year's award recipients represent a wide range of businesses who all have demonstrated their commitment to the

recruitment and retention of individuals with disabilities to meet their workforce needs," said Russ Cusack, director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. "Their inclusive recruitment strategies have created outstanding opportunities for individuals with disabilities to become employed and engaged within their communities."



“

More people should be aware of this amazing program.

CLIENT COMMENT

”

## DVR SUCCESS STORY

### Lakenna Martinez

After eight years as a nurse, Lakenna Martinez of Minot was told to leave the career she loved due to back and knee issues.

"I belong in nursing," explains Lakenna, who was diagnosed with a degenerative disk disease that made long periods of standing and physical labor difficult. Lakenna's doctors advised her to find a job that was less physically stressful. "I tried waitressing and working [in retail] but it didn't matter because I still had to stand," she says.

After years of trying other jobs, a friend referred Lakenna to the North Dakota Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) where she met Amanda Armstrong, a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

"When I meet with clients, my philosophy is: let's not focus on your disability; let's focus on your abilities and what you can do," says Amanda. After initial interviews, Amanda began the process to help Lakenna find the resources needed to continue her nursing career. This included additional occupational training and employment search assistance to help Lakenna find a nursing position that fit her physical abilities.

Through DVR recommendations, Lakenna applied to and was hired at Edgewood Vista, an assisted living facility in Minot. She has worked there since May 2014. "[Lakenna] shines as a nurse," says Denise Christianson, Clinical Service Director at Edgewood Vista. "The staff and residents love her. She's in a position with flexibility, so she's there for her kids. She's amazing at her job."

“DVR has helped me get back to where I belong. It's the best thing I could have done for myself.”



Lakenna Martinez (center) is back to work at a job she loves thanks to the support of Amanda Armstrong (left), DVR Counselor and Denise Christianson (right), Clinical Service Director at Edgewood Vista.

# ENHANCING PARTNERSHIPS WITH BUSINESSES

## Rapid Retention

### What is it?

Through Rapid Retention, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) is reaching out to North Dakota businesses in an effort to maintain their skilled and valuable labor force.

### How?

Vocational Rehabilitation services are provided to existing employees in need of worksite accommodations that might include amplification of hearing, ergonomic assessment, and participation in the cost of ergonomic workstations for employees with orthopedic disabilities. Disability is a natural part of life occurring due to accident or aging such as vision loss, hearing loss, mobility issues or learning disabilities. The services of Vocational Rehabilitation are intended to minimize the impact these natural occurrences impacts have at the workplace. The difficulty could be due to vision, hearing, mobility issues or learning disabilities, for example.

### What will VR do?

VR will provide disability-related expertise and help find solutions so people can continue to perform their job. The expertise could take the form of ergonomic assessments, recommendations regarding accommodations including assistive technology, both low tech and high tech, and potentially funding these solutions.

### Finding Success

A gentleman contacted VR at the recommendation of his audiologist. He was

having difficulty using the telephone at work due to a decline in his hearing. His hearing loss also had a negative effect on his ability to communicate with his employer and co-workers. VR met with him immediately and asked him to provide information from his audiologist, which determined he was eligible for VR service. VR assisted this employee to obtain hearing aids that resulted in his ability to use the telephone at work and communicate with his employer and co-workers. In this case, VR was able to pay 100% of the cost of the hearing aids. Some individuals may have additional financial resources or choose to help participate in the cost of service such as hearing aids.

In another situation, VR received a call from an employer. One of the employees had undergone surgery and was having difficulty with mobility at their work station. VR's ergonomics specialist traveled to the worksite, met with the employee, and recommended adjustments which included chair and monitor height. There were other adjustments that couldn't immediately be fixed such as the desk height and keyboard level, so the Vocational Rehabilitation staff member summarized her recommendations in an email to the employer. In this situation, the employer provided the recommended changes to the employee's work area. The expertise was provided discreetly, quickly, and at no cost to the employer or employee.

Further information regarding the value of the Vocational Rehabilitation Rapid Retention program will become available through a public education effort in 2015.

## TRANSITION SERVICES

### Transition From School To Work For Students With Disabilities: Summer Work Experience

DVR implemented the Summer Work Experience program for youth with disabilities in 2014. Eligibility requirements were:

- Eligible for VR services prior to participation in work experience
- Enrolled in their last two years of high school (juniors and seniors) or enrolled in high school until age 21

DVR partnered with Job Service ND to assist with internship stipends, as well as a variety of community rehabilitation providers who assisted students with obtaining and maintaining summer work. The experiences gave youth an opportunity to learn work norms and develop good work habits in order to build on a long-term career goal.

The intent of the 2014 Summer Work Experience was to provide an opportunity for students to gain career readiness skills (soft skills), increase knowledge of job skills & work settings, and to establish a work history. Some participants, such as George, exceeded those expectations and attained on-going permanent employment.

Although George had limitations in communication and self-direction, he was very motivated to work. During his Individual Education Plan meeting in the year prior to completion of his high school curriculum, George indicated an interest in applying for VR services and participating in the Summer Work Experience program. He was determined eligible for VR services and referred to Community Living Services for support needed to participate in the

Summer Work Experience program. He was already working with Job Service staff and was eligible for a paid internship. Through collaboration with Community Living Services, Job Service ND and Vocational Rehabilitation, George was placed in a summer job. Job Service North Dakota provided stipend to support George's work experience and monitored his attendance and punctuality. Community Living Services provided job coaching and support needed for George to succeed on the job and provided monthly progress reports to his VR counselor. George made good progress throughout the summer and was offered permanent, on-going employment when the Summer Work Experience ended. He continues to meet with his VR counselor and will now be better prepared to develop his Individualized Plan for Employment prior to completing his final year of high school training.



## LAUNCH MY LIFE ND

[www.launchmylifend.com](http://www.launchmylifend.com)

In 2013-14, DVR joined other transition-dedicated programs to form the North Dakota Transition Consortium (NDTC). The NDTC represents public/private sector partners who share a goal to promote, improve, and educate North Dakotans about transition services that help young adults with disabilities move from high school into college, training, or a job.

The NDTC includes:

- ND Center for Persons with Disabilities
- ND Department of Human Services' Division of Vocational Rehabilitation
- ND Department of Public Instruction - Special Education
- ND Protection and Advocacy Project
- ND State Council on Developmental Disabilities
- KAT Communications

The NDTC initially focused on the creation of a North Dakota transition website and the necessary marketing support to establish user awareness. In its first two project phases, the NDTC utilized student focus groups and the expertise of each NDTC partner to bring Launch My Life ND to life.

Launch My Life ND is a website that includes critical transition information, links and resources for students, young adults out of school, families, educators, and counselors. The site is a repository for diverse information ranging from student self-advocacy to program services and responsibilities.

The NDTC is currently in Phase 3 of site development as it remains committed to its goal of making Launch My Life ND the primary resource site for North Dakotans seeking a greater understanding of transition. In this phase, the NDTC is working to identify media/material developed by programs and agencies outside of the state that could enhance Launch My Life ND and benefit visitors to the site.

I was very pleased for the way VR helped me. I didn't realize in the beginning how much VR was able to help me.

CLIENT COMMENT

More people should be aware of this amazing program.

CLIENT COMMENT

VR really worked hard to get me a job and see where my skills are.

CLIENT COMMENT

## FFY 2014 AT A GLANCE

### Program Expenditures

Program Expenditures . . . . .	\$10 Million
People completing training and becoming employed . . . . .	394
Average weekly earnings before rehabilitation . . . . .	\$85.93
Average weekly earnings after rehabilitation . . . . .	\$447.77
People receiving training and other services . . . . .	3259
Percent of individuals served with a significant disability . . . . .	94%

### Return On Investment (ROI)

DVR uses ROI to show how clients benefit economically from VR services as well as how their increased income positively impacts the economy.

- **For every dollar spent by DVR, clients earn \$7.03.**
- **For every dollar spent by DVR, the clients pay back \$1.41 in taxes.**

### Social Security Reimbursement Program

The Social Security Administration (SSA) administers a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Reimbursement Program. Under this program, VR agencies are reimbursed by SSA for the cost of services VR provided to individuals who were current recipients of Social Security disability benefits. The services must have resulted in the individuals achieving work at or above a specified earnings level for a given period of time.

During FFY 2014, DVR received \$195,532 to further assist individuals with disabilities.

## FFY 2014 AT A GLANCE

### Employment Placements

Service Workers	27%
Administrative Support Workers	19%
Professionals	13%
Operatives	9%
Laborers & Helpers	8%
Sales Workers	7%
Executive/Managerial	6%
Craft Workers	5%
Technicians	5%
Other	1%

### Types of Impairments of Individuals Employed

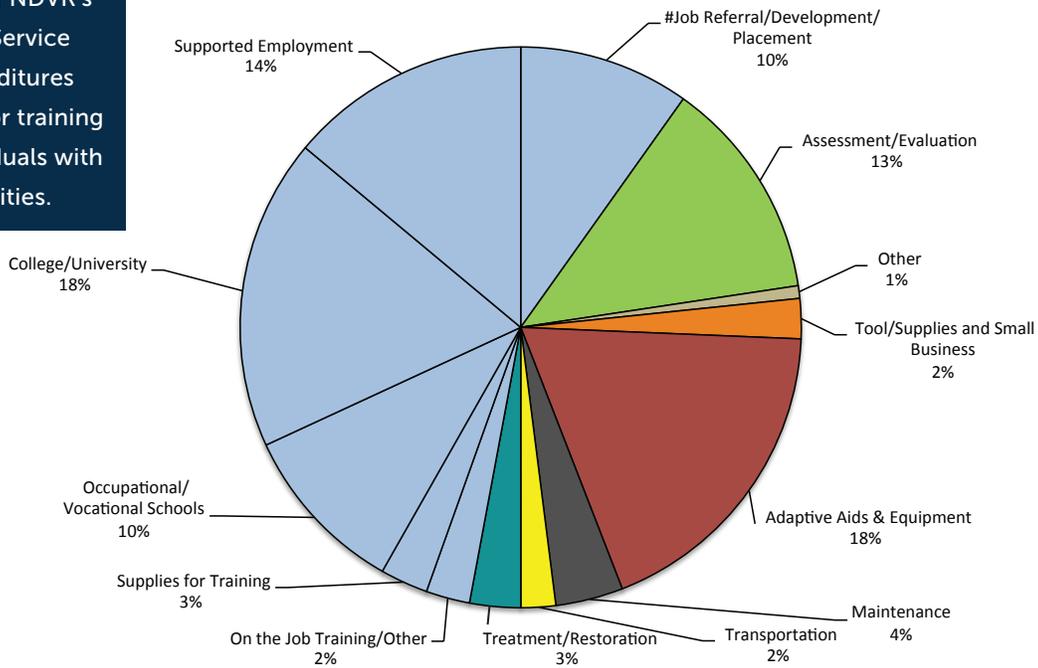
Cognitive	36%
Psychosocial	19%
Mobility/Orthopedic/Neurological	15%
Hearing	9%
Other Physical	9%
Other Mental	6%
Visual	5%
Communicative	1%

### Types of Service Expenditures

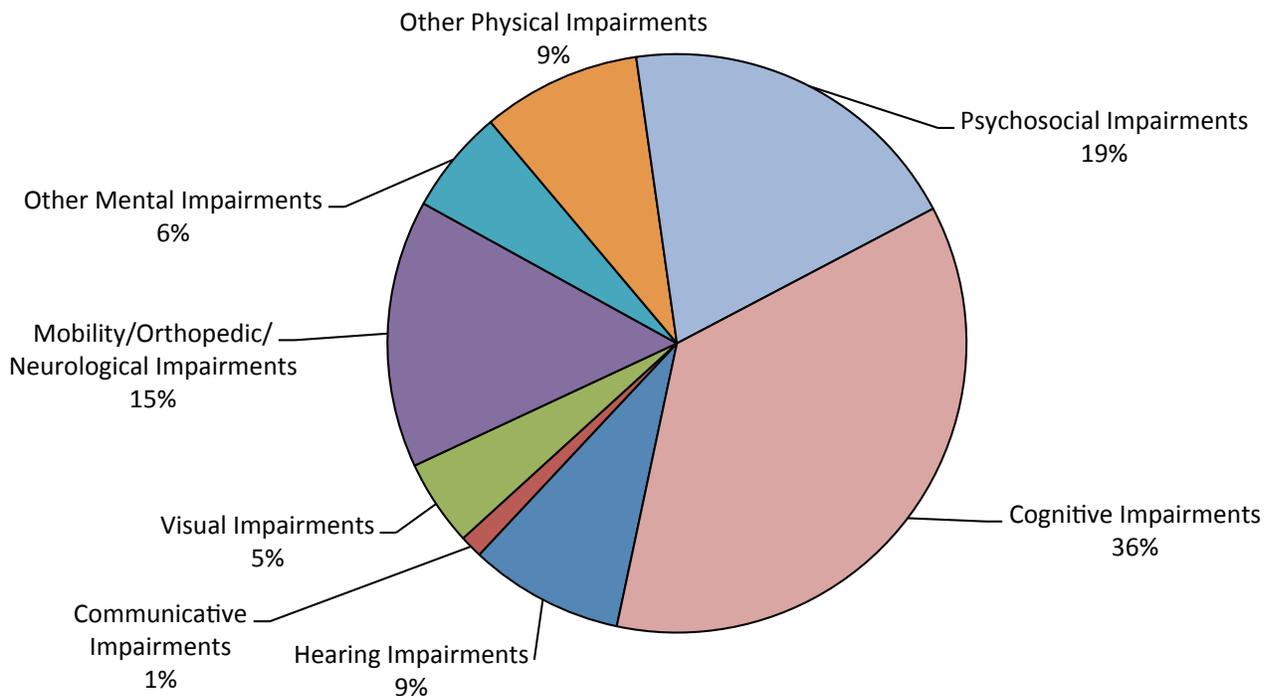
Adaptive Aids and Equipment	18%
College/University	18%
Supported Employment	14%
Assessment/Evaluation	12%
Job Referral/Development/Placement	10%
Occupational/Vocational Schools	10%
Maintenance	4%
Supplies for Training	3%
Treatment/Restoration	3%
On the Job Training/Other	3%
Tool/Supplies and Small Business	2%
Transportation	2%
Other	1%

## CASE SERVICE EXPENDITURES ND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FFY 2014

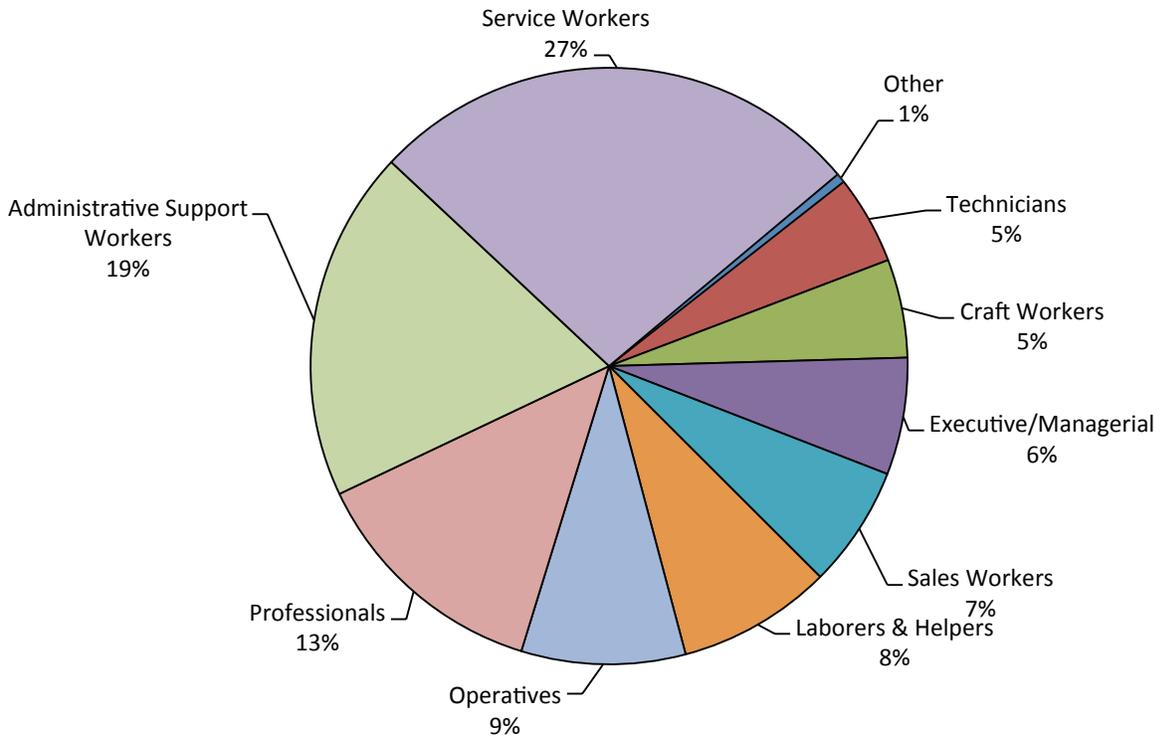
57% of NDVR's Case Service expenditures was for training individuals with disabilities.



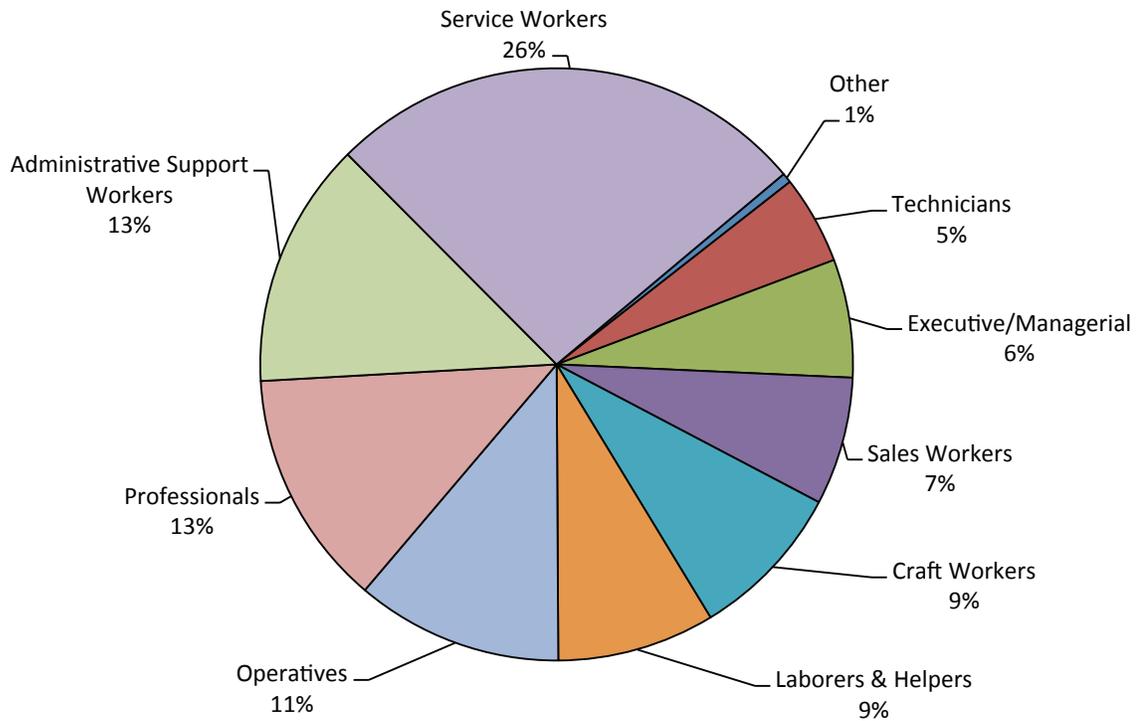
## PRIMARY IMPAIRMENTS OF INDIVIDUALS ACHIEVING EMPLOYMENT ND VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION FFY 2014



## OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES OF INDIVIDUALS ACHIEVING EMPLOYMENT FFY 2014

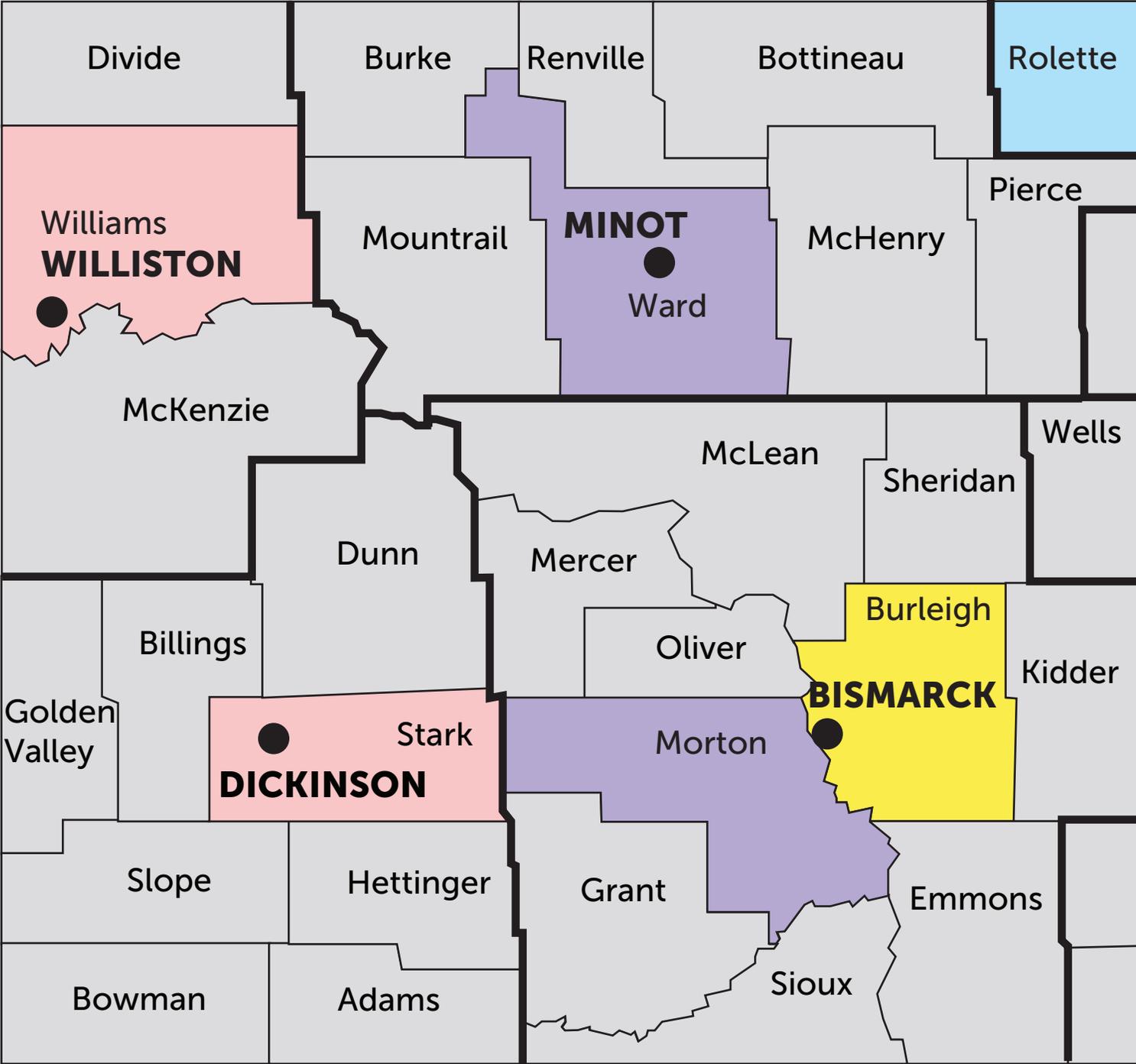


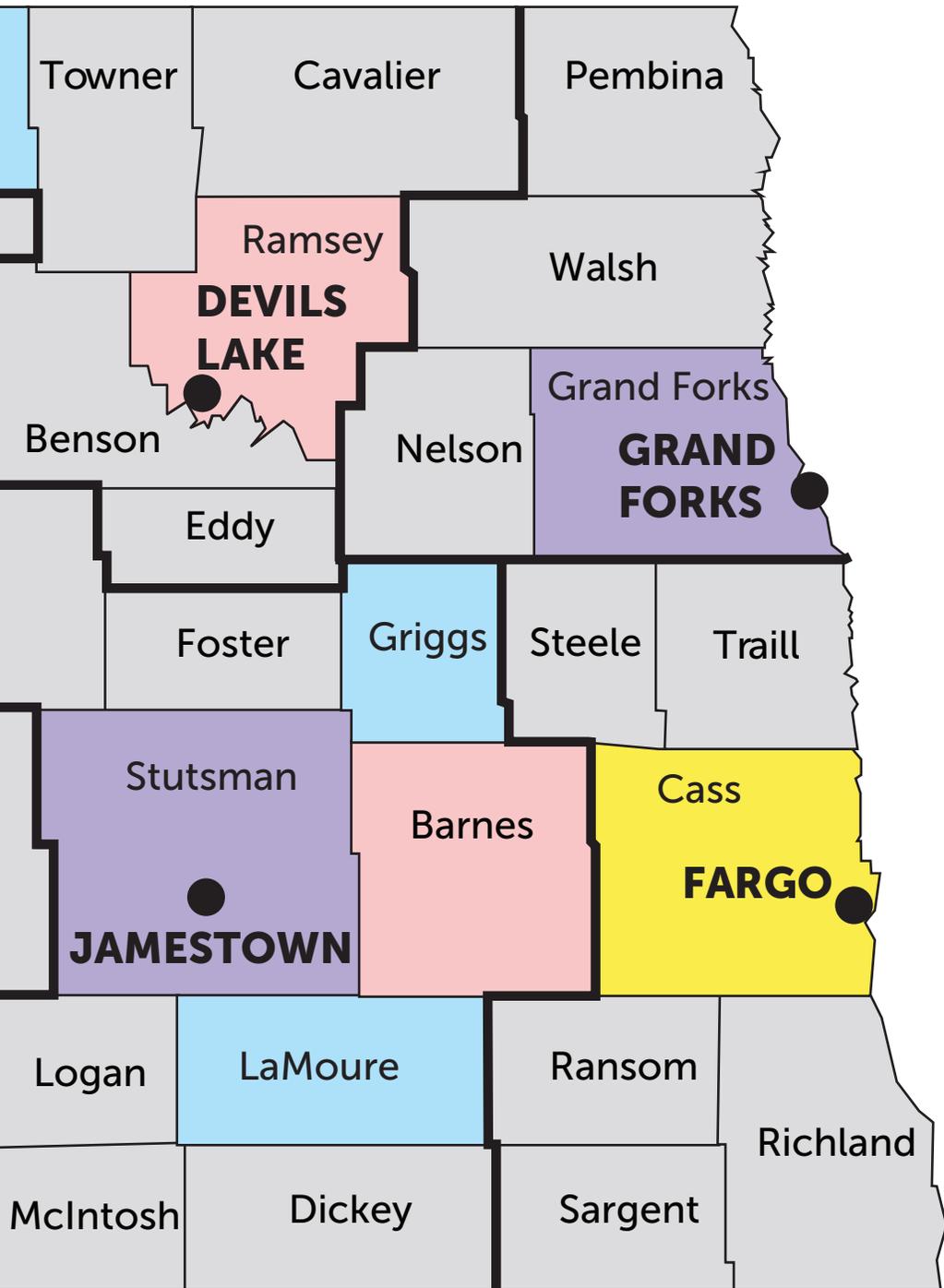
## OCCUPATIONAL CATEGORIES OF INDIVIDUALS ACHIEVING EMPLOYMENT FFY 2014 - AGE 24 AND UNDER AT TIME OF APPLICATION



# CLIENTS EMPLOYED

This map of North Dakota depicts the location of each of the eight regional DVR offices and the counties they serve including total clients employed.





**Williston Region**  
16 Employed

**Minot Region**  
65 Employed

**Devils Lake Region**  
20 Employed

**Grand Forks Region**  
52 Employed

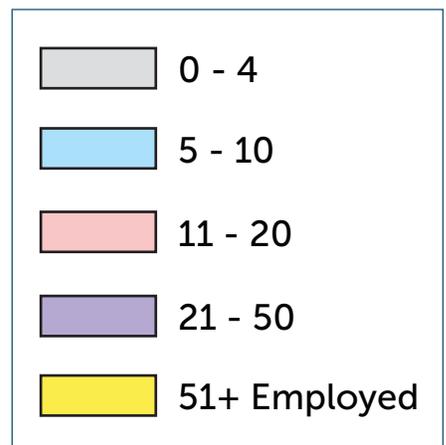
**Dickinson Region**  
16 Employed

**Bismarck Region**  
85 Employed

**Jamestown Region**  
60 Employed

**Fargo Region**  
80 Employed

**Total Clients  
Employed:  
394 (FFY 2014)**



To learn more about the North Dakota State  
Rehabilitation Council and the North Dakota  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation,  
**visit [www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr](http://www.nd.gov/dhs/dvr)**



North Dakota  
**STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL**  
*A NEW HORIZON FOR INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES*

DVR is a partner in

