

Rhode Island Department of Human Services  
Office of Rehabilitation Services  
and  
Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council

# 2017 ANNUAL REPORT



**Gina M. Raimondo**  
Governor



**Courtney E. Hawkins**  
Director

## **The Mission of the Rhode Island Office of Rehabilitation Services is**

*“To empower individuals with disabilities  
to choose, prepare for, obtain, advance in,  
and maintain employment, economic  
self-sufficiency, independence and  
integration into society”*

---



### **ORS Values**

*We value the worth, dignity, rights,  
responsibilities, and empowerment of all  
persons with disabilities in achieving their  
individualized goals.*

*We value staff who reflect pride and  
commitment to excellence in achieving our mission.*

*We value a management style that fosters  
responsibility and accountability while  
encouraging creativity, initiative, and leadership  
throughout the organization.*

*We value community support in achieving  
the agency’s mission.*

*We value leadership which promotes  
clarity of purpose.*

# Table of Contents

Message From the Director of Department of Human Services .....	1
Message From the Associate Director .....	2
Vocational Rehabilitation .....	4
Raymond A. Carroll Award .....	6
Statistics .....	8
Services for the Blind & Visually Impaired .....	18
Statistics .....	22
Disability Determination Services .....	24
Statistics .....	27
Success Stories .....	28
Message From the State Rehabilitation Council Chair .....	36
State Rehabilitation Council Members .....	39
SRC Committee Reports .....	46

## Message from the Director,



*Courtney Hawkins*

The Rhode Island Department of Human Services is an agency dedicated to the people who need us, and it is my pleasure to provide you with the Annual Report for Federal Fiscal Year 2017 for our Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS).

ORS is charged with empowering Rhode Islanders with disabilities who voluntarily wish to obtain and maintain employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and full integration into society. Vocational Rehabilitation Services; Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI); and Disability Determination Services (DDS) provide a myriad of resources and services which enhance the quality of life for Rhode Islanders with disabilities.

Younger individuals with disabilities and their families work with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to make that important transition from school to post-secondary education and/or careers. The business and labor community depend on ORS for trained, job-ready applicants. Rhode Islanders applying for Social Security disability benefits get accurate and timely decisions; and Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired provide services for individuals who have a visual impairment. The staff also personalize services when needed.

In FFY2017, 3,838 persons with disabilities were provided vocational rehabilitation services, training, and employment services provided by ORS-approved vendors. The Disability Determination Services adjudicated 18,633 claims for Social Security disability benefits.

We are proud of the partnerships that our staff has developed with our citizen advisory councils, community partners, customers and the community, which has contributed so much to the quality of life for individuals with disabilities in Rhode Island.

*Courtney Hawkins*

## Message from the Associate Director,



*Ronald Racine*

The Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) is in an unparalleled period of change. Having served in many different capacities within ORS over the past 23 years, I can truly say that I cannot remember a time when we have been challenged with as many regulatory, programmatic, and reporting requirements as we are now facing. Despite these challenges, the ORS leadership team is invested and passionate about our work and committed to the individual success of our staff, and ultimately the customers we serve.

With the recent passage of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), we have been strengthening our partnerships with workforce investment, education, developmental disability partners, economic development systems and businesses throughout the local, state, and national levels to streamline workforce service delivery approaches.

ORS staff have been working extremely hard all year, and the Vocational Rehabilitation program placed 703 people in successful, competitive integrated employment last year. This is an increase for the fifth consecutive year. The Independent Living for Older Blind Program helped 434 people who are now able to live more independently in their communities, and 2,321 individuals received information or services under the Assistive Technology Access Partnership. (ATAP)

But more importantly, behind these numbers are real stories. We have highlighted some of these stories in this report to illustrate the work that we do. I hope you enjoy seeing the difference our dedicated counselors and social workers are making every day to assist Rhode Islanders with disabilities to become employed and live independently. I also want to take this opportunity to thank the State Rehabilitation Council for their commitment and support over the past year. They have been an instrumental partner as we have implemented the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) and developed new programs and services for transitioning students.

*Ronald Racine*

# January, 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b> New Years Day State Offices Closed	<b>2</b> SRC Executive Leadership Mtg	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b> SRC Full Council Mtg	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> Martin Luther King Day State Offices Closed	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> Governor's Commission on Disabilities - Disability Business Enterprise Committee Mtg	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>			

## Special Observations:

National Mentoring Month  
Alzheimer's Awareness Month

## Vocational Rehabilitation

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Program is the public state and federally funded program that assists individuals with disabilities to choose, prepare for, obtain and maintain competitive integrated employment. Employment being the successful outcome of services provided through the public vocational rehabilitation program. It is expected that individuals with disabilities who apply for services are interested in becoming employed and understand that this is the focus of the VR program.

A Masters level Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor works with the individual to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) that includes an employment goal. The time expected for the individual to reach the goal, the services that the individual chooses as necessary to reach the employment goal, and how the services will be provided are all individualized.

Vocational Rehabilitation services that may be incorporated in an Employment Plan include:

- \* Assistive Technology Services
- \* College or Vocational Training
- \* Counseling and Guidance
- \* Diagnostic Evaluations
- \* Housing Modifications
- \* Job Development and Job Placement Services
- \* Job Training and Job Supports
- \* Other Goods and Services
- \* Post-Employment Services
- \* Rehabilitation Technology Services
- \* Transition Services from School to Career
- \* Vehicle Modifications

# February 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				<b>1</b>	<b>2</b> Ground Hog Day	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Governor's Commission on Disabilities — Employment Comm. Mtg 9:30—11:00 am	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b> Valentine's Day  State Independent Living Council 12:30 - 2:30 pm	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b> Chinese New Year	<b>17</b>
<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> President's Day Governor's Commission On Disabilities Mtg 5:00—6:30 pm	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>25</b>	<b>26</b> GCD— Accessibility Committee Mtg 2:00—3:00 pm	<b>27</b> State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Leadership Mtg	<b>28</b>			

## Special Observations:

Heart and Stroke Month

White Cane Week - 1st week of February



ORS Associate Director Ron Racine described Sheri this way: "Sheri Lomax has been with ORS for 9 years, she has done an excellent job in building a successful caseload working with a very difficult population of folks. The RIWorks recipients that Sheri works with are not just individuals with disabilities, but folks with very limited work history, no work role models, and a history of relying on a system to take care of them. She has cultivated a mutually beneficial relationship with the DHS office, as well as Goodwill Industries, providing her vocational expertise, guidance and a consistent message of firm understanding. She has been a consistent and calming voice and presence in a more recent chaotic time within the DHS office. She advocates for her clients especially around program development, always looking for a better way to reach and teach her clients the skills they need to be self-sufficient. She is respected by everyone she works with for these qualities. She exemplifies the definition of a team player. As a Counselor she is someone I can rely on if I ask her to do something, she meets the needs of the agency, meeting her goals with this challenging group of clients. she is a leader in the region and sought for her knowledge and expertise."

Congratulations, Sheri!

We're so proud of you!

## Raymond A. Carroll Award

The Raymond A. Carroll Award is given to an individual who exemplifies the same dedication in serving individuals with disabilities as Mr. Carroll had during his forty-two years of state service.

Raymond Carroll began his career at the Office of Rehabilitation Services in 1966 and retired in 2008. During that time, he demonstrated his awareness of the needs of individuals with disabilities and was a dedicated and effective advocate for improving the standards set for programs providing services for those individuals with disabilities.

On Friday, October 27, 2017, Department of Human Services Director, Courtney Hawkins, presented Sheridan Lomax with the 7th Annual Raymond A. Carroll Award.



*Sheridan Lomax, Director Hawkins*

### **Past Recipients include:**

Sharon DiPinto - Sr. HSPSS - 2011

Kathy McCabe - Sr. Rehabilitation Counselor - 2012

Sherry Olink - Jr. Resource Specialist - 2013

Teresa Scaramuzzo-DiMattia - VRC II - 2014

Rosemary Feeney - Sr. HSBO - 2015

Paula Stachelek - 2016

# March 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4	5	6 SRC Full Council Mtg.	7	8	9	10
11 Daylight Savings Begin	12	13	14	15	16 Brain Injury Awareness Day	17 St. Patrick's Day 
18	19	20 Spring Begins 	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30 Good Friday ----- Passover Begins	31

## Special Observations:

**March 15, 2011 - American Disabilities Act (ADA) came into effect.**

American Red Cross Month

Multiple Sclerosis Awareness Month

Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month

Cerebral Palsy Awareness Month

# Vocational Rehabilitation Program Statistics

## 703 Successfully Employed

### Age at Application

< 25 yrs	293
25 - 35 yrs	137
36 - 45 yrs	114
46 - 60 yrs	145
61 or >	14

### Gender

Male	373
Female	330

**2,173** individuals applied for vocational rehabilitation services.

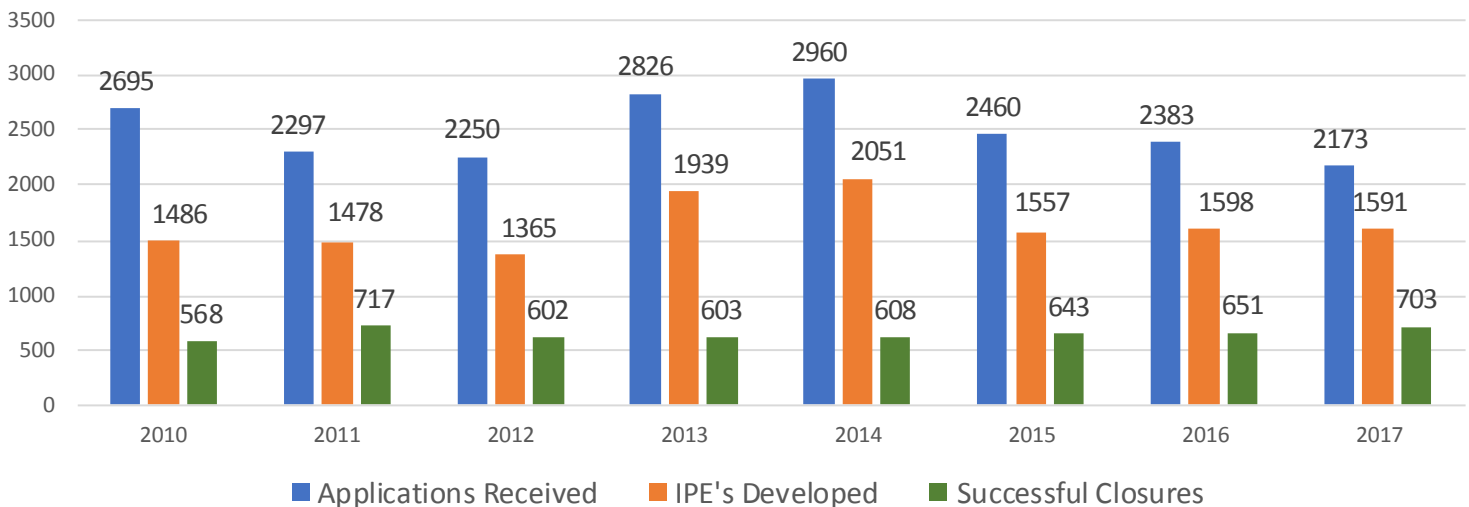
**1,591** individuals worked with a vocational rehabilitation counselor to develop a new Individualized Plan for Employment [IPE].

**3,985** individuals received services purchased from vendors. Services ranged from evaluations, medical and psychological therapies, personal assistant services, job placement and training.

**143** individuals received rehabilitation technology services to assist them to prepare for and to enter employment.

**809** youth with disabilities ages 14-24 applied for transition services .

2010 - 2017 Statistical Comparison



# April 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
<b>1</b> Easter  April Fool's Day	<b>2</b> World Autism Awareness Day	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b> World Health Day
<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b> State Independent Living Council 12:30 - 2:30 pm	<b>19</b> Governor's Commission on Disabilities - Disability Business Enterprise Committee Mtg	<b>20</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>22</b> Earth Day	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Executive Leadership Mtg	<b>25</b> Administrative Professional Day	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Show Your Mettle Day*
<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	* Encourages amputees to show off their metal (prosthetic devices, wheelchairs)				

## Special Observations:

Alcohol Awareness Month  
 American Cancer Society Month  
 Autism Awareness Month  
 Limb Loss Appreciation Month  
 Stress Awareness Month

### Hourly Wage

9.00 - \$15.00	609
\$15.01 - \$20.00	47
\$20.01 - \$30.00	36
> \$30.00	11

### Primary Disability

Respiratory	2
Communicative	12
Visual Impairments	33
Deaf or Hard of Hearing	17
Physical	39
Neurological	48
Cognitive	258
Emotional	294

### Race

White	600
Black	210
Indian/Alaskan	36
Asian	36
Pacific	4

### Primary Occupation

Management Occupations	7
Business and Financial Operations Occupations	9
Computer and Mathematical Occupations	6
Architecture and Engineering Occupations	3
Life, Physical, and Social Science Occupations	2
Community and Social Service Occupations	25
Legal Occupations	1
Educational Instruction and Library Occupations	18
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media Occupations	10
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical Occupations	18
Healthcare Support Occupations	55
Protective Service Occupations	22
Food Preparation and Serving Related Occupations	117
Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance Occupations	49
Personal Care and Service Occupations	37
Sales and Related Occupations	52
Office and Administrative Support Occupations	154
Farming, Fishing, and Forestry Occupations	0
Construction and Extraction Occupations	14
Installation, Maintenance, and Repair Occupations	27
Production Occupations	16
Transportation and Material Moving Occupations	51
Military Specific Occupations	0

# May 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
		<b>1</b> May Day	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> SRC Full Council Breakfast Mtg	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b> Governor's Commission on Disabilities — Employment Comm. Mtg 9:30—11:00 am	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>13</b> Mother's Day	<b>14</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b> Armed Forces Day
<b>20</b>	<b>21</b> Global Accessibility Awareness Day	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>27</b>	<b>28</b> Memorial Day State Offices Closed	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b>		

## Special Observations:

ALS Awareness Month  
 Arthritis Awareness Month  
 Guide Dog Month  
 Mental Health Month  
 Mobility Awareness Month

Each year Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and Regions are expected to achieve goals in three different areas:

- \* Number of Applications Received;
- \* Number of IPES - Individualized Plan's for Employment Developed; and
- \* Number of Successful Closures

For FFY2017, the twenty-seven Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors listed on these next pages achieved all three of these goals, as well as Regions I and III.

## Targeted Goals

**Regions I and III achieved all three of these goals.**

### Region I Counselors Achieving All 3 Goals



Teresa DiMattia, Rosemarie Aponte, Paula Cardi Berard, Karen Dougherty, Diana Marcotte, Sheridan Lomax, and Supervisor Barbara Mulligan  
Missing from picture: Rebecca Dine-Nyeswa

### Region III Counselors Achieving All 3 Goals



Shayna Cogswell, Avis Gunther-Rosenberg, Manuel Carbuccia, Sandra Perez, Elizabeth Champagne, and Supervisor Patricia Ianiere  
Missing from picture: Michael Lombardi

# June 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14 Flag Day 	15	16
17 Father's Day	18	19	20 State Independent Living Council 12:30 - 2:30 pm	21 Summer Begins 	22	23
24	25 GCD— Accessibility Committee Mtg 2:00— 3:00 pm	26	27	28	29	30

## Special Observations:

Antiphospholipid Antibody Syndrome Awareness Month

Audiobook Month

PTSD Awareness Month



## Individual Achievement Awards for Meeting All Goals

### Region II Counselors Achieving All 3 Goals



Natalia Montoya, Laura Allbee, Nicole Crossett,  
Robert Fox, with Supervisor Jennifer Fiske

### Counselors Meeting Goal of No. of Applications and Closures Include:

Bonnie Flanagan  
Nina Lusignan  
Kim Pinksaw

### Counselors Meeting Goal of No. of Individualized Plans for Employment and Closures Include:

Valerie Williams  
Emilee O'Connor  
Kathleen McCabe

Regions II and V

### Region IV Counselors Achieving All 3 Goals



Carolyn Blessing, Karen Russell, Kathleen Neun, Teresa O'Brien,  
with Supervisor Karen Davis

# July 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4 Independence Day State Offices will be closed	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16 Disability Awareness (ADA) Day	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31				

Special Observations:

*Have a safe holiday!*  Happy July 4th

## Individual Achievement Awards for Meeting All Goals

### Region V Counselors Achieving All 3 Goals



Supervisor Jessica Warwick, Ann Marie Folcarelli, Sharon Thistlewaite–Morra, Michaela Stannard, and Kristen Livesey

### Counselors Meeting Goal of No. of Applications Include:

Glenn Lanoue

### Counselors Meeting Goal of No. of Successful Closures Include:

Kelley Conti  
Cynthia Hebert  
Amanda Marcaccio  
Jeffrey Milette

Region IV

### Region VII Counselors Achieving All 3 Goals



Graciela Pires, Paul Hughett, with Supervisor Jane Cannata

# August 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
			1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8	9 Governor's Commission on Disabilities — Employment Comm. Mtg 9:30—11:00 am	10	11
12	13 Victory Day State Offices will be Closed	14	15 State Independent Living Council 12:30 - 2:30 pm	16 Governor's Commission on Disabilities - Disability Business Enterprise Committee Mtg	17	18
19	20	21	22	23	24	25
26	27 GCD— Accessibility Committee Mtg 2:00— 3:00 pm	28	29	30	31	

## Special Observations:

Children's Eye Health & Safety Month  
 Children's Vision and Learning Month

# Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI)

## Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI)

Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (SBVI) offers a wide array of services to eligible individuals who are blind or visually impaired through its Vocational Rehabilitation Unit, Business Enterprises Program, and Social Services Program. The various services offered by these programs are designed to help individuals of all ages achieve independence at home, in the community, and in the workplace.

**Vocational Rehabilitation Program...** A Federal/State Program created to assist people who are blind or visually impaired to obtain or maintain employment. Services provided include: evaluation, orientation, mobility training, rehabilitation technology, guidance and counseling, career assessment, educational planning, vocational training, provision of adaptive equipment, job development, job placement, and follow-up services.

**Business Enterprises Program...** A Federal/State Program which establishes vending facilities in state, federal, or private buildings for operation by persons who are legally blind. Licensed blind vendors operate vending facilities at 14 locations throughout the state and are assigned to these locations on the basis of their seniority within the program. 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. All operate under the name of “Coffee Plus”.

**Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP)...** The Office of Rehabilitation Services is the lead Agency for the Rhode Island Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP). ATAP is a statewide program funded under the Assistive Technology Act of 1998, which works to reduce or eliminate barriers that impede access to, and funding for, assistive technology devices and services for individuals with disabilities of all ages.

# September 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2	3 Labor Day State Offices will be Closed	4	5	6	7	8
9 Grandparent's Day --- Rosh Hashanah Begins	10	11 Patriot Day	12	13	14	15
16	17	18 Yom Kippur Begins	19	20	21	22 Autumn Be- gins
23	24	25	26	27	28	29
30						

## Special Observations:

National Guide Dog Month

Sight Saving Month

Spinal Cord Injury Awareness Month

## **SBVI (cont.)**

**Social Services Program...** Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired coordinates a federal comprehensive service program which focuses primarily on children from birth through age 14, elderly individuals, and individuals for whom a vocational goal is not feasible.

**Children's Case Management Services** include family case-work, coordination with Early Intervention Programs, educational guidance, summer camp for youths, arrangement of ophthalmologist and low vision evaluations, and information and referral to appropriate community programs.

**Independent Living for Older Blind Program** provides case management services, along with ancillary services for mobility and orientation, rehabilitation teaching for skills training in activities of daily living, management of low vision, provisions of adaptive equipment, and information and referral to support groups and appropriate community services.

**Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan Program (ATEL)...** The ATEL Program loans telephone equipment to residents of the State of Rhode Island who have hearing, speech, or neuro-muscular (unable to dial or hold a receiver) impairments and have a signed certificate of disability. Equipment is issued on a first-come, first-serve basis. This was the first full year that wireless devices were available, and ATEL issued \$12,600 in wireless equipment for year one!

# October 2018

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>8</b> Columbus Day State Offices will be Closed	<b>9</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>14</b>	<b>15</b> National White Cane Safety Day	<b>16</b> National Bosses Days	<b>17</b> State Independent Living Council 12:30 - 2:30 pm	<b>18</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>21</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>24</b> United Nations Day	<b>25</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>28</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>31</b> Halloween 			

## Special Observations:

National Disability Employment Awareness Month

Diversity Awareness Month



# SBVI Statistics

- 14** Vending facilities were supported by the Randolph-Sheppard Business Enterprises Program (BEP) at Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired. Though most locations are single operators, these 14 facilities collectively also provide employment for numerous individuals around the state.
- 3** sites renovated and one new site in development at the new EOHHS offices ( Johannes Virks Bldg), Cranston.
- \$19,100** Average net earnings (profit to vendor after expenses) across all sites
- \$42,860** Highest reported net earnings by a vendor
- 509** individuals were registered for NEWSLINE, a newspaper reading service of which 11 recently signed up.
- 424** elderly individuals who are blind or visually impaired received services from the Independent Living for Older Blind Program. Services included: 37% - assistive technology services and training; 17% - orientation and mobility services; 28% - communication; and 41% - daily living skills services. 81% of this group feel in greater control and are more confident in their ability after receiving services.
- 1,905** individuals received information from Assistive Technology Access Partnership (ATAP) Resource Centers about assistive technology (AT) and funding options.
- 173** individuals received AT training, demonstration, loans or assistance with recycled AT devices.
- 243** individuals were provided specialized equipment through the ATEL (Adaptive Telephone Equipment Loan) Program.
- 1,295** Presentations were made on Assistive Technology devices and services.
- 127,903** AT Newsletters were distributed via mail and email.

# November 2018

	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
				1	2	3
4 Daylight Savings Time Ends	5	6 Election Day State Offices Closed	7	8	9	10
11 Veterans Day	12 State Offices Closed	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22 Thanksgiving State Offices Closed	23	24
25	26 GCD— Accessibility Committee Mtg 2:00— 3:00 pm	27	28	29	30	

## Special Observations:

Alzheimer's Awareness Month

Diabetes Awareness Month

Epilepsy Awareness Month

Hospice Awareness Month

## Disability Determination Services

The Rhode Island Disability Determination Services (RI DDS) is a unit within the Office of Rehabilitation Services, which operates under a “state-federal” partnership. The function of the RI DDS is to make determinations as to the medical eligibility of adults and children with physical and/or mental impairments who have applied for Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits. The RI DDS is assigned a budgeted workload under a regulatory agreement with the Social Security Administration (SSA). The RI DDS is 100 percent financed by SSA to adjudicate initial disability applications, appeals of cases initially denied, and continuing disability reviews. The RI DDS also performs disability hearings on cases in which benefits have been terminated. In total, the RI DDS processed 18,633 disability cases this year. We anticipate processing about the same number in FFY2018.

RI DDS is starting to roll out the new computer system that SSA is developing. The system is referred to as DCPS (Disability Case Processing System). We started the roll out in March, and currently have four examiners processing cases on the new system. We also have support staff working in the system. There are limitations with the new system, and SSA is constantly working on software development to make the system more functional for the users. We will gradually introduce more users to DCPS in the coming year as the system becomes more functional. In the meantime, we have the bulk of our staff working on the old system. SSA is constantly improving the software and tools that the examiners use in their daily functions to enhance timely and accurate decisions.

SSA has been working diligently to get all the Continuing Disability Reviews up to date. This has resulted in an increase in CDR’s over the past couple of years. In FY17, we processed 5224 CDR’s. We expect to produce a similar amount in FY18, and then we will reach currency. We had to reorganize staff and train Hearing Officers in order to keep pace with this increasing workload.

# December 2018

December 2018						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
						1
2 Hanukkah Begins	3	4	5	6	7 Pearl Harbor Remembrance Day	8
9	10	11	12 State Independent Living Council 12:30 - 2:30 pm	13	14	15
16	17	18	19	20	21 Wi  ins	22
23	24	25 Christmas Day State Offices Closed	26 Kwanzaa Begins	27	28	29
30	31					

## Special Observations:

*Wishing everyone a  
Happy Holiday Season!*

## **Disability Determination Services (cont)**

Despite all the changes in the method that claims are processed, the RI DDS has been able to maintain excellent accuracy ratings of 95.1% while processing 18,633 claims. We have faced some challenges keeping pace with this workload, but we were able to reduce our reliance on help from other states with our medical reviews and assistance processing cases from the Regional Case Processing Unit. We were able to reduce aged cases and our Processing Time, which result in more timely accurate service to the citizens of RI.

Rhode Island opened a CDI (Cooperative Disability Investigations) Unit in January 2015 to help combat fraud in the program. This unit investigates fraud in initial and reconsideration applications prior to claimants being put in pay status. Recently they have been able to work fraud cases for individuals already in pay status. The referrals come from the field offices, DDS, and the public. The CDI unit consists of a DDS examiner, a field office representative, two investigators from the Attorney General's office, and a Special Agent. SSA continues to put a high emphasis on combatting fraud in the program.



### **Local Social Security Field Offices**

**30 Quaker Lane, 1st Floor ~ Warwick, RI 02886-0111  
1-866-964-2038**

**4 Pleasant Street ~ Pawtucket, RI 02860  
1-866-931-7079**

**Pavilion Plaza ~ 2168 Diamond Hill Road  
Woonsocket, RI 02895  
1-877-229-3542**

**130 Bellevue Avenue ~ Newport, RI 02840  
1-866-253-5607**

**1 Empire Plaza ~ 6<sup>th</sup> floor ~ Providence, RI 02903  
1-877-402-0808**

# Disability Determination Services Statistics

<u>17,083</u>	total cases were received by the Disability Determination Services (DDS).
<u>18,633</u>	claims were successfully processed by the DDS.
<u>8,585</u>	initial claims were filed.
<u>9,113</u>	initial claims were processed.
<u>5,224</u>	Continuing Disabilities Review cases were completed.
<u>631</u>	Pre-Hearing Cases were processed, resulting in <u>408</u> Disability Hearing Unit decisions.
<u>5,445</u>	cases with Consultative Examinations were purchased.
<u>15,895</u>	cases with Medical Evidence of Record were purchased.
<u>\$1,543,572</u>	total Medical Costs with a Total Budget of <u>\$9,692,141</u>
<u>\$529.31</u>	cost per case.

Production Per Work Year (PPWY) efficiency rate was 365.3

The national rate was 306.5

The performance accuracy rate for RI was 95.6%

The net accuracy was 95.1%. The national rate was 97.3%.

The regulatory standard is 97%. The Failure threshold is 90.6%.

*\*Based on the Monthly Obligation Report for 9/2017.*

# Success Stories

*“As reported, ORS assisted **703** individuals to obtain employment in jobs that were consistent with their goals and aspirations. Of that number, ORS would like to showcase some individuals who exemplify the benefits of employment.”*

## **Client:**

Melissa Richardson

## **Counselor:**

Michael Lombardi

## **Occupation:**

Receptionist

## **Employer:**

Community Care  
Alliance

Melissa Richardson, is a recent graduate of the Administrative Office Management training at Community Care Alliance Employment and Training Center. Melissa was fully disabled after losing part of her leg in a car accident. All her jobs before the accident were very physical, and she lost the ability to do any of her former work due to the physical requirements.

Melissa decided that she needed retraining and she wanted to work in an office setting, because it has equal amounts of sitting and standing. She wanted to see people, talk to people, and just get out of the house, enter the workforce, and become part of society again. Melissa wanted to work so she could show her daughters that she can still do a lot, even with her injury. The goal was to teach them that, no matter what, you can do anything if you work hard and try hard.

Melissa was referred to Community Care Alliance for their training program by her ORS counselor, Michael Lombardi. She enrolled in the Administrative Office Management training, and she was off on the new journey of her life. She passed the Microsoft Office Specialist Certification for Microsoft Word. She also learned soft skills, like how to perform in an office setting.

Now, Melissa is a receptionist in an office in Woonsocket RI. She makes appointments, calls for reminder appointments, files paperwork, greets clients as they come in, and makes sure that they have everything they need. She lets the clinicians or physicians know when their next appointment is in.

Thinking back, she said that “I should have been doing this kind of work all along, but I guess I never had the right steps in place or anybody to direct me”.

I am very grateful for the Office of Rehabilitation Services and Community Care Alliance. She loves what they do for Woonsocket – how they get out and try to help the city and help people better themselves.

**Client:**

Richard

**Counselor:**

Natalia Montoya

**Occupation:**

Stock Clerk

**Employer:**

West Elm and Pottery Barn

"this job opened  
up a lot of doors  
for me."

Richard applied for services with ORS in September 2015. When he first met with his Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor, he expressed his frustration with the process of trying to obtain employment. Although Richard was receiving SSDI benefits, he was desperate to obtain employment, and feel like he was a productive member of society.

Richard and his VR Counselor had a somewhat "rocky start" to their working relationship. Trusting others was very difficult for Richard; however, over time Richard felt more comfortable working with his VR Counselor, and they developed a trusting working relationship.

Richard was referred by his ORS Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor to Goodwill Industries of RI to complete a vocational evaluation in order to learn about his interests, abilities, and work readiness skills. Upon successfully accomplishing this evaluation, Richard completed a Community-Based Work Experience (CBWE) to assess his skills in his field of interest. He had an extensive employment history working as an auto detailer at different car dealerships. Although he considered returning to this industry, he was open to try other jobs, as he really wanted to become employed.

Richard's attitude changed, his self esteem increased, and his motivation and eagerness to move forward with his life completely changed during this time. Richard was then referred for Job Development, Placement, and Retention Services, and also received Benefits Counseling. Richard applied for and was interviewed for several jobs, and was offered a couple of positions; but for different reasons, those jobs did not work out for him. Richard never gave up, and he continued with his job search despite the difficulties he encountered.



*"My counselor  
Natalia and case  
manager Maryann  
made me feel that I  
could be a  
productive member of  
society and move  
forward. You guys  
had the confidence  
that I could do it."*

*Richard C.*

In August 2016, Richard started working at West Elm as a stock clerk. He continues to work there an average of 25 hours per week alternating between the two stores Pottery Barn and West Elm.

Richard is very happy with his job, and he stated that **"this job opened up a lot of doors for me."**

Richard's story is only a snap shot of what could be accomplished working as a team. Richard's counselor really believes that working as a team is what made the difference in Richard's life.



***Client:***

Christine

***Counselor:***

Karen Russell

***Occupation:***

Substitute Teacher Assistant

***Employer:***

Coventry Public School  
Department

Christine is a 46-year old married woman with one son. Her primary diagnosis is Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Fibromyalgia, Hypertension, and Allergies to dogs, cats, dust, and pollen. Christine has 9 years of volunteer experience assisting teachers in various schools. She was told by one teacher that because she has many years of volunteer experience and really enjoyed doing this type of work, she should become a Substitute Teacher Assistant.

Christine liked that idea, but she first needed to obtain the PARA Pro Certificate. This certificate is required to be a Substitute Teacher Assistant. Being a Substitute Teacher Assistant would provide her with flexible work days and hours. Christine spoke to the Coventry School Department, and she was able to confirm that they were in desperate need of Substitute Teaching Assistants.

In order to assist Christine in the decision-making process, ORS provided funds for a vocational evaluation that was completed by ORS-approved vendor, Career Construction of RI. During the work site assessment of this evaluation, results indicated that to working in a position that allows flexible hours would accommodate her physical stamina needs. Christine earned an “A” for her coursework and obtained a perfect score on the Teacher Assistant License Exam.

ORS assisted Christine to reach her employment goal with her vocational goal of Teacher Assistant by funding the Certification Course, the PARA Pro registration fee, book, and test. In addition, she received benefits counseling, and assistance with job development and placement services. She updated her resume, and submitted a letter of interest to the Coventry School Department. Christine obtained a permanent Substitute Teacher Assistant position in the Coventry Public School Department.



# In Her Own Words...

**Client:**

Laura Whitaker

**Counselor:**

Paul Hughett

**Occupation:**

Examiner

**Employer:**

Amica Insurance

July 9, 2017

Dear Paul,

Thank you so much for the services you and RI Services for the Blind provided to me in recent months. The technology instruction, devices, and occupational assistance have helped me greatly in my day to day work and home life. It couldn't have come at a better time, either, with my company's recent system upgrade as my workdays have been busier than ever. The magnification devices have made reading charts, tables, and other printed material (paper or digital) so much easier.

As I go forward in my career, I feel more confident now to apply for positions that require more responsibility and technical prowess. In a large part, this is due to your help. Having tools, knowledge, and adaptive technology has inspired confidence in me that I can take more on. I always worry, when a new position comes up, whether I'll be able to handle it, and what it will require of me visually. Now I don't have to worry because I know I can do more armed with the tools you've given me.

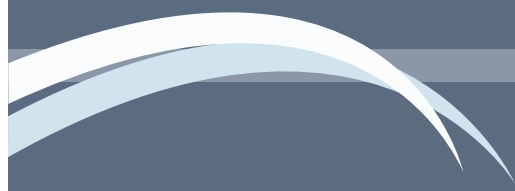
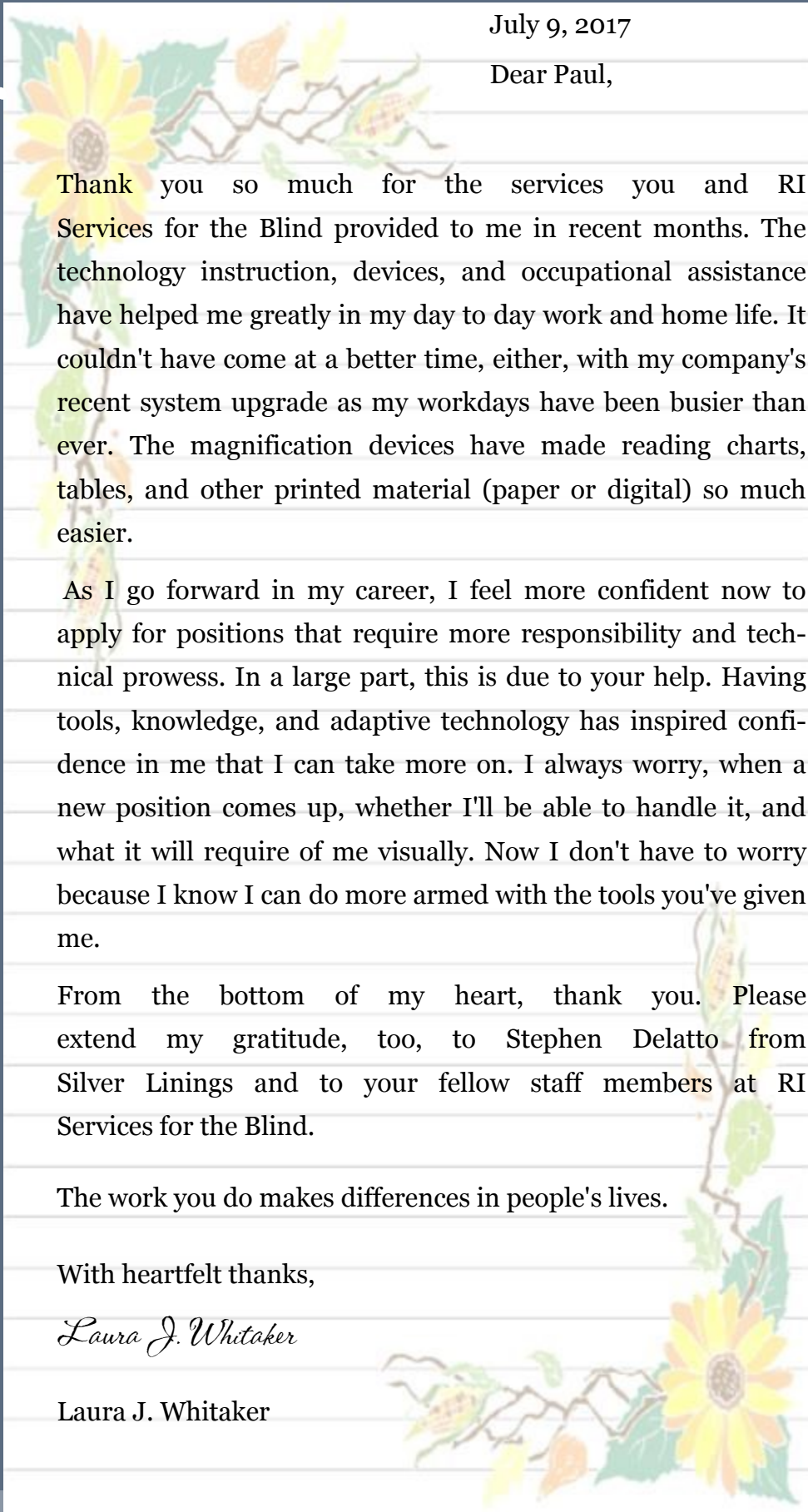
From the bottom of my heart, thank you. Please extend my gratitude, too, to Stephen Delatto from Silver Linings and to your fellow staff members at RI Services for the Blind.

The work you do makes differences in people's lives.

With heartfelt thanks,

*Laura J. Whitaker*

Laura J. Whitaker





***Client:***

Audra Leroux

***Counselor:***

Emilee O'Connor

***Occupation:***

Cashier

***Employer:***

Compass Group

Audra applied for ORS services in March of 2013. She had previously worked with the agency and had been closed successfully when she obtained part-time employment as an usher at a local movie theater. Audra worked at the cinema for nine years. During that time, her pay-rate remained at minimum wage, and her schedule included mostly weekends and holidays. Audra re-applied for ORS services because she was interested in obtaining full-time employment with a more consistent schedule. Her ultimate goal was to buy herself a car and to be completely financially independent.

Audra was referred to Employment Concepts at the Trudeau Center, as she was also receiving other services from this agency. While there, she worked with Lorraine Lesniak, a job developer. Lorraine came across an opportunity for a cashier position for the Compass Group, the food service company that runs the cafeteria at Amgen, a pharmaceutical company in West Greenwich. When the opportunity was first presented to Audra, she was interested, but unsure if she had the skills and capabilities to perform this job, as it was different from her job at the movie theater. Audra and the business agreed to try out the job over a two-week period to determine if the setting and job were a good fit. Within the first two hours of her assignment, the employer was so impressed with her performance, that she was offered permanent employment. Audra accepted the job, and is now working 32 hours per week, with a schedule from Monday through Friday with no night or weekend shifts.

Her job responsibilities have increased to include completing inventory, stocking, and ordering for the coolers in the cafeteria. She was also given the opportunity to perform some food preparation. With her new income, Audra was able to purchase her first car and is now completely independent on the job and with her transportation to and from work. She is in the process of participating in her employer-offered health insurance plan. Audra's supervisor continues to be impressed with her productivity and reports that Audra is an asset to the business and her co-workers.

***Client:***

Mariah Kiss

***Counselor:***

Amanda Marcaccio

***Occupation:***

Housekeeper

***Employer:***

Homewood Suites

Mariah applied for ORS services in October of 2013, when she was a junior at Middletown High School. As part of her high school program, she attended the Rhode Island Transition Academy where she learned basic job preparation skills and gained valuable work experiences.

After completing a year at the RI Transition Academy, Mariah finished her last year of high school through the Project Search program, located at Newport Hospital. Project Search is a collaboration among Office of Rehabilitation Services, Looking Upwards, Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities & Hospitals, Newport County Regional School District and Newport Hospital.

At first Mariah struggled with communication and social interaction, appearing to be very nervous and shy around the patients, guests, and her co-workers. The Project Search team encouraged Mariah to interact with others and initiate conversations, which was not easy for her. Eventually Mariah became more comfortable communicating with her co-workers, hospital guests and patients.

Through the work experiences through the Project Search program, Mariah performed different jobs throughout the hospital. Through these experiences, she discovered her passion for housekeeping. In January of 2017, her focus changed from exploring jobs to looking for a permanent job. She started this process with the help of a job developer through Looking Upwards. Mariah worked hard at applying for jobs and went on several interviews before being hired at Homewood Suites in Middletown, RI.

Mariah works as a Housekeeper, 20-25 hours a week. Her main job duties include cleaning guests' rooms. Although she required some job coaching initially, Mariah has been able to master most tasks and only requires check-ins from her job coach. Mariah is very happy at her job, and her supervisors always have such nice things to say about her and her work.



ORS counselor, Valerie Williams, met Tre at the Met School in 2009. Through ORS, Tre completed a vocational evaluation and summer work with Goodwill Industries of RI. Tre's dream job was to become a welder, and as such, he participated in an internship provided through the Met at the Steel Yard.

***Client:***

Tre Smith

***Counselor:***

Valerie Williams

***Occupation:***

Welder

***Employer:***

Electric Boat

Once he graduated from High School, his ORS counselor authorized welder training at Thielsch Engineering. Once completing his training, Tre and his employment team identified Electric Boat as a possible employment opportunity. However, Tre did not drive, and RIPTA was not a viable option for transportation to Electric Boat.

Tre reached out to his ORS Counselor seeking assistance to obtain his driver's license. Despite his learning difficulties, he persevered and obtained his permit. ORS then authorized a driving evaluation and lessons to help him get his license. This allowed his ORS counselor and Work Opportunities Unlimited to help Tre secure employment at Electric Boat in August of 2016. Tre is currently working 40 hours a week making \$17.+ an hour at Electric Boat.

With some timely interventions and supports from ORS and Work Opportunities, Tre's hard work and determination allowed him to overcome the obstacles that were holding him back.

## Message from the State Rehabilitation Council Chair

**Dear Consumers, Families, Friends, Partners and Stakeholders:**

### Highlights

As the 2017 Chair of the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), I am pleased to report that the SRC has had a very successful year meeting its goals and energizing the membership to fully meet its mandated responsibilities. In this report, you will be provided with an overview of our accomplishments of the past year, projects we are working on this program year, detailed reports from the subcommittees that do the work of the Council, and a list of SRC members with brief biographies of those members and the constituency each member represents.



It is my hope that this report will energize the SRC membership as we reflect on the work we have done in the past year and look forward to the new program year. I also hope that this report will energize others to join the SRC and help complete our important work in helping all Rhode Islanders find meaningful work.

### Partners:

Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS)  
Rhode Island State Independent Living Council  
Governor's Workforce Board  
Governor's Commission on Disabilities

### Goals of the Council

The State Rehabilitation Council is charged with meeting the following goals:

- \* Review, analyze, and advise the Office of Rehabilitation Services regarding the performance of the responsibilities of the Agency in planning, developing and implementing services to persons with disabilities in order to affect competitive employment outcomes.
- \* Advise and assist in the application of the State Plan, strategic plans,, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations required under the Rehabilitation Act as amended.
- \* Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of consumer satisfaction with the functions and activities of the State Agency as they relate to employment outcomes.
- \* Advise the State Agency and provide for working relationships between the State Agency and the Statewide Independent Living Council and centers for independent living within the State.

- \* Perform such other functions as the Council deems appropriate and that are comparable to the other functions performed by the Council.
- \* Prepare and submit an Annual Report to the Governor and the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

### **Our Accomplishments**

A significant responsibility of the SRC is to work collaboratively with ORS in the design and completion of a Consumer Needs Assessment (CNA). The most recent CNA completed by ORS had a limited survey scope in determining the needs of persons with disabilities. Given the new requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), it was felt that a more comprehensive CNA was needed. Several members of the SRC participated in five separate subcommittees surveying the various stakeholders in the CNA process. Once the data were collected, SRC members met collaboratively with ORS leadership to interpret and draw conclusions about existing needs. The SRC Executive Committee reviewed and provided comment to ORS on the final report

During the 2017 program year Ms. Catherine Sansonetti, Chair of the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee, spent many hours reviewing and commenting on the ORS proposals providing constructive feedback to our ORS colleagues. While not all of the SRC's suggested revisions were accepted by ORS, the SRC fulfilled its responsibility to "...advise and assist in the application of State Plan." Unfortunately, Ms. Sansonetti has resigned her position as Chair for this important committee, although she will continue to work on this committee. The SRC is grateful for the many years of leadership and service that Ms. Sansonetti has provided.

To acknowledge the work of outstanding individuals or organizations in providing services to those with disabilities within the State of Rhode Island, the SRC established an SRC Outstanding Service Award. This award was first given in the spring of 2017 at our annual breakfast meeting to Mr. Domenic DiOrio. We believe that this award increases the visibility of the very good work that many individuals do in providing services to those with disabilities. Moreover, this award validates the importance of that work as well. The award winner was selected by an ad hoc subcommittee that had been formed under the leadership of Jack Ringland. We look forward to again acknowledging the work of an outstanding individual via the SRC Outstanding Service Award in the 2017-2018 program year.

### **Looking Ahead**

As we approach our new program year, we look forward to continuing to provide advice to ORS as it strives to operationalize its State Plan, the very first State Plan responding to the



## Mission

To work with the Office of Rehabilitation Services (ORS) assuring that all Rhode Islanders with disabilities are able to obtain and keep meaningful and satisfying employment.

## Vision

The SRC is an independent body of diverse members that works together to insure continuous improvement in ORS employment outcomes; enhances communication among all people and groups committed to increase opportunity for people with disabilities;

- increases employer awareness of people with disabilities as a productive human resource pool; and
- has the respect of decision-makers in the allocation of resources.

mandates of WIOA. We look forward to hearing from ORS of the progress it is making in implementing that Plan on an ongoing basis.

We also will continue to keep abreast of the progress the State of Rhode Island and ORS is making in fulfilling its responsibilities under the Rhode Island Supported Employment and Integrated Day Service Consent Decree. We recognize that the Consent Decree is key to meeting the needs of some of Rhode Island's most vulnerable citizens with disabilities, and our awareness of the State's efforts to meet the needs of these citizens is of importance to the Council.

During this program year, we will finalize for the first time, a resource plan focused upon assisting the SRC in meeting its mandated goals. In order to make this happen, an ad hoc subcommittee under the leadership of former Chair of the Council, Jeff Machado, has examined all aspects of the work of the SRC and identified the resources that are needed to carry out that work. That subcommittee will consider all aspects of the SRC, including personnel costs (salaries and wages, fringe benefits, consultants), training, space, equipment purchase or rental, travel, copier, telephone, general office supplies, etc. This work has led to the development of a program budget that will be presented to the Office of Rehabilitation Services during the current program year.

During the upcoming program year, the SRC will need to focus on membership recruitment. Many individuals who have provided exemplary service to the SRC will be leaving the Council at the conclusion of the program year. It is imperative, if the good work of the Council is to continue, that additional members be recruited. This is most pressing need of the Council at this time.

As a final note, I wish to note that it has been my honor and pleasure to serve the Council as its Chair for the past three years. While I have declined to continue as Chair, I will continue to serve on the Council in whatever capacity that I may be of service. I wish to thank the members of the Council and in particular the members of the Executive Committee for their dedicated service, support, and advice during my term as Chair. I wish also to note the excellent work of Ms. Nancy Baker in her role as Administrative Assistant.

**Respectfully Submitted,**

**Gail M. Lawson, PhD, SRC Chairperson**

# State Rehabilitation Council Members

**Gail M. Lawson, PhD**, is the Chairperson of the State Rehabilitation Council. Gail is Ex-Officio on the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance, and the Membership Training, as well as the newly formed Resource, and SRC Awards committees. She sits on the Council representing a Community Rehabilitation Provider. Gail Lawson, PhD has served as the Chairperson of the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council for the past three years. Prior to that, she served as Co-chairperson for one year and Secretary for two years. Professionally Dr. Lawson has held a variety of positions in the mental health and education fields during her professional career. Prior to her retirement in 2014, she served as the chief executive officer of a community mental health agency for nine years and as director of Administrative services for public school districts for thirteen years. Prior to those positions, she served as faculty at Rhode Island College, a program administrator at Community College of Rhode Island and adjunct faculty at University of Rhode Island. Dr. Lawson is a certified school psychologist. Currently she is adjunct faculty at Salve Regina University in the Rehabilitation Counseling program.

**Judith L. Drew, Ph.D., CRC**, is the Vice-Chairperson of the Council and a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She represents a Community Rehabilitation Service Provider, and is the president of VocWorks in Cumberland, Rhode Island. Her practice focuses on career and rehabilitation counseling, school to work transition assessments, vocational expert testimony, and vocational assessment. In addition, she develops and conducts staff development and training for-profit and non-profit organizations on disability awareness, employment of people with disabilities, and vocational assessment and job coaching. Currently, she is an Assistant Professor at Salve Regina University, where she is also the Program Director for the MA degree in Rehabilitation Counseling and the MA in Clinical Rehabilitation and Mental Health Counseling.

**Lea Colardo**, is Co-Secretary of the Council and Co-Chairperson of the Membership Training Committee. She sits on the Council as a representative of a Disability Advocacy Group representing individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, or mental disabilities who have difficulty in representing themselves or are unable due to their disabilities to represent themselves. She has been an Educational Advocate for eleven years at The Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College where she is also a member of the Leadership Team and the Transition to Life ad hoc Team Leader. She is appointed by the Rhode Island Department of Education to make educational decisions on behalf of students that are in the care of the Rhode Island Department of Youth, Children and Families.

**Maryellen T. Hagerty**, is Co-Chairperson of the Membership Training Committee. She sits on the Council representing Education and Disability Advocacy Groups representing a cross section of: parents, family members, guardians, advocates, or authorized representatives, of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty in representing themselves or are unable due to their disabilities to represent themselves. Maryellen is an Educational Advocate at The Paul V. Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College. She has held the position of Educational Advocate for the past twenty-three years, first at the Office of the Child Advocate and for the past twelve years at the Sherlock Center on Disabilities at Rhode Island College. Maryellen is a member of the Leadership team at the Sherlock Center. She has been a member of the State Rehabilitation Council for four years and is part of the Leadership of the Council.

**Jack Ringland**, is Co-Secretary of the Council and a member of the Membership Training Committee, and he is the Chair of the SRC Awards ad-hoc Committee. He sits on the Council representing individuals with physical disabilities. Jack has been disabled since 2008. He assists in coordinating the Cross Disability Coalition meetings as part of the Developmental Disabilities Council. Jack is also a Commissioner on the Governor's Commission on Disabilities and Chairperson of the Accessibility Committee and Co-Chairperson of the Legislative Committee.

**Catherine Sansonetti**, is the Chairperson of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She sits on the Council as the current designee for Raymond Bandusky representing the Client Assistance Program established under section 732 of this Title under 43 CFR part 370. Catherine is a Staff Attorney at the Rhode Island Disability Law Center and has been on the Council for four terms. During her tenure, she served as Secretary of the Council, and was on the Transportation ad hoc Committee. She has been the driving force behind the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee for all the years of her service on the Council. Catherine actively works on the Consumer Satisfaction Surveys and the Comprehensive Needs Assessments.

**Christina Battista**, is a member of the Membership Training Committee. She sits on the Council, representing current or former applicants for, or recipients of Vocational Rehabilitation Services; and representative of the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) established under Section 796(d) of this Title, which representative may be Chairperson or other designee of the Council. Christina is currently a student at Salve Regina University in the Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling program. She serves as the representative of the Rhode Island Statewide Independent Living Council for several years.

**Margaret ‘Peggy’ Benz**, is a member of the Membership Training Committee. She sits on the Council, representing Business, Industry, and Labor, and current or former applicants for Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Peggy currently is employed with the Workplace working with the local RI Workforce Boards. As a graduate student at Illinois State, she worked with People First of Illinois, an organization committed to empowering and improving the lives of people so that all people with disabilities are treated equally, as active members of every community.

**Christine Botts**, is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She sits on the Council representing a Community Rehabilitation Service Provider and individuals who have difficulty representing themselves. Christine has over ten years’ experience as an Administrator for the State of Rhode Island, specializing in employment programs for individuals with developmental disabilities and behavioral health issues. Most recently, she has served on the State Committee for the Consent Decree. This committee is responsible for developing employment policies and procedures for individuals with developmental disabilities and ensuring they are employed in the most integrated setting making at least minimum wage.

**Rocco Bruno**, is a member of the Membership Training Committee. He sits on the Council representing Business, Industry, and Labor. Rocco was the Manager of the Provider Audit and Reimbursement Department for the Medicare Program. He is responsible for updating the Council on the NCSRC events and meetings as well as to help mentor new members and plan for the training events.

**Cynthia M. Cote**, is a member of the Membership Training Committee. She sits on the Council representing Business, Industry, and Labor. Cynthia is currently employed at Lifespan on the Rhode Island Hospital Campus. She is a Registered Nurse with experiences in Coronary Care, Intensive Care, and Medical-Surgical Nursing. Cynthia is a Certified Senior Clinical Documentation Specialist with the Department of Clinical Documentation Integrity. Her other experiences include Corporate Compliance Auditor for the Lifespan Department of Internal Audit/Corporate Compliance and over nine years of employment regarding the Federal Medicare Program in the areas of Medical Review and Provider Education and Training.

**Joan Fino**, is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She sits on the Council representing a Parent Training and Information Center established pursuant to Section 1431(e)(1) of Title 20. Ms. Fino has been a family leader for twenty years advocating for her own children’s needs and navigating many systems, which include Special Education, Mental Health, Child Welfare, Office of Rehabilitation, and social service systems. Professionally, Joan has been working one-on-one with families for over eleven years, helping

them navigate systems of care and meet their needs. Joan's additional trainings include: Train the Trainer and Grant Writing workshops, National Standards for Culturally and Linguistically Appropriate Services, Ability Training Response, and Crisis Management as well as Non-Violent Physical Restraint Using the Behavior Management System. She actively works on the Strategic Planning on the Office of Rehabilitation Services State Plan, and the Comprehensive Needs Assessments.

**Elizabeth Graves**, is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She sits on the Council representing a Disability Advocacy Group representing individuals with physical, cognitive, sensory, or mental disabilities. "Liz" is a retired Special Education Teacher. She is a member of the Governor's Advisory Council for the Blind and Visually Impaired, and a former member of the Statewide Independence Living Council. She has been an advocate for the elderly and blind for many years, focusing on independent living and ADA rights.

**Paul Harden**, is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. He sits on the Council as a representative of Business, Industry, and Labor. Paul is the former Director of Transportation Technology at the New England Institute of Technology, and currently is consulting on workforce development and economic development.

**Diana Kriner**, is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She sits on the Council representing a Parent Training and Information Center established pursuant to Section 1431(e)(1) of Title 20. Diana joined the Rhode Island Parent Information Network (RIPIN) team in 2004, and serves as the Transition Manager, specifically in the area of students with disabilities transitioning from school to adulthood. Her committee work includes representing (RIPIN) at Rhode Island's Regional Transition Coordinators meetings, State Transition Council, and the State Rehabilitation Council.

**Jeffrey D. Machado**, sits on the State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee and will Chair the newly formed Resource ad hoc Committee. He sits on the Council representing a Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider. Jeffrey D. Machado, President/CEO Goodwill Industries of Rhode Island, currently serves on the Providence/Cranston Workforce Investment Board, the Finance Committee of the Rhode Island Disability Law Center and is Vice-Chairperson of the Governor's Board of the Rhode Island State Rehabilitation Council.

**Lori Norris, M.Ed.**, is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She sits on the Council representing a Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider and individuals with cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities. Lori is the Director of the National Center for Innovation and System Improvement (NCISI). She brings over twenty-

one years' experience in the areas of workforce development for people with and without disabilities, PK-16 education, alternative education, adult education, and educational vocational and transition services for youths with disabilities. Prior to joining the (NCISI), an entity that provides technical assistance and training to federal, state and community based agencies that serve individuals with I/DD, Lori was the Administrator for Workforce Development for the Rhode Island Department of Labor and Training (DLT) and is the former CEO of Goodwill Industries of Rhode Island.

**Daniel C. Pieroni**, is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. He sits on the Council representing current or former applicants for, or recipients of, Vocational Rehabilitation Services. Dan has worked as a substitute teacher in the Scituate School Department, and is very active in serving youths in transition as a member of the Southern Rhode Island Transition Center's traveling student panel. In the past, he has lent his time and talent to worthy causes, like the Rhode Island Youth Leadership Forum, and the Rhode Island Council on Assistive Technology (RICAT).

**Vincent Rossi**, is a member of the Membership Training Committee. He sits on the Council as a representative of Disability Advocacy Groups, representing parents, family, guardians, advocates, or authorized representatives of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty in representing themselves or are unable due to their disabilities to represent themselves. Vincent is a Statewide Coordinator of Employment and Training Programs at the Department of Labor and Training. Vincent is dedicated to educating, advocating and raising awareness of the abilities and challenges of the disability population on a local and State level. Vincent participates in several local organizations helping to spread disability awareness and create change within the community.

**Jane Slade, MA, CRC**, is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She sits on the Council as a representative of the State Educational Agency responsible for the public education of students with disabilities who are eligible to receive services under this subchapter and part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. [20 U.S.C. 1411 et seq.] Jane has been employed as the State Transition Coordinator with the Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE), Office of Student, Community and Academic Supports (OSCAS) since June 2011. Core functions of this office include Special Education policy/program development & oversight; IDEA State Performance Plan Indicators; Liaison to School Support System visits; State Councils; and RIDE state-wide developmental work. Ms. Slade's additional focus area of responsibilities include Secondary Transition; Secondary Reform/PBGR; Post-secondary Outcomes; Interagency/Adult Services; and she is the Chair of the Rhode Island Transition Council. She is also a Certified Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor.

**Willa Truelove**, is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She sits on the Council as a representative of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty in representing themselves or are unable, due to their disabilities, to represent themselves. Willa is a dedicated advocate for the most underserved populations in Rhode Island. She is a culturally diverse activist and tireless in her efforts of outreach to those in the most need. She is very competent in networking especially to outreach those in need. In addition to her compassion and charitable approach, she also brings a street knowledge and practical nature to everything she does. Willa is an artist and very active in promoting an inclusive artist community in Rhode Island.

**Christine Yankee**, is a member of the State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee. She sits on the Council representing a Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider and individuals with barriers to employment. Christine is the Vice President of Program Services at Goodwill Industries of RI. She brings over twenty-three years' experience in the areas of workforce development, adult education, and transition services for youths and adults with and without disabilities. Her committee work includes representing (Goodwill) at the RI Workforce Alliance Meeting, RI Department of Adult Education Learning Disability Advisory, RI Department of Adult Education Advisory Board, and is the Board President of Rhode Island Rehabilitation Association (RIRA).

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Services:**

**Diana Siravo-Marcotte, MA**, is a member of the Membership Training Committee. She sits on the Council as Liaison for the Office of Rehabilitation Services as a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor with knowledge of and experience with Vocational Programs. Diana is a VRC II and has been working for the Office of Rehabilitation Services for fourteen years serving the mental health population. In addition to her work with the Council, she is also the liaison to The Providence Center.

**Ronald Racine**, Associate Director

**Kathleen Grygiel**, Administrator, Vocational Rehabilitation

**Laurie DiOrio**, Administrator of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired

**Linda Deschenes**, Assistant Administrator of Operations

**John Valentine**, Strategic Planning Supervisor

# 2017 Annual Meeting

## State Rehabilitation Council

May 9, 2017

Crowne Plaza, Warwick, Rhode Island



**Back Row:** Diana Marcotte, Vincent Rossi, Rocco Bruno, Paul Harden, Diana Kriner, Linda Deschenes, Margaret Benz, Ronald Racine, Joan Fino, John Valentine, Willa Truelove, Laurie DiOrio, Nancy Baker

**Front Row:** MaryEllen Hagarty, Christine Yankee, Lea Colardo, Jane Slade, Gail Lawson, Cynthia Cote, Judy Drew, Kathleen Grygiel, Christine Batista, Catherine Sansonetti, Jack Ringland



## Membership Training Sub-Committee

The Membership Training Sub-Committee is charged with the interviewing, orientation and training of new members, including disseminating new materials and providing an annual training event in partnership with ORS. A mentoring program is available to new members for their first year on the Council. The committee maintains four core goals:

- \* Maintaining an annual training event - Ensure that all new and existing members have participated in the annual training seminar.
- \* Disseminate a membership package - All members are offered a binder that clearly states the SRC mission, vision, responsibilities, and contact information along with other relevant materials.
- \* Sustaining ongoing efforts toward active recruitment of qualified individuals to its membership. Candidates must represent the interests of the stakeholders and represent a diverse composition that reflects the needs of the populations served, while meeting the federal requirements. SRC members represent people with disabilities, advocates, and family members, employers, and rehabilitation and education professionals. Recruitment of new members is an ongoing, shared responsibility of ALL council members.
- \* Implement a mentoring program - The committee will pair new members with experienced members to answer any questions and clarify responsibilities and expectations of the council for at least one year.

### **Committee Accomplishments:**

- \* Annual training took place on September 13, 2017 at the Sherlock Center on Disabilities located on Rhode Island College campus. Each participant received a binder that included bylaws, the role of the SRC, and our duties as members, WIOA mandates in relation to the SRC's responsibility to state policies, and finally, procedures for ORS. The presentation by the Training Committee reviewed the history of disability, vocational rehabilitation, and the role of the SRC. Diana Marcotte from ORS reviewed the ORS application and eligibility criteria. Finally, Christina Battista, introduced a video titled Employment Can Work for You, which highlights the positive impact of the employment of people with disabilities on businesses and on the employee with a disability. The PowerPoints and videos can be viewed independent of the training. Please contact us at [risrc@cox.net](mailto:risrc@cox.net) for provided materials.

- \* The application to the SRC was reviewed with minor changes made.
- \* A recruitment/members wanted flyer is being offered to public and private businesses and institutions throughout the state to increase membership and fill upcoming vacancies.
- \* The mentoring program is available to all new members.

### **How to Become a RISRC Member:**

The Governor appoints members. As SRC members and VR advocates, we work in strategic partnership to increase the employment of people with disabilities in competitive, integrated jobs of their choice and in keeping with their skills and abilities. Federal law governing membership requires that certain categories be represented on the council (e.g., businesses, community rehabilitation providers, disability groups), and these category assignments are made by the Governor's office, in light of applicant experience and expressed representational preferences. If you are interested or want more information about the RISRC, please contact us at [risrc@cox.net](mailto:risrc@cox.net).

Respectfully Submitted,

Maryellen Hagerty & Lea Colardo, Co-chairs

Membership Training Committee

## **State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance**

The State Plan, Policy, and Quality Assurance Committee of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is responsible for helping the entire SRC membership to provide feedback to ORS about its plans and policies in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act. The committee also participates in reviewing the quality of services delivery to ORS customers and continuous quality improvement.

This year, the committee reviewed four ORS proposed policies. They included Supported Employment; Eligibility, Ineligibility, and Trial Work Periods; Motor Vehicle Modification; and Adaptive Housing. We commented on the Supported Employment Policy last year, as well. The committee also met for the purpose of reviewing ORS proposed policy changes to three additional policies: Eligibility, Ineligibility, and Trial Work Periods; Motor Vehicle Modification; and Adaptive Housing. We provided written comment to ORS about these policies and also expressed our concern about the agency's removal of procedures that affected important client rights information. In addition, we asked for more information about the numbers of individuals who ask ORS for motor vehicle modifications and adaptive housing. The SRC received timely responses from ORS regarding our concerns.

This year, the agency conducted its Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), which is required under the Rehabilitation Act, to assess the vocational rehabilitation needs of the disability community. Several committee members worked with the agency on this project.

Respectfully Submitted,

Catherine Sansonetti, Chair

State Plan, Policy and Quality Assurance Committee

DHS does not discriminate against any person on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, political beliefs, sexual orientation, age, religion or sex in acceptance for or provision of services, employment or treatment in its educational and other programs and activities.

For further information about this policy, contact: the Community Relations Liaison Office, 401.462.2130 or TDD (hearing impaired) 401.462.6239.



**Department of Human Services**  
**Office of Rehabilitation Services**

40 Fountain Street  
Providence RI 02903

**Tel** 401.421.7005  
**Spanish** 401.462.7791

**Fax** 401.222.3574

[www.ors.ri.gov](http://www.ors.ri.gov)

Available in alternate formats  
by calling 401.462.7818