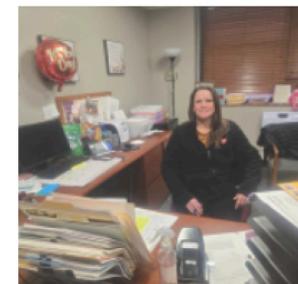
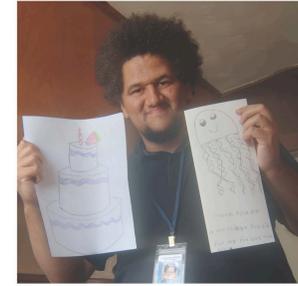
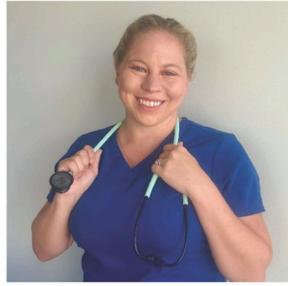


2025 ANNUAL REPORT SUCCESS STORIES



Success Stories

Amanda came to ORS in 2023. She was determined to be legally blind and was then referred to Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (SBVI) for Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Her counselor was Karen Russell.

Amanda wanted to resume working as an RN, but as a Telehealth RN. An Assistive Technology Assessment was completed, and a laptop as well as a height adjustable desk were both purchased. ORS also provided funds for set up/installation and training for use of laptop.

Amanda obtained an In-Home Nurse position but was experiencing difficulty with seeing small print. Her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor referred her to the Rehabilitation Teacher who suggested trying Smart glasses (wearables). New England Low Vision did a demonstration of wearables at the office which Amanda attended. Amanda was able to try on glasses at this demonstration and selected wearables, which ORS provided as well as training to use them.

Amanda thanked her counselor, as well as her Rehabilitation Teacher as they really helped her be more efficient with her job. She continues to be successfully working part-time as an In-Home nurse for Maxim Health Services since November 2024. When Amanda was contacted by Karen to see if she was interested in being highlighted as a success story in this year's ORS Annual Report, Amanda stated that she was honored to do so.



Amanda Pickard

VR Counselor: Karen Russell

Magnum came to the RI Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) in 2023. He was determined to be legally blind and was then referred to Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired (SBVI) for VR Services. His counselor was Karen Russell. In meeting with Magnum, it was revealed that he has a vocational background in food service and computer science. Karen began to discuss options with Magnum. The Randolph Shephard Business Enterprise Program was discussed.

The Business Enterprise Program [BEP] provided through ORS/Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired offers training and employment for qualified persons who are legally blind. Licensed blind vendors operate vending facilities at various locations found throughout the state. All locations are operated as independent businesses in close cooperation with SBVI. Types of facilities range from small snack bars serving light snacks and beverages to larger food-service sites serving hot and cold entrees prepared on-site. Magnum had previously worked with Massachusetts Vocational Rehabilitation and was never introduced to the BEP program. He was immediately interested. Magnum loved the idea of running his own Café.

He began to work with his Rehabilitation Counselor toward becoming a BEP Vendor as a vocational goal. He first completed a Community-Based Work Assessment at a local restaurant. He did great on the assessment and showed that food service was definitely the right goal. There are many steps that go into becoming a BEP Vendor. One of the main benchmarks Magnum completed was obtaining his Food Safety Manager Certificate. Magnum also completed a Certified Online Training Program for Vendors of Randolph Shepard. Magnum then completed 9 weeks of on-the-job training with all of RI's current BEP vendors and various locations.

Magnum is currently running the Coffee Plus Café located at the Garrahy Court House. He is doing very well working toward becoming a licensed BEP vendor and enjoying this new chapter in his life. Stop by and visit this ORS Success Story for a cup of coffee or a sandwich for lunch...



Magnum Goncalves

VR Counselor: Karen Russell

Andrew Blackson, 24, applied for ORS services in March 2024 with a goal of becoming a teacher assistant. Andrew had struggled in high school, dropped out, but went back on his own to earn his GED. He had some experience working with young children and was taking a class to become certified as a teacher's aide.

Goodwill worked with Andrew to update his resume, apply for jobs and practice interviewing skills. ORS also helped Andrew purchase interview clothing.

In December 2024, Andrew was hired to be a teacher's assistant in a classroom at Potter-Burns Elementary School which he loved and excelled at. When the school department transferred him to another school to supervise in-school detention, Andrew quickly learned this wasn't what he wanted to do. He left and was immediately rehired by Potter-Burns to work in their after-school program where he still is today.

During the summer months, Andrew was retained for the summer program because he was valued so much for his skills. For the school year, Andrew works with children from kindergarten through fifth grade. He is usually assisting the kids with activities. He shifts between being a program aide and acting as a primary teacher, as well as providing one-on-one individualized assistance for students who need it. He has been told he's "very engaging for the children" and "good at explaining" subjects to them.

"What I like most about my job is how impactful it feels to be there for the children and my staff. Some days it's really hard for them to crack a smile or find the fun in what they're doing, but being able to bring that spark back into their eyes always fills me with a sense of accomplishment and joy. I couldn't be happier that I am seen so positively in their days and am even happier to be so dependable to my fellow staff. A single smile a day proves that engagement will always be the best way to building trust, dependability, and cooperation from a child!" - Andrew



Andrew Blackson

VR Counselor: Avis Gunther

Cesar Cordero Jorge has been involved with the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) since August 2024. He is a very friendly, outgoing, social, and highly motivated gentleman.

Cesar has been successfully employed by Kohl's since May 2025. His job title is Housekeeping and Operations staff. He works 20 hours per week. His duties include ensuring the store is cleaned and organized before guests arrive. Duties also include dry mopping, vacuuming, cleaning high touch surfaces, and operating a trash compactor.

Cesar was assisted by ORS with the following services: Project Search – Bally's, Job Development, Job Placement, Job Retention and Supports along with Brokerage Services with Iraida Williams through LAZO and Assistive Tech Assessment/Equipment with Daniel Multer. Cesar was assisted with his vocational services through Access Point RI and developed a great relationship with his Job Developer Jennifer Fraser and his instructor at Project Search Tammy Fonseca. Cesar graduated from Project Search – Bally's in June, 2025.

Cesar is doing phenomenal at his job and is an integral part of Kohl's. He is affectionately known as the mayor by those close to him and his big personality and smile brightens everyone's day.



Cesar Cordero Jorge

VR Counselor: Gina Albanese

Sandrith is a 28-year-old female who resides in Pawtucket, RI. Sandrith first came to ORS in January, 2023. She had recently graduated with her master's degree in Youth Development from Rhode Island College and wanted assistance from ORS to secure employment. Sandrith had several vocational interests including working for a Domestic Violence Shelter or Non-Profit Organization that provided before and after school programs for children. However, Sandrith's ultimate career goal was to work as an academic advisor for a college or university. Sandrith found that these types of positions were highly competitive and had not had luck in securing this type of position on her own despite an impressive resume. Sandrith hoped that ORS services could help her achieve this goal and was referred to Easter Seals of RI (ESRI) to work with a career resource specialist (CRS). The CRS provided Sandrith with job development services which included resume development/editing, interview skills practice and help with applying for jobs.

In March of 2023, Sandrith independently applied for, and was hired to work full time as a Student Support Advisor at Dorcas International in Providence, RI. The position at Dorcas International was hybrid and required her to have the appropriate technology at home to conduct business. ORS was able to provide Sandrith with a technology assessment at her home, and also financially supported the purchase of a computer and headset needed for her to do her job from home. ORS recommended Sandrith work in this position for a bit to gain current work experience and encouraged her to reapply for ORS services in 6 months to a year to try looking for a new position as an academic advisor.

In September 2023, Sandrith reapplied for ORS services. She was still employed in the same position at Dorcas but wanted help securing a job at a college or university as an academic advisor. ORS referred her back to Easter Seals of RI (ESRI) to work with the CRS again. Although Sandrith continued to be independent with the job application process, she relied on the expertise of the CRS and ORS counselor to problem solve and debrief after having interviews. Sandrith struggled with her confidence at times, which may have been reflected in her interviews and resulted in not being offered a position. Through team meetings with CRS, ORS counselor and client, we were able to discuss these experiences and offered suggestions on how to improve for the next interview. In March of 2025, Sandrith was offered a full-time job as an Academic Advisor at CCRI. Once hired, ESRI provided Sandrith with job retention services. These are check-in services provided by ESRI for the first 90 days of employment to ensure the client is successful in her job. I am happy to report that Sandrith continues to be employed at CCRI and is very happy in her new job.

Congratulations, Sandrith, in achieving your dream job!



Sandrith Perez

VR Counselor: Elizabeth Champagne

Hugo

Hugo began his journey with the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) in 2016 while still attending Blackstone Academy Charter School. At the time, Hugo was exploring his future career path and working toward overcoming the challenges associated with transitioning from high school into adulthood. With the support of ORS, he participated in a variety of assessments and services to identify his interests and strengths, including a vocational evaluation, a summer work experience, and a Community-Based Work Experience (CBWE). These experiences were instrumental in helping Hugo explore different vocational options and understand the type of work environment where he could thrive.

Recognizing some barriers to employment, Hugo engaged in Brokerage services, travel training, and job club. These services helped build his independence, job readiness skills, and confidence. Through this process, Hugo discovered a passion for working with children and realized that he was most comfortable and successful in interactive, social settings.

As Hugo pursued his long-term goals, he also worked diligently on his education, ultimately earning a Bachelor of Arts in Social Sciences from Rhode Island College (RIC). With his career interests becoming clearer, he began working with a Job Developer through ORS to find a position that aligned with his skills and aspirations. Through targeted job development and placement services, Hugo secured employment as a bus monitor with DATTCO, where he is able to engage with children daily in a supportive and structured environment.

To help ensure his success on the job, Hugo continues to receive job retention services. These services have been key in maintaining his employment and addressing any challenges that arise in the workplace.

Today, Hugo is thriving in his role and is very happy with his job. His story reflects the power of persistence, targeted support, and a clear vision for the future. ORS is proud to have been part of Hugo's journey and celebrates his ongoing success.

VR Counselor: Alisha Plante

“From Student to Healthcare Professional: Sirena’s Journey”

At just 16, Sirena Amado joined Vocational Rehabilitation Services through Hope High School. With Pre-ETS, travel training, and support at Providence Transition Academy, she earned her ServSafe certification and was hired at Golden Crest Nursing Centre as a Dietary Aide earning \$17/hour.

Now 19, Sirena has returned to VR, receiving services from Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Fernanda Furtado to pursue her dream of becoming a Certified Nursing Assistant (CNA).

“I truly appreciate the support and services provided by ORS. They keep it professional, and I found my dream job because of their work and the opportunity I was given.” – Sirena Amado



Sirena Amado

VR Counselor: Fernanda Furtado

* * *

John

John applied to ORS in May of 2025. He came to ORS with a robust set of skills in the Data Analytics field.

While he was already skilled in Analytics, he needed assistance around securing a job that could become a career. ORS Counselor met with John several times to assess what services would be appropriate to help meet his employment goal.

ORS Counselor first helped John by revising his resume to make sure his skills and accomplishments were highlighted so future employers would be able to see.

While ORS Counselor was revising John’s resume, John was doing research on what employers were looking for in new hires. He put in countless hours of research and was able to identify two professional certifications that would make him more employable. ORS was able to cover the cost of the two certifications John needed.

John never gave up the job search, ORS Counselor would send him job leads, and he would apply right away. He was also hard at work connecting with former contacts and creating new professional contacts to help connect to a job.

Throughout this process John showed a high level of motivation and dedication to securing his dream job.

John is now working for one of RI’s largest employers. He is in a management role where he can utilize his skills and is doing something that he loves.

Great job John, it was a pleasure working with you!

VR Counselor: Amanda Marcaccio

Edward Torres, 35, lives in Providence with his family. He graduated from Hope High School and went on to attend the day program at Action Based Enterprises. He was initially referred to ORS in 2015 and participated in supported employment services including a vocational evaluation and community-based work assessment. In 2018, he was hired as a parking lot attendant where he worked until 2020 when the pandemic no longer brought traffic to the lot.

Eddy reapplied to ORS in 2023 and participated in a nine-month Adult Project Search Program at Bally's Twin River Resort & Casino. ORS provided additional supports through an assisted technology evaluation, purchase of an Apple watch to help him keep track of his time, and benefits counseling. During this time, he completed three different internships – housekeeping and front desk at the hotel and cashier at the retail store. He excelled at whatever tasks he undertook and quickly became a trusted member of the team.

When Project Search graduation came around in July 2024, Bally's knew they did not want to lose a valuable asset. With the help of Access Point vocational staff, Eddy was hired as a bar back in the events center, initially working 23 hours a week. As his experience grew, his hours were also increased.

Access Point continues to check in on Eddy, even though his case has now been successfully closed with ORS. Recently, Eddy gave a speech at this year's Project Search celebration to show what determination and hard work can do.



Edward Torres

VR Counselor: Avis Gunther

Perseverance should be Tonia’s middle name. Tonia came to the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) as a self-referral in August of 2022. As an older adult, Tonia qualified for services and underwent a vocational evaluation. This evaluation revealed so many strong aptitudes that were above average. Initially Tonia was thinking of a part-time position in an office environment assisting a business with their mission.

However, the story does not end there. After the company downsized in March 2023, Tonia set out to find her next career. Taking information from her first assessment counseling, along with the benefits planning she received, Tonia quickly decided to enroll in the Certified Work Incentives Counseling online training program out of Virginia Commonwealth University. This allowed her to become self-employed and to work in any state.

Two and a half years later, Tonia has received her Certification, completed a 9-month Internship working in her new field and is currently setting up her home office. She is busy networking/making connections to better assist the clients she will be working with.

Another successful story, thank you Tonia.



Tonia Croce

VR Counselor: Olivia Butler

Ryan F. Booth began Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services with ORS in September, 2024. Ryan accessed ORS while he was employed part-time since July 2018 as an Order Clerk at Stop & Shop. Ryan has been dedicated to ensuring he engages in each experience in a way that will continue to improve his quality of life.

Ryan earned a four-year degree but wanted a new path. Ryan participated in numerous VR services including counseling, guidance, information, and referrals. Additionally, Ryan participated in Job Club, Job Development, Job Placement, and Job Coaching programs at the Holistic Development Center.

These services helped Ryan prepare and face challenges related to interviewing and ultimately earning a position with the United States Postal Service as a Rural Carrier Associate.

He reports enjoying this position but has found it difficult to maintain employment with Stop & Shop.

Ryan has a bright future and will be an inspiration to many by overcoming the challenges related to his barriers to employment.



Ryan Booth

VR Counselor: John Gillard

Sophia started with the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) during her junior year of high school where she was set to participate in pre-employment transition services. Sophia did not finish her job exploration service due to significant anxiety and untreated medical barriers, which led to her taking a pause from ORS. Sophia's anxiety around work was so significant, that the conversation around it was too overwhelming.

Upon graduation, Sophia reconnected with ORS to work towards obtaining entry-level employment. In a short period of time, Sophia had demonstrated that she could manage her anxiety and work through her barriers that prevented her from being successful in the community. Not only did she complete her Vocational Evaluation service but is now completing Job Development and Job Placement services after a successful Summer Work program.

Sophia has gained confidence and increased her independence regarding work and has shown that she could break through her barriers to employment.

By ORS continuing to work alongside and support Sophia, she is now on her way to successful employment.



Sophia Patenaude

VR Counselor: Tara Caraccia

Peter applied for ORS services in 2021 while at the Salvation Army Program engaging in recovery. When we met, Peter had a lot of ideas of what he wanted to do, Recovery Coach, C N A, Substance Abuse Counselor amongst others.

For work therapy at the Salvation Army, he was assigned in the kitchen, and he admired the workings of the chef. He loved the kitchen, and he loved preparing food for the residents. At this point in his life, he wanted to make a change and make something of his life. Because he had done different things, as his disability kept getting in the way of him maintaining his jobs, he told his VR Counselor “I think I found something I would like to do when I’m qualified for your services... “Become a Chef”

ORS funded a clinical evaluation to determine eligibility. When he was found eligible for ORS services, he indicated that he wanted a change for good. Through working with his ORS/VR Counselor, he received an array of services that helped him make this dream of becoming a chef a reality. He was provided funding to attend the Culinary ServSafe training at the RI Hospitality Association. He completed, obtained the necessary certificate, and was hired as a cook at the Salvation Army. ORS funded his tools and vocational clothing. Through his meticulous work, and with guidance from his ORS/VR Counselor, he was promoted to chef a few months later. When the Head-Chef at the Salvation Army became too sick to continue working, Peter was given the Head-Chef position and has been working for three years now in that position. Peter is thrilled to continue working, and even became the boss of his department- Head Chef.

He is so happy and very proud of the progress made and how far he has come as well as maintaining his recovery. He says, “I tell everyone of the beneficiaries here: Go See Ms. Rebecca, tell her what you want, she will help if you are serious and stick with it- I’m here because ORS give me a chance and I took it I am thankful I did”. Congratulations Peter keep soaring!



Peter Mburu

VR Counselor: Rebecca Dine-Nyeswa

Jessica applied for ORS services in 2024, at which time she wanted to either do Administrative Work, Peer Counseling, or Become a Truck Driver. When found eligible, she received services from ORS which assisted her in securing full-time employment with benefits. She loves her work there. She was diagnosed with Crones disease, mental health problems, as well as addiction issues. She has a BSN Degree in Nursing, but her addiction and disability got in the way.

She engaged with the Salvation Army Rehabilitation Program and took hold of her recovery as she understood and realized that the life of addiction was not helpful. With ORS support, guidance and counseling, she was able to obtain employment as a truck driver at the Salvation Army initially. She was then transferred to the administrative side within a year as an Intake Coordinator due to her demonstrated interest in improving her life and building a stronger career. Her experience, attitude, motivation and willpower to do better are all evidence to what an individual can achieve once you put your mind to it.

Currently, she is providing intake, peer advocacy, helping the beneficiaries stay focused and maintain their recovery. When I spoke to her about including her in the annual report, she was excited to share her story which she states will help others turn their lives around as anything is possible once you “BELIEVE”. She asked me to include the Believe sign on her wall that serves as her motivational force.

Jessica loves her job and is quite happy with her success and the employer who saw it fit to take a chance on her – The Salvation Army, she calls them her second family as she recently got married and all is going well. She had to maintain recovery and the changes in her life to excel. (Congratulations Jessica!). She has demonstrated to ORS and the Salvation Army her willingness and commitment to follow through consistently with her goals of staying employed, sober, stable and doing her best as she “Believes” .



Jessica Rivet

VR Counselor: Rebecca Dine-Nyews

Nicole, a mainstream teacher for the deaf at Captain Isaac Paine Elementary School in Rhode Island, has spent years inspiring her students to overcome communication barriers. As a cochlear implant user herself, Nikki relies on this technology to excel in her classroom.

However, when her cochlear implant hardware began to fail, Nicole faced a significant challenge – the high cost of upgraded hardware which threatened her ability to continue her impactful work. Determined to remain a role model for her students, she turned to Rhode Island’s Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program for support.

The Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services offered vocational guidance and counseling, information and referral, and financial assistance to cover some of the cost of the upgraded cochlear implant hardware, alleviating the financial burden and allowing Nicole to focus on her teaching and students.

With her new cochlear implant hardware, Nicole achieved optimal auditory function, enabling her to engage fully with her students, and deliver lessons with confidence. Her ability to model resilience and adaptability has inspired her students, some of whom use similar assistive devices.

Nicole’s success highlights the transformative impact of Rhode Island’s Vocational Rehabilitation program.



Nicole Poirier

VR Counselor: Paul Hughett

Steven Dona

Steven is a 45-year-old who re-applied to ORS looking for a full-time job in a warehouse, a position he had experience in.

Steven worked with Perspectives Corporation's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Department for Job Development and Job Placement services. After a long, frustrating, and disheartening journey, Steven went on an interview with Ocean State Job Lot for a full-time role as a First Shift Warehouse Associate - Special Projects position within the Distribution Center. At the end of the interview, he was given a verbal offer for the role and he happily accepted!

In partnership with Steven's employer, ORS, Perspectives Corporation's Deaf and Hard of Hearing Department, and Dan Multer, Rehab Engineer, a tablet with installed software was put in place for Steven to communicate with his supervisor and co-workers. Job Retention services were provided to ensure Steven performs his best and adheres to Ocean State Job Lot's performance standards.

Steven's doing great at his job and loves it!

VR Counselor: Jennifer Pires

Lois H. , age 94, came to SBVI looking for any assistance to help with her vision loss. She was very open to services and appreciative for the help.

Lois lives in senior apartments by herself in Wakefield. She has some in-home assistance but wants to remain as independent as possible. She uses her kitchen appliances and will prepare her own food, as well as sets up her own medications. Vision services allow her to maintain some independence, requiring minimal in home assistance.

She was provided with several lighting options which made areas brighter for her to do daily tasks, such as preparing her medications, eating, etc. She continues to use appliances and prepares her food. She was given several aids to make these tasks safer, such as a boil alert, cut resistant glove, OVEN gloves, and a cafeteria tray. Instruction was provided on low vision items.

She was added to the SBVI large print calendar list to make it easier for her to keep track of her appointments, as well as provided with bold lined paper for grocery lists, etc. In addition, she was given TV glasses to trial to possibly improve the TV watching experience.

Lois' daughter reached out to let us know that her mom is feeling less stressed and very happy with the prompt service and Low vision items she was provided. She stated "mom is delighted with everything."

Lois will be having a sunglasses evaluation in the near future.



Lois Hartley

ORS Caseworker: Sue Furtado

Janna

Janna is a young woman who earned a Doctorate in Pharmacy and currently works in a specialized oncology treatment center. As a pharmacist in this center, Janna's job tasks are many and varied. This very impressive accomplishment started with a high school student who encountered challenges and barriers to achieving vocational success and obtaining the job she worked toward, in collaboration with RI Office of Rehabilitation Services providing vocational rehabilitation resources.

Janna sustained an intrauterine stroke which resulted in hemiplegia and hemi-paresis of her right dominant side, as well as cardiovascular involvement. Janna experiences subsequent weakness and paralysis of her right side with minimal articulation of her fingers and restricted fine motor dexterity.

When she was seventeen years old, Janna was referred to the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) and enrolled in Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Through inter-agency collaboration, along with vocational assessments, Vocational Guidance & Counseling, Information and Referral Services, as well as her own research, Janna decided upon the field of pharmacy and set her sights on a nearby pharmacy program to earn her Doctor of Pharmacy (PharmD). She applied to a college with a specific professional program to which she was accepted. After she graduated from high school in 2018, knowing that Janna could benefit with Assistive Technology (AT) for college, a VR Counselor sent her for an AT Assessment with a rehabilitation engineer to procure for tools necessary and specific to Janna to push beyond barriers. Over the course of training the ORS purchased AT to assist with classwork, homework, and internships. The ORS also provided Janna with tuition grants and books & supplies to allow her to progress toward her vocational goal of becoming a pharmacist. Janna was successful.

In 2024, Janna graduated from a five-year program with Doctor of Pharmacy degree. Her professional training was not over, however. Janna went on to complete a residency with a specialty in Oncology at a hospital out of state. The ORS then assisted Janna with fees for professional exams and licensure fees in two states. It is in one of these states where Janna currently works as a Pharmacist in Oncology at a renowned cancer treatment center.

Janna declares that she is extremely grateful for all the support, personal and financial, she has received through the RI Office of Rehabilitation Services.

VR Counselor: Paula Berard

Hayden Drew Williams III offers a great success story for overcoming challenges related to his learning disability. He began services with ORS beginning in September, 2024. Hayden engaged in Vocational Rehabilitation Services, choosing Holistic Development Center as his preferred vendor. Hayden diligently engaged in services including, a Vocational Evaluation, Job Placement, and Job Coaching. In December, 2024, he was offered employment as a Backroom Associate at Marshall's & HomeGoods.

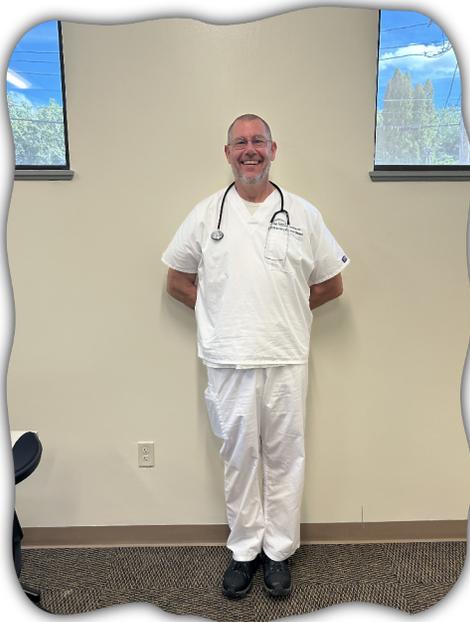
Hayden has excelled since being hired and has maintained this position since, January, 2025. During a meeting in May 2025, Hayden expressed a desire to prepare for the anticipated discontinuation of his SSDI benefits, projected in 2027.

Following the meeting, Hayden completed his OSHA-10 requirement, in preparation for becoming a Forklift Driver. Hayden is an inspiration to many as he continues to overcome obstacles due to challenges associated with his learning disability.



Hayden Drew Williams III

ORS Counselor: John Gillard



Joel Robinson Jr.

Joel W. Robinson, Jr. resumed services in October, 2024. Although Joel was employed, he was adamant about not allowing his disabilities to negatively impact his employment and quality of life based on previous experience. Joel has worked as a Maintenance Technician at Wingate Residences on the East Side since July, 2024.

Joel faced challenges securing additional hours to supplement his needs. He actively engaged in Vocational Rehabilitation Services, specifically counseling, guidance, information, and referrals. Joel's vocational rehabilitation services counselor was able to speak with his then supervisor to help increase his hours from 16 hours to 24 hours. Joel was able to both effectively self-advocate and utilize available supports. While engaged in services, Joel expressed an interest in becoming a CNA. He has since enrolled in the CNA program which began September, 2025.

Joel relies on his faith and familial support to continue to succeed in his vocational endeavors. Great things on the horizon for Joel!

Alannis Nieves was referred to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) by Central High School in September, 2023. During her time at Central Falls High School, she received IEP special education services for a non-verbal learning disability and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD). Alannis graduated in 2024.

Although she faced challenges in self-direction, communication, work skills, and tolerance, she had a strong desire to work with children as a teacher's assistant. In April 2024, she applied for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services and became job-ready by March 2024. She chose to collaborate with Easter Seals of Rhode Island and actively participated in job development, placement, retention, and community-based work experience (CBWE) services until she achieved her goal.

On March 4, 2025, Alannis began working at Joyful Heart Discovery Learning Center in Pawtucket, Rhode Island, as a teacher's assistant. She continues to excel in her role and is praised by her employer for being a fantastic team player.

They commend her positive attitude, willingness to help, and dedication to teamwork, stating that these qualities contribute significantly to the success of the entire team.



"A reliable employee truly makes a difference!"

Joyful Heart Discovery Learning Center

Alannis Nieves

VR Counselor: Ileana Santiago

Mary Abby Jusayon

Mary Abby has been totally blind since she was a very young child. She had wanted to be a teacher of the visually impaired since she was a teenager. She is a bright young woman who demonstrated that she could realize her dreams through hard work and determination. She achieved her dream when she was hired as a Teacher of Blind and Visually Impaired Students in a public school system in Rhode Island. In order to obtain the necessary skills for success she was provided training by ORS/SBVI to utilize non-visual techniques to help her be more independent, obtain her education, as well as work skills.

While in high school and college, ORS/SBVI sent her to summer work at a camp where she obtained experience working with blind and low vision children. Prior to college ORS/SBVI provided assistive technology to access information to assist with completing college work. She attended Rhode Island College, where she obtained a bachelor's degree in elementary education. She was also provided with Orientation and Mobility Training to access the college campus as well as the community.

She went on to obtain her master's degree in education with a concentration in vision studies at the University of Massachusetts in Boston and earned the certifications required to teach in Rhode Island and Massachusetts. While getting her master's, she was hired for a position working with blind and low vision adults where she instructed them in the use of technology. The culmination of her education and experiences helped her to secure her current position as a teacher of blind and visually impaired students. This position requires her to travel throughout the district to work with her students.

ORS/SBVI assisted by providing orientation services to the schools, as well as information to assist her with requesting ADA accommodations from her employer. She is now successfully employed, using her skills and lived experiences, teaching blind and low vision children where she is a true role model to both students and their parents.

ORS Counselor: Grace Pires

"John"

In April 2024, "John" applied for services and began working with ORS. At the time of intake, "John" was a 29-year-old man who was looking for assistance in securing employment. He had recently relocated from Massachusetts to Rhode Island and was unsure of attainable employment options which fit his skills and abilities. "John" had never held paid employment, due in part to significant social anxiety, was receiving income through SSI. While in Massachusetts he had been attending the local community college and was enrolled in their Information Technology program, but he had switched to Human Services. As "John" was unaware of what services were available to him, his vocational rehabilitation counselor explained eligibility and the range of services ORS could provide. "John" was presumed eligible for our services given he was receiving SSI benefits.

The first step in his vocational journey was to refer "John" to Career Construction in Narragansett to complete a vocational evaluation to clarify his vocational interests while assessing his skills and abilities. "John" was fully cooperative and promptly completed the assessment process. Recommendations from the evaluation included (1) "John" participating in job preparation to develop basic job seeking skills and (2) completing a Community Based Work Experience (CBWE) to develop experience, establish references, and gain firsthand information about a particular field of interest. "John" completed his CBWE at the Court House Center for the Arts in Kingston, RI and demonstrated the work skills and work ethic required to be successfully employed. As a result, "John" was offered a job at the nonprofit. His vocational rehabilitation counselor authorized job placement and retention services with Career Construction, and additionally referred "John" for benefits counseling so that he could learn about the impact of earned income on his benefits.

"John" started working part-time as a Marketing Assistant at the Court House Center for the Arts in October, 2024. Dudley Samponaro, Sr. at Career Construction emphasized that this has been "A solid journey for this young man, who in eight months went from a 29-year-old never-employed individual avoidant of social contact to a new father successfully maintaining 20 hour/week employment."

"John's" success story with ORS is an example of collaboration among the client, vocational counselor, and service provider.

VR Counselor: Natalia Montoya

Micaela Chester

Micaela was self-referred to Office of Rehabilitation Services for services and has been compliant with services and all recommendations. Micaela Chester is a single mother of two adult male sons. She has been diagnosed with schizophrenia, depression, PTSD, and Crohn's disease. Client has endured many obstacles in her adult life, but this has not deterred her from reaching her goals. She has faced significant issues with her mental illness and even faced homelessness. When she requested to receive VR supports, her demeanor was always positive and driven.

Initially, Micaela participated in culinary training through Nico Bella, and services were added to her employment plan. Micaela excelled in this program and was given a part-time position in the restaurant. Micaela's vocational rehabilitation counselor provided her with weekly check ins while she worked at the restaurant for a few months. Micaela's case was successfully closed in January, 2025. Soon after Micaela returned for services requesting to participate in the Certified Nursing Assistant Program, through Crossroads RI. Micaela did exceptionally well in this program, scoring high scores on almost all her exams.

Micaela made it a point to text her vocational rehabilitation counselor every week with her scores, leading to invitation to her CNA ceremony. Micaela was hired by Lifetime Medical, a home care agency in July, 2025. She is also working at Tockwotton Assisted Living Facility where she was hired two weeks later. Micaela has been doing well in her position. Micaela was having a hard time with ending services, but I ensured her that she will continue to excel as a Certified Nursing Assistant and will go far in her career.

Micaela has displayed perseverance and determination throughout her studies, and maintained positivity and compassion throughout her participation in VR services.

VR Counselor: Kenia Richards

Peter Chora

Peter is a 22-year-old male who applied for ORS services in 2021. At the time of application, Peter was 18 years old, a senior at Cumberland High School, and did not have any work experience. Through ORS, Peter was able to take part in several pre-ETS services provided by our vendor, Viability, including a job exploration and a 40-hour, paid community-based work experience. These services provided Peter with an opportunity to try temporary work at Seabra, Ocean State Job Lot, and Chili's Restaurant.

In addition to these experiences, Peter attended one year in the transition program at Cumberland High School in which he was able to experience working at Mount Saint Rita Nursing Home as a dietary aide. With the experience gained through these work placements, the support of ORS, and the CHS transition program team, Peter applied for his dream job at a movie theatre. In July of 2023, the client was hired to work part time at Cinema World in Lincoln, RI as an usher!

In addition to employment services, Peter requested help from ORS to obtain his driver's license. ORS supported this goal and provided Peter with adaptive driving services, including a clinical driving assessment, on-the-road-driving assessment, and driving lessons provided by The Driving Doctor.

ORS also provided Peter with one-on-one tutoring through Tailor Made Training to help him with studying for the permit test. Peter worked diligently on this goal for 2 years, and in 2025 he obtained his driver's license! Peter is now able to drive himself independently to his dream job at Cinema World.

Peter is truly a success story, and we are proud of his dedication to work towards his goals of self-sufficiency.

VR Counselor: Elizabeth Champagne

Jonathan

As a vocational rehabilitation counselor at the Office of Rehabilitation Services, I have been at this for a while and have seen many different people struggle with getting and keeping employment. It is often easier to obtain employment and harder to keep it. This success story is a prime example of a person with a disability struggling with not just gaining employment, but keeping employment for an extended period of time. A young man named Jonathan was referred to me on 5/22/2024 from The Providence Center by Darian Simas. He is a 20-year-old high school graduate with a diagnosis of ADHD, General Anxiety d/o and Major Depressive d/o. I receive many referrals from TPC as I am the liaison to this agency, working closely with the vocational counselors there, assisting clients in gaining employment.

Jonathan had just started working at Van Pool as a bus monitor. Darian from the Providence Center had assisted him in obtaining this position, and my thought was that he would be closed successfully after he worked for 90 days. This was not the case. Jonathan worked approximately one month before being let go due to calling out too much. Jonathan then obtained a job at Advance Auto Parts as a driver, this position did not last long either. Other positions that Jonathan acquired with Darian's assistance included a delivery driver for Feast & Fettle, however, he left this job after about a month due to being injured. He then began working for Meals on Wheels in January, 2025 as a full-time driver. He worked there for a little over a month, prior to leaving due to needing shoulder surgery.

After Jonathan was medically cleared to work, he obtained employment at Russell Morin Caterers as a light delivery driver, starting work in May, 2025, where he worked 20 hours per week receiving \$18 per hour. Thus far, he has stayed at this job and seems to be happy. The vocational team at the Providence Center has been providing him with Supportive Employment supports including the following services: job development, job placement, and retention supports. Uniforms and work clothing have also been provided to Jonathan.

Prior to client getting his most recent employment, he had requested a meeting with the vocational treatment team, as he was inquiring about getting his CDL-B license. When the team met with Jonathan, there was a discussion about the need for him to first maintain employment for at least 90 days to show that he has the motivation to keep working. It was further explained to him that ORS needed to see some success prior to funding his CDL-B license. His team discussed the fact that although he is already doing this type of work, the specialized license would enable him to further his work and gain more pay in this field in the future. Jonathan was agreeable to this plan of maintaining employment for at least 90 days or more to ensure a successful closure with ORS. He would then be re-referred by the vocational team at The Providence Center so that he could be trained and obtain his CDL-B license.

Jonathan's case is due to be closed successfully with the plan for him to re-apply for services with the intention of gaining his CDL-B and being more marketable in the field of delivery driver.

VR Counselor: Diana Siravo-Marcotte

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