



Annual Report

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity
Act Program Year 2019
(July 2019 through June 2020)

State Rehabilitation
Council of Kansas

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Kansas Department for Children and Families (DCF)

Mission: To protect children, promote healthy families and encourage personal responsibility.

Kansas Rehabilitation Services (KRS)

Mission: Working in partnership with Kansans with disabilities to achieve their goals for employment, independence and self-reliance.

Principles: The following core principles will be infused into all VR operations:

- Competitive, integrated employment is a key component to reaching self-reliance, independence, inclusion, economic equality, and integration into society for people with disabilities.
- All people with disabilities, including those with the most significant disabilities, are presumed to be capable of engaging in gainful employment.
- KRS, its consumers, providers and partners will be accountable for the achievement of employment and the effective use of resources.
- KRS expects and encourages meaningful involvement of people with disabilities, public/private partners, employers and other stakeholders in KRS programs, services and activities.
- KRS promotes the use of evidence-based practices in VR service delivery to empower Kansans with disabilities to maximize employment and economic self-reliance.
- KRS emphasizes employer engagement activities that market the skills and abilities of qualified workers with disabilities have to contribute to the success of Kansas business and industry.

Unless otherwise noted, information in this report is based on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Program Year 2019 (July 1, 2019 through June 30, 2020).

State Rehabilitation Council of Kansas Members PY 2019

Tom Anderson	Overland Park	
Ted Brant	Topeka	Transitioned off this year.
Mike Burgess	Topeka	
Margo Chediak	Topeka	
Daniel Decker	Topeka	
Laurie Gerber	Garden City	Replaced by Tami Allen this year.
Carrie Greenwood	Topeka	
Dawn Masqua	Mayetta	
JoRita Hill	Wichita	
Julie King	Wichita	
Stacie Martin	Topeka	
Irma Ramirez	Salina	
Lisa Schuetz	Gardner	
Roxanne Treece	Canton	
Ranita Wilks	Lawrence	Transitioned off this year.
Deb Young	Lawrence	
Connie Zienkewicz	Wichita	Transitioned off this year.

Annual highlights

Review of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) operations

At each quarterly meeting, one of the RS Regional Program Administrators for VR presents information about their operations. Among the topics are staffing, outcomes, challenges, business development in the region, unemployment, size of communities, and success stories. These presentations give Council members a better feel for how VR services are carried out at the local level. These presentations are also an opportunity for questions-and-answers about regional operations.

Data report

RS provides a quarterly performance data report that hones in on key areas of interest to the Council members. This report includes: number of persons served, number of persons employed, average hourly wage, average hours worked per week, highest full-time hourly wage, percent of persons employed who report their own income as their primary source of support, number of transition youth served and employed, number of counselors, and average caseload size. The report also includes performance on timeliness of eligibility determination and development of Individual Plans for Employment. Finally, the report includes the number of persons rehabilitated by type of disability.

The regional presentations, data report and reports from administrative staff on key initiatives give Council members the opportunity to stay informed about RS operations, and to evaluate/guide the agency's performance.

Youth with disabilities

The Council maintains a strong focus on how to empower youth with disabilities to pursue post-secondary education, achieve employment and become self-reliant. Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are discussed at each meeting. The Pre-ETS program offers job exploration, counseling on post-secondary education, self-advocacy training and other services to help young people prepare for employment and self-reliance, rather than dependency on public benefits.

A major area of emphasis is the provision of paid work-based experiences through which youth can learn the basic skills necessary to succeed in the workplace and experience the benefits of earned income. To carry out this component, RS has established innovative partnerships with most KANSASWORKS one-stop workforce centers as well as some Centers for Independent Living (CILs). These partnerships leverage the expertise of the workforce centers and CILs to provide work readiness training and develop opportunities for paid work experiences. The services are funded through RS service provider agreements. Research published in the Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation shows that youth employment is a strong predictor of successful employment as adults, and therefore an important milestone toward self-reliance.

Another goal is to increase participation of youth with disabilities in foster care in Pre-ETS VR Services. These services are designed to empower youth with disabilities to achieve successful outcomes in post-secondary education, employment and self-sufficiency. Therefore, these

services can be a source of significant support for foster care youth. Currently 6% of Pre-ETS students served are individuals in foster care.

In addition, RS has established a partnership with the Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy. “Empower Me” workshops are conducted to help high school students plan for post-secondary education and employment. During the workshops, students participate in activities focused on job exploration, resume building, work readiness training, self-advocacy skill building, mock interviews and post-secondary educational options. An important aspect of each day-long event is a panel presentation by people with disabilities who discuss their life and employment experiences. *The number of workshops that were completed this program year were impacted due to the pandemic. We are working on a virtual event to be able to continue to conduct the workshops.*

KRS and KYEA partnered to present six Empower Me Workshops in PY 2019, with a total of 133 student participants. According to students, the workshops are a valuable experience, and they live up to the “empower me” goal.

Said one student: “I learned I can have the “BIG” job.”

Said another: “I am capable of getting and maintaining a job.”

Coordination with other disability organizations

One major purpose of the Council is to facilitate coordination among disability and service provider organizations. The Department of Education, the Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation, the client assistance program, the parent training and information center, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and the Kansas Advisory Committee for the Blind and Visually Impaired each have designated times on the agenda to present about their organizations. Other members representing service providers, VR consumers, advocacy organizations, business/industry and the workforce development board all have opportunities to share information, announce opportunities for collaboration, or raise issues for further consideration.

**Maintenance policy*

The Kansas Advisory Committee for the Blind and Visually Impaired and State Rehabilitation Council made recommendations to modify the state’s maintenance policy. According to federal regulations, maintenance means monetary support provided to an individual for expenses, such as food, shelter, and clothing, that are in excess of the normal expenses of the individual and that are necessitated by the individual’s participation in an assessment for determining eligibility and vocational rehabilitation needs or the individual’s receipt of vocational rehabilitation services under an individualized plan for employment. The maintenance policy was updated and effective 10-1-2020 related to the deeming calculation for normal costs. The excess expenses caused by participation in VR is allowable VR service. For persons receiving SSI or SSDI, their normal expenses would be deemed to be the lesser of 30% of their actual monthly SSI and/or SSDI, or 30% of the average monthly SSI amount.

**Economic Need policy*

Economic need, also known as financial participation, requires VR consumers to contribute to the cost of services according to their ability to do so. The federal regulations give states the option of whether to apply an economic needs test. Effective 10-1-2020 the economic need policy was discontinued.

COVID 19 Response

As the nation continues to adapt to the “new normal” brought on by COVID 19, so does State Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies. While the circumstances are unprecedented, VR’s nimbleness is not. Adapting during a pandemic is one more example of how the Kansas VR Program has continually evolved to meet shifting needs over the course of VR’s 100-year history. This year has been a challenging and rewarding year for us in the Field. We have had to learn to adapt in providing services to our consumers in a whole new different way while holding on to the strengths that make us, VR. We also had to increase our focus about our personal health and safety of each other and our consumers.

The COVID 19 pandemic first impacted Department for Children and Families (DCF)/Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in March 2020. DCF/VR responded to the COVID 19 Virus by restricting what staff were allowed in the Service Centers. An announcement from Governor Kelly declared that State Offices will be closed March 23rd to April 3rd except for essential staff. Vocational Rehabilitation program was considered non-essential during this timeframe. We were expecting to be back to work and available on April 6th. We reached out to our consumers letting them know that VR will be out of the office from March 23rd to April 3rd. We asked and started laying the groundwork for working with our consumers by phone, emails or texts. The following message was sent to our consumers. “You are welcome to email or leave a message, and we will return your call as soon as possible. Due to preventive measures in keeping with CDC guidelines on COVID-19, we will not be scheduling face-to-face meetings at this time. Since we are unable to meet face-to-face, I would like to get an update on how things are going for you and how Vocational Rehabilitation Services can best assist you moving forward. Please be assured that Vocational Rehabilitation will continue to provide services to the best of our abilities during these uncertain times.”

We had to focus on turning a stationary work force to a mobile workforce. DCF/VR provided the equipment that was needed to let our staff be mobile including a laptop, cell phone when appropriate, and internet access. The equipment was provided to most regions in a very timely manner, but they were certain areas where it did take a little longer to get the appropriate equipment. Many counselors were granted access to a Google phone number or Amazon Connect. During this time managers and Program Administrators stepped up and helped to enter critical data into our computer data system for counselors that did not have the proper equipment. While this was challenging, we all worked together and did what it took to get our consumers served.

We moved quickly to communication by phone, text, or email during this time and restricted our face to face contact. We quickly adopted the use of Microsoft Teams for meeting with our consumers and staff. We were also able to use other platforms like Zoom, Doxy.me, Google hangout, and Google Meets. We also implement the ability for consumers to approve their IPE through email and Counselor’s e-signatures for required VR forms and Authorizations. We used other types of Technology and here are a few examples: locked printing to secure documents safety and OneNote to put documents in our narratives. I do think that VR became a little more Technology Savvy because of this pandemic. There have been certain VR staff that have shown

great leadership skills by teaching our less “techy” staff about new systems and strategies. This is exciting because we are growing new leaders for the future.

DCF/VR also develop guidance for all DCF employees to follow if anyone that had actual or suspected exposure to COVID 19. DCF also provided updates on the virus, guidelines, travel restrictions, etc. We also provided information to our Supervisors for any employees that should need assistance with coping with stress during this time of the pandemic. We reminded our staff that they may seek support by reaching out to the Employment Assistance Program provided to all State workers. This practice has happened throughout the pandemic and will continue.

At the same time, we were closing the offices for two weeks in March, we had a leadership change at the Director Position. The previous Director of 10 ½ years transition to another job while we welcome our new director, Dan Decker.

During this year of COVID, one of the most important issue in serving our consumers was to make sure they felt safe while being served by the VR program. We provided service to our consumers in whatever way worked best for them, in-person, over the phone or video conferencing. We expanded the use of electronic approvals to make it easier for consumers who couldn't meet in person and expanded the use of cab rides for those who were at an elevated risk level and were uncomfortable using the more crowded bus system in the bigger cities.

In response to the safety of our consumers, Vocational Rehabilitation implemented a modification of our job preparation service to address COVID-19 concerns. The purpose was to engage the client in a manner that specifically addresses COVID 19 issues. Clients needed support to talk about their anxieties related to the virus, stay-at-home and social distancing. Others needed encouragement to maintain an interest in employment while they wait to be called back from a furlough or for the job market to improve pertaining to their vocational objectives. Others benefited from services such as resume development, interviewing skills, or labor market research. These are examples and are not an all-inclusive list of the issues that were addressed. This adaptation created a win-win-win situation. Clients benefited from additional engagement and supports. The service providers had access to an additional revenue stream for the important work they were doing. VR staff benefited by having an additional resource to help maintain client engagement.

In June, some of the restrictions were lifted and we could look at having a few staff work in the office. Most of the VR employees are still utilizing the telework option. We are encouraging this option, but there are some exceptions like our VR support staff. They have gone above and beyond in assisting the VR staff teleworking and consumers to ensure that quality services continue. All staff are helping with whatever needs to be done even if it is not part of their regular duties.

Due to COVID-19, DCF/VR continue to take the following steps to protect staff and the public:

- Reconfiguring offices to promote social distancing.
- Transitioning most Vocational Rehabilitation staff to telework from alternate locations, such as their homes.
- Offering support and services to consumers by phone or other remote methods.

- Working closely with vendors to maintain services while mitigating exposure.
- All new counselor training and refresher courses are online.

We were able to partner with community agency and increase our collaboration with other state agencies during this time. We provide the resources that were being offered and offered by these agencies. Some of the resources included: telemedicine appointments, Thanksgiving dinners, commodity distribution, Webinars, hiring events, KS Eviction Prevention Program, Veterans Smile Day, Clean Slate, Training, Cooperative Parenting in divorce, Youth Core Life, and many others.

It has been a strange year to say the least but definitely a year of growth and adaptation. I think this year has helped show how resilient not only our clients are but all the staff as well. This year has pushed our staff to be more creative and adaptable than I ever thought was possible. We have grown in so many areas from the use of technology, communication approaches and styles, and different ways to implement service in a timely fashion.

A statement from a counselor during this time of COVID states:

“Being allowed to work from home and being given the technology to effectively do my job during these uncertain times has been greatly appreciated. Having chronic health conditions, I would have had to questioned whether it was safe for me to venture to work each day, raising my anxiety and compromising my ability to do my job with peace of mind regarding my personal health and safety. Having this supervisory support and trust in me as a worker has made the positive difference in my continued success as a VR counselor.”

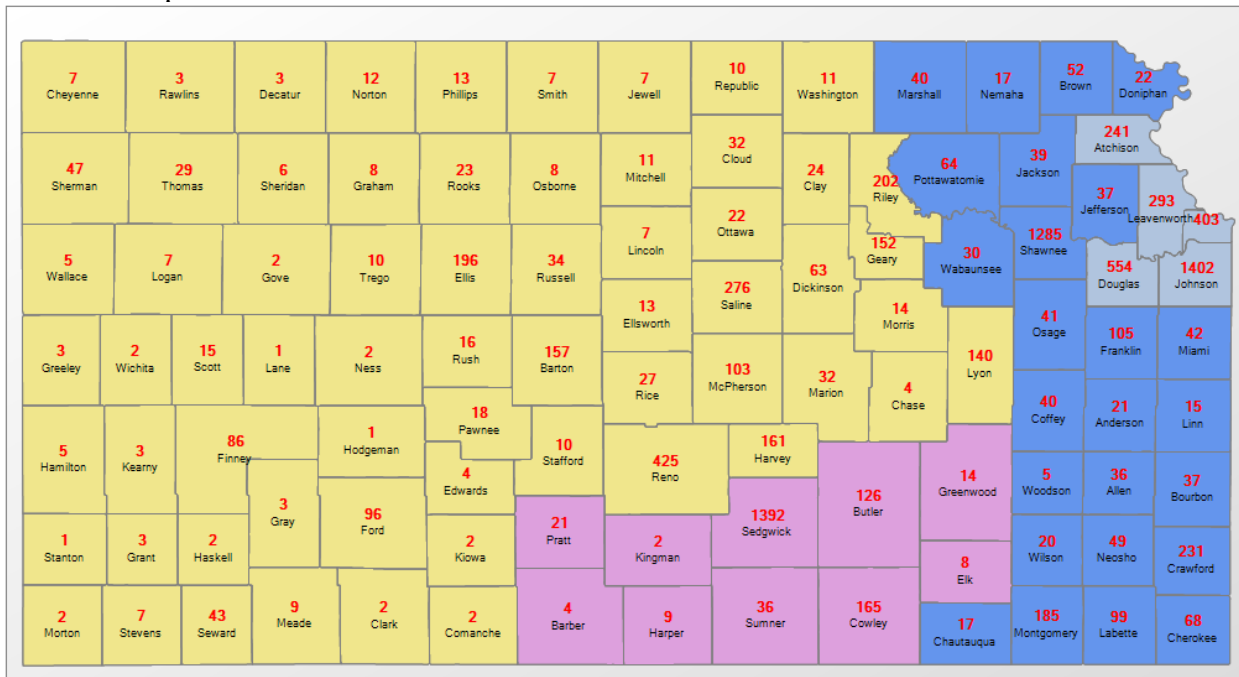
RS Program Overview and Outcomes

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR)

VR provides services for Kansans with disabilities to obtain, maintain or regain employment in the competitive and integrated workplace.

- To be eligible for services, a person must have a physical or mental disability which results in a substantial impediment to employment, and he or she must require VR services in order to get a job.
- Services are provided by qualified VR counselors stationed in DCF offices and in partnership with private contractors and service providers.
- Services are individualized according to each person’s rehabilitation needs and employment objective. Services may include vocational assessment, counseling and guidance, job-related training, job coaching, supported employment, assistive technology, physical/mental restoration services, transition services for youth, and job placement.
- Basic VR funds are 78.7% federal, authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

In PY 2019, VR provided services for 9,918 Kansans with disabilities who were at various stages in their preparation for employment. As the map below illustrates, the VR program has statewide impact.

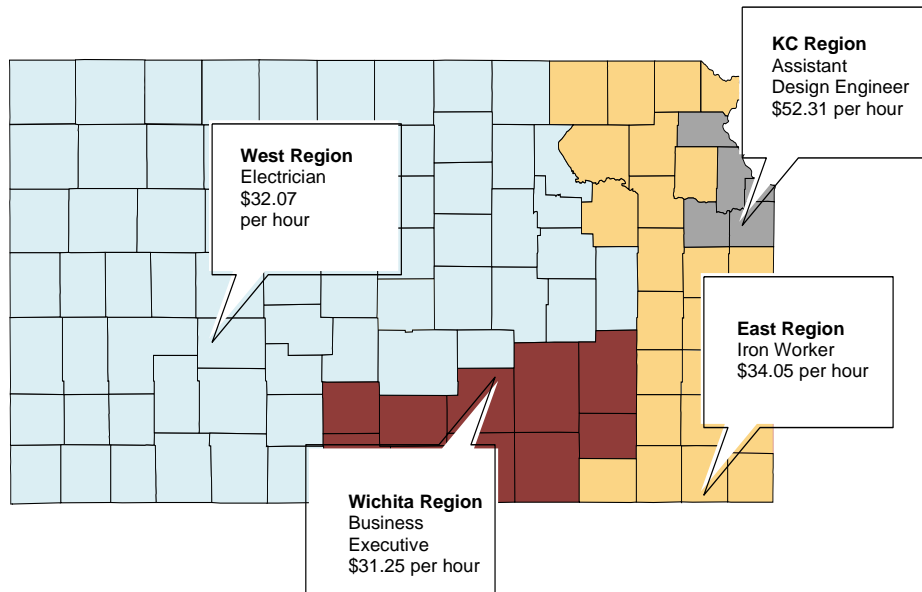


TOTAL NUMBER SERVED: 9,918

A total of 1,225 persons achieved competitive integrated employment in PY 2019. Their average earnings were \$11.04 per hour, and they worked an average of 28 hours per week. A total of 79% of persons successfully employed reported *their own income* as their primary source of support at VR case closure, representing a significant milestone toward self-sufficiency. Of those achieving employment, 28% were youth with disabilities who therefore began a lifelong path focused on self-sufficiency rather than reliance on public benefits.

VR staff statewide are working hard to facilitate timely access to services. And this work is paying off. PY 2020 the average timeframe from application to IPE totaled 68 days compared to the 150 days permitted by federal regulations.

Dispelling common misperceptions about the employment potential of people with disabilities, the following are examples of high wage employment outcomes achieved by individuals working at least 40 hours per week. (Full-time employment of at least 40 hours per week — PY 2019)



Disabilities of Persons Rehabilitated	PY 2019 7-1-19 to 6-30-20
Mental Illness	444
Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	131
Other Cognitive Impairments	177
Learning Disabilities	72
Intellectual Disabilities	153
Other Physical Impairments	70
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	79
Blindness & Other Visual Impairments	30
General Physical Debilitation	56
Other	13
TOTAL	1,225
TBI as the cause of a disability	22
Autism Spectrum Disorder as the cause of a disability	133

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

The VR program is required to set aside 15% of its annual federal grant to provide Pre-ETS services students with disabilities. The purpose of Pre-ETS reflects one of the major goals of RS—to empower youth with disabilities to achieve their highest employment potential. Authorized by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), Pre-ETS include job exploration, counseling on post-secondary education options, self-advocacy training, workplace readiness training and work-based learning experience. Research published in the Journal of Occupational Rehabilitation shows that participating in such services is a strong predictor of successful employment as adults, and therefore an important milestone toward self-reliance.

RS Pre-ETS staff provide some services directly to students and RS has contracted with local workforce centers and Centers for Independent Living to provide services as well.

To be eligible for Pre-ETS several criteria must be met, including:

- The student has a disability and is 16-21 years of age.
- The student is in a secondary, post-secondary, or other recognized education program.

The Pre-ETS program served 1,633 students with disabilities during SFY 2020.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

VR also includes a specialized program for persons who are legally blind. BEP offers them the opportunity to manage food service and vending operations in public/government facilities, including state office buildings, the State Capitol, military food service operations, and highway rest areas. BEP uses funds generated by its operations, rather than state general funds, to match federal VR dollars.

BEP has 11 blind managers operating 91 sites across the state, including vending machines, snack bars, micro markets and cafes/cafeterias. BEP also has contracts to operate dining halls on two military bases, Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth. The median annual earnings of BEP blind managers is \$17,183.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

Under the WIOA, VR is a partner in the state's workforce development system, along with adult basic education, labor exchange services, and workforce centers. As partners, these programs develop goals, strategies and performance measures to address the needs of Kansas employers and job seekers. A combined state plan is updated every two years and submitted to the U.S. Departments of Labor and Education.

WIOA also incorporates significant changes to the VR program through amendments to the Rehabilitation Act. Pre-ETS, described previously, was established.

In addition, VR must provide Career Counseling, Information and Referral Services for the 3,000 Kansans with disabilities employed at subminimum wage in sheltered workshops. The goal is to provide information about competitive integrated employment options and the services available to help them secure such jobs in the integrated labor market.

End-Dependence Kansas (EDK)

The EDK initiative was launched in October 2014 to pilot the use of evidence-based employment practices for persons with the most significant disabilities. Persons served also have other barriers to employment, such as correctional histories, no work experience, and reliance on public benefits. The goal of EDK was for VR and our partners to learn, implement, sustain and replicate service delivery models that result in competitive integrated employment, rather than sheltered employment, subminimum wage jobs, non-work day activities or other segregated services.

EDK provided funding to 13 community service providers, who were selected following a competitive RFP process. EDK was also supported by robust training, technical assistance from nationally recognized consultants and an evaluation component.

Since implementation of EDK, the contractors have provided comprehensive evidenced-based employment services to 1,540 persons. A total of 564 have achieved competitive integrated employment earning an average of \$10.59 per hour. We are reviewing the results from the EDK

initiative to determine the successes we can implement into practice. The majority of the EDK pilot ended on 9/30/2020, and the final report will be completed at the end of December 2020.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES (DDS)

DDS makes medical disability determinations for the U.S. Social Security Administration on most Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) claims filed or reviewed in Kansas. DDS is responsible only for the medical adjudication, and the Social Security Administration determines whether to award benefits. DDS also works with the Kansas Department of Health and Environment and the KanCare Clearinghouse to assess medical documentation for Kansans who apply for medical assistance on the basis of disability. DDS is virtually 100% federally funded in that it receives only about \$100,000 in SGF.

In FFY 2020, 22,826 Kansans filed disability claims (all types). The Kansas DDS was responsible for processing 13,719 of those claims. The Kansas DDS is recognized nationally as one of the best for quality determinations. For FFY 2020 the Kansas DDS average claim processing times were 83 days with an accuracy rate of 97%.

INDEPENDENT LIVING (IL)

RS administers the independent living program, which includes grants to a network for Centers for Independent Living (CILs). CILs provide information/referral, peer counseling, independent living skills training, advocacy and deinstitutionalization services for people with disabilities.

In addition, RS oversees grants with community-based organizations to carry out the independent living program for older (age 55+) individuals who are blind. Services include independent living skills training, assistive technology and orientation/mobility training. Services are intended to help persons served live in their own homes and communities rather than more costly institutional settings.

RS is also required to provide support for the Statewide Independent Living Council, in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act and implementing regulations.

Centers for Independent Living provided services to 5,705 Kansans with disabilities in all 105 counties.

KANSAS COMMISSION FOR THE DEAF AND HARD OF HEARING (KCDHH)

KCDHH is established in KSA 75-5391 and is overseen by a board of commissioners appointed by the Governor. KCDHH offers advocacy, technical assistance, information/referral, sign language interpreter registration and coordination of interpreting services.

- KCDHH staff receive between 500 and 800 contacts every month (mostly phone calls or email messages) involving many issues on services or specific resources for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH).

- KCDHH maintains a registration list of 403 sign language interpreters in Kansas. KCDHH hopes to expand this registration list to include communication access services, including captioning (CART) and support providers for persons who are deaf-blind (SSP).
- KCDHH provides an annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Day at the Capitol event every March attracting 250 to 300 visitors, including state legislators.
- KCDHH is continuing to monitor implementation of the Language Assessment Program for persons who are D/HH.

Regional Information and success stories

As a state, we currently have 78 counselor positions with 73 of them filled. The average tenure of the counselors is just over five years. We have eight counselors that have over 20 plus years of experience (four in the West, two in the East, and two in KS City). We also have 33 counselors (45%), that have less than two years of experience.

We also have eight Program specialists in the State with 7 filled. The average tenure for Program Specialist is 1 ½ years.

For the management Staff of VR, we have eight managers in the state. The range of experience is from 12 years to 2 months. The average tenure of managers are 3 years. We have four Program Administrator with 3 of those positions filled. The average tenure is 4.6 years.

We have a total of 20 Pre-Employment Specialists in the state with 19th filled. The average tenure of the Pre-ETS are about 6 months. We have 6 specialist that have less than 6 months of experience.

We have a total of 24 position that provides support to the regions. Some are part-time and some are providing accommodations to the counselors.

We also have three Vocational Evaluator in the State.

The East Region consists of 25 Counties which are divided into a North and South Region. The region is supervised by one Program Administrator and two Program Managers. The East currently have 35 total Staff-17 are in the Northeast Portion, 12 in the Southeast Portion, and 6 who cover both North and South in Pre-ETS and the Program Administrator.

The break-down of staff is;

19 counselors with an average Tenure of 5 yrs. There are 9 counselors that have less than one year of experience.

2 Program Specialists with an average Tenue of 3 months.

5 Pre-ETs with an average tenure is 1.8 years.

2 managers with an average tenure of 3 months.

1 PA with a tenure of 2 years.

6 Support staff (HSA) with an average tenure 4.6 years.

Success Stories

VR program:

Joseph Seymour

Joseph had recently completed truck driving training through the Prairie Band Potawatomie VR program. However, he was unable to obtain his Commercial Driver's License (CDL) because his vision did not meet safety requirements. He was legally blind in one eye due to an injury to the eye. It was determined that he would need cataract surgery. This was something that the tribal health program was unable to provide for him.

He applied for KS Vocational Rehabilitation Services with the request to get his vision restored.

We were able to arrange for the cataract surgery within a short amount of time. Joe got his new lens, his vision restored, and he passed his vision exam, thus he was able to obtain his CDL. He got hired as a truck driver for a construction company. He went from unemployed (and unemployment running out) to earning \$ 18 for regular hours and \$ 27 for overtime pay, averaging \$ 19.50/hr. He is very relieved that things worked out for him.

From our perspective, this was a very successful rehabilitation, as with a relatively short-term and limited cost service. The client was able to find and maintain employment in his desired career field. He should be able to continue in this line of work for years to come.

Kelsey Robinson

Name & Address of Employer: BCBSKS

1133 SW Topeka Blvd Topeka Ks 66629

Job Title: Group Master and Benefit Coding Membership Representative

Start date: 8/24/2020

Hours per week: 40

Hourly rate of pay: \$16.89 with health benefits.

What I have really appreciated about the services is mostly the support and understanding by the counselor. I needed the aid absolutely, but it was more the willingness and assistance from you that I really appreciated. You have been the absolute best about this entire experience.

What being employed means to me is independence. I have the freedom and financial ability to take care of myself and my son. I have always had a job but now I'm working on my career and that means the most to me.

Kelsey Robinson



Wendy Cox

JOB TITLE: REINTEGRATION CASE MGR

EMPLOYER NAME: CORNERSTONES OF CARE

ADDRESS: 300 E 36TH ST, KANSAS CITY, MO. 64111

START DATE: 06 / 18 / 2020

HOURLY WAGE: \$18.41

HOURS WORKED/WEEK: 40

Once upon a time I was a medical coder and worked from home. The best situation I could imagine since I had freedom and no one hovering over me, but I was depressed. Not anything I could admit to, but it was intense. I was just doing my thing but ended up breaking my dominant wrist. There was casting, surgery, casting, physical therapy and then more surgery. During this time, I went through my short-term disability and then once I hit my long-term disability time that is when I was referred to Vocational Rehabilitation for services. Did I understand what was going on? No, but I just did what I was told. Through Vocational Rehab services I found a new career. I am a voice for children who are in the system or in that fact anyone who needs a voice for things that will help them in their life.

I was sent to school, paid for, provided with supplies, books, and all that went with school. It seemed to take me forever to graduate since I already had a teaching degree, but I had never taught since I graduated from college in 1984. By the time I did graduate there was a new program at the school I was attending that allowed me to become certified in trauma and recovery. Fits the kids I work with daily in so many ways. I am not going to say this road has been easy but compared to when my injury that prompted me to go down the road I am on I wouldn't have worked with a family to reintegrate the kids back with dad who was cut out of their life for the last 7 years. The kids are thriving but they are also facing major hurdles in their lives over the death of their mother at a young age, the years of abuse from their maternal grandmother and now finding out that the lies of their father not wanting them, not loving them and also being in jail for years on end but yet he was still dead has posed some huge hurdles. I am the voice they don't have and even though I don't work for that agency any longer I am still in touch with this family. I also forgot to say that while I was in the beginning of my life change, I also broke my other wrist. You can't do much when you have plates with screws and casts on your hands, so typing was so frustrating. Now all I do is speak into my computer and it is right there for editing and I will say it is so much easier than trying to type!

If it wasn't for Voc Rehab and my case manager there dragging me then walking me through the process I would not be the voice of those who need to be heard. I am also steadier in my depression and anxiety due to now realizing signs, symptoms and how to change this part of my life. This is all due to the services I received while working my program tasks. With all this I will say, take the leap of faith even though you don't feel you need to, don't want to or are so angry at life that you can't seem to figure out anything that is happening in the world and just roll with it. Get out of your comfort zone and just take the leap of faith that you need to take. It will be worth it in the end.

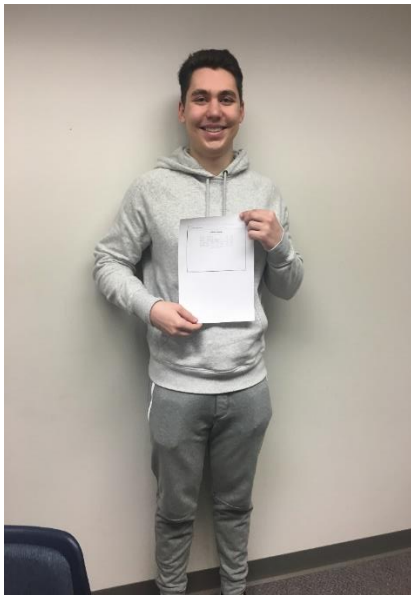
Wendy Cox



Pre-ETS- Wyatt

I started working with Wyatt his senior year at Paola high school. Wyatt has always been interested in the medical field and would like to work towards becoming a physical therapist. Wyatt currently has all the services on his plan besides job shadowing since he has been able to job shadow at the hospital in his hometown. Wyatt attended the KYEA workshop last spring and was a great participant. He is currently attending college and received all A's and a B his first semester. Wyatt told me Pre-ETS has helped him "have extra support when needed" and has been helpful in answering questions about college and jobs. Wyatt has been a student who has come out of his shell and realized what his strengths are through both programs like Pre-ETS and now college. I can't wait to see what he continues to achieve!

Abby Githens, Pre-Employment Services Specialist



Jaxon stated "The Pre-ETS program has been good. I have learned how to look for different jobs and work well with others. I have learned to not be so shy and be out there."

Jaxon has been provided with all services with Pre-ETS besides counseling in post-secondary. We have explored jobs, work on self-advocacy skills, completed a job shadow at a Marina, and worked on work-place readiness skills in group activities. Jaxon works incredibly well with others.



Nathan Erickson

I started working with Nathan in March of 2019. Nathan attended Project Plus Alternative School in Forbes Field. He originally attended school at Mission Valley High School. Nathan was not very goal oriented and had a pretty bad attitude about school. I honestly did not know if he would work out with the program as he really did not like to participate when I would meet with him. But he eventually warmed up and became more involved. Both myself and the school encouraged him to try to meet the goals set for him, which were to obtain employment part time as he could use that for credits towards graduating early. He and I worked on the job applications, resume and mock job interviews as well as the soft skills like attitude and commitment. Nathan is also working with Vocational Rehabilitation with John Lewis. He ended up obtaining a full-time job at Mars working 2-10 M-F and only had to take morning classes, virtually, for the first semester of this year. I let him know how proud I was of him for obtaining not only a job, but a full-time job with benefits and a future. I successfully closed Nathan, per his request, in October, as he had met his goals that were set for him.

Jennifer DeShazer

The Kansas City Region consists of 5 Counties. The Region is supervised by one Program Administrator and two Program Managers. Kansas City currently have 38 total Staff.

The break-down of staff is;

20 counselors with an average Tenure of 5.5 yrs. There are 9 counselors that have less than two year of experience and two with over 30 years of experience. There are currently 4 vacant positions.

1 Program Specialists with an average Tenue of 3 years and 8 months.

5 Pre-ETs with an average tenure is 2 years
2 managers with a tenure of one with 2 years and one with 2 months.
1 PA with a tenure of 6 years.
8 Support staff with an average tenure 3 plus years.
1 Vocational Evaluator with an average tenure of 22 ½ years.

Success Stories

VR-Cody Belles

Cody was a Douglas County consumer that worked with Danielle Thibault. Cody applied to VR 2/26/20 as his employer at the time – KMART Distribution – was going out of business. He had worked there since February 2015. Client received severance pay. JobLink provided supported employment services and the client was able to find a new job at Berry Global in the midst of a pandemic. He started working for Berry Global in July 2020. It's a good fit in that it's similar work to what he did at his previous job. He is doing very well there and reached stability in August 2020. The case closed successfully on 11/18/20 working f/t making 14.00/hour with benefits. Joblink will continue ongoing supports by checking in with client and/or employer consistently. Job coaching was a helpful component to the supported employment services client received to secure and maintain this job. Cody loves the job and reports he does the best job he knows how every day. He has received 2 raises so far based on work performance and one bonus for referring someone for employment.

Sean Berrigan:

Sean was a consumer in the Johnson County office working with Victoria Donnelly, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor. Sean worked with Johnson County Developmental Supports (JCDS) and received Supported Employment services including job coaching. Sean is a very personable individual who is excellent at giving great customer service. As a courtesy clerk, Sean has multiple opportunities during each shift to provide customer service in a variety of ways to customers of Hy-Vee and his co-workers. Sean has accepted responsibility to be cross trained and add additional duties/tasks to his position. He continues to be a role model for all employees at Hy-Vee. Sean is humble about his achievements but admits that he takes initiative to assist co-workers and supervisors whenever possible. Sean states he loves his job and loves going to his job. Sean believes this is a good fit for him and that he may be able to become an assistant manager at some point to maximize his employment even further. Sean loves both his job and the wonderful and supportive assistance he has received from JCDS to maximize his employment. Sean closed successfully making \$10/hour as a Courtesy Clerk at Hy-Vee.

Pre-ETS-Seth Gibson:

Seth was referred to Pre-ETS by former VR counselor Opal. Lori Creason inherited Seth's case from previous Pre-ETS worker in August 2018. Lori and Seth worked together monthly to build up his work skills. Lori and Opal also coordinated meetings together to show Seth that we are both there to support him and help him succeed. Once a quarter, Opal would go with worker to Seth's school to meet with him. Seth wanted VR's help in looking for employment. VR, Workforce, and Pre-ETs all worked together to help Seth find employment. Lori and Seth created a resume together and had Workforce edit it. Lori also helped Seth apply for jobs, and

Seth obtained a job as a security guard, which is what his Vocational Objective with VR was. Seth's VR case closed successfully, and Seth was happy with the services he received. Lori and Seth still meet monthly as he is now in college and he wanted to keep his case open. Lori touches base with Seth on his job and helps him work through solutions to problems that arise at work. Seth and Lori continue to work on employment skills, but Lori is also helping navigate through his first year of college. When asked about Pre-ETS services he has been receiving, Seth stated that it has been helpful to learn new skills as well as touching base on skills that he already has. In addition to all the work Seth completed with Lori individually, he also participated a KYEA Empower Me Workshop last February he was able to work on skills for interacting with peers both in college and on the job.

Jaden: Our Overland Park Pre-ETS Specialist, DJ Satterfield, started working with Jaden at the end of his senior year of high school in May 2019. At that time, he was finishing up high school online due to some behaviors that were making in-person schooling difficult for him. They worked together on some anger management techniques, how to handle criticism, and workplace ethics. They also focused on interview skills, self-advocacy, budgeting, and independent living skills. They did research comparing college degrees versus certificate programs to help him get a better understanding of the different types of programs available and different career options.

When they first started, he wasn't sure what his career direction would be. His plan after graduation was to get his general education classes at JCCC and then transfer to a 4-year college. He originally said he was interested in doing some type of computer work, but he really wasn't sure. DJ and Jaden worked together on in trying to help Jaden narrow down his interests. One of DJ's teammates scheduled a workplace tour for students at KCTV News 5, and Jaden was able to attend with DJ and some other Pre-ETS students to get some ideas of some of the types of jobs available involving using computers. Jaden is now attending classes at JCCC, and his experiences there have caused him to rethink what he wants to do. He has now decided to get an Associates in electrical science at JCCC instead of going on to a 4-year college.

In high school, Jaden had difficulties with behaviors and maintaining impulse control. He can be easily distracted and easily frustrated. He sometimes responds in "out-of-control" proportions to things that may seem like everyday experiences to others. He has had interpersonal difficulties with peers, as well. He is aware of his disabilities and diagnoses and how these can affect his behaviors. He's also Gifted and was able to skip a grade in school.

Outside of school, Jaden had some experiences with mowing lawns for the neighbors and pet sitting, but he had never worked in an official, part-time employment setting. DJ talked extensively with Jaden and his parents about him participating in a paid work-based learning experience. He was eager to work and make money, but his parents were concerned about his anxiety and the possibility of him struggling with his behavioral issues if he became frustrated or overwhelmed at a job. Jaden does not always speak up when he needs help, especially when he is discouraged, so the thought of employment was a little scary to them. Still, DJ encouraged him and his parents that this would be a good time to try because he would have supports from DJ and the job placement providers. In addition, DJ would help him apply for VR services in case

he needed a job coach to support him. DJ and Jaden had been working on self-advocacy skills and appropriate workplace behaviors, so we wanted to support him in having a first job experience.

Jaden interviewed for and was hired to work at an animal shelter. Unfortunately, Jaden came home upset from work one day due to some of his coworkers. Normally, upsetting situations can cause him to have behaviors and become dysregulated; however, this time, Jaden was able to speak up and be a self-advocate about his concerns with some coworkers who were talking about participating in illegal activities in front of him. He said when the incident happened, he left the room because he was very uncomfortable (rather than panicking or displaying behaviors). He was worried about his safety, yet he handled the situation appropriately. After work, he was able to talk to his mom about his concerns, and the next day, they requested to have him moved to different job. His mother told DJ that that was the first time Jaden was able to really speak up for himself and share his concerns without experiencing behavioral issues or having an outburst. This was great progress for Jaden.

Still wanting to work with animals, Jaden was able to finish his PWBLE at a local pet park/daycare doing general cleaning, cleaning of the kennels, dishes, laundry, baths, and playgroups with the animals. The pet park is a smaller, family-owned business who was happy with Jaden's work skills and his work ethic. He successfully finished his experience without having to hire a job coach, and with the added ability to speak up for himself when he was concerned about the first placement. Although the employer does not currently have a job opening, they are interested in Jaden coming back to work with them possibly after the holidays. Jaden's growth in working with Pre-ETS has been great, and he continues to be successful in his classes at JCCC.

The West Region consists of 65 Counties which are divided into a North and South Region. The region is supervised by one Program Administrator and two Program Managers. The West currently have 43 total Staff-19 are in the Northwest Portion, 17 in the Southwest Portion, and 6 who cover both North and South in Pre-ETS and the Program Administrator.

The break-down of staff is;

22 counselors with an average Tenure of 7.75 yrs. There are 9 counselors that have less than one year of experience.

3 Program Specialists with an average Tenue of 2.6 years.

5 Pre-ETs with an average tenure is 8 months.

2 managers with an average tenure of seven years and one year.

1 PA which is currently vacant.

6 Support staff (HSA) with experience from 30 years to 9 months.

Success Stories

VR- Lenny L Cherry

Lenny is a thirty-five-year-old African American/Caucasian male referred to Vocational Rehabilitation by the Hutchinson Community College Adult Basic Education program in Newton, Kansas because he could not see to do his class work. He had an open case with VR

from 01/19/17 through 10/14/19. His case was closed in Status 26 (Successful Case Closure) on 10/14/19 after he had been working for Lippert Components as an assembler since 05/15/19. At the time of VR case closure Lenny had full company benefits (vacation, sick leave, health insurance, life insurance, dental insurance) and was working 40 hours a week earning \$13.00 an hour. At that time Lenny indicated that he would be willing to share with others what he had gained from working with VR.

When Lenny applied for services with VR he had a long history of substance abuse which had led to a spotty work history and to involvement with the legal system. He did not have a high school diploma or GED, did not have specialized work skills, and had poor coping and conflict resolution skills. Throughout the life of his case VR provided counseling and guidance, psychological assessment to determine mental status & needed mental health services, vocational assessment, psychotherapy, prescription glasses, GED preparation materials, dental work (treatment plan, fillings, extractions), work clothes, and EDK job placement services and supports through the Local Area 1 Workforce Investment Board.

Lenny successfully completed his GED through the HCC ABE program and successfully completed substance abuse treatment and probation. He became involved with an Oxford House in Newton and has become a leader in recovery program efforts in the Newton/Wichita area. He was selected by his chapter to attend a national meeting in Washington, D. C.

Lippert Components went out of business with little notice to employees or the Newton community. Although his VR case had already been closed Lenny contacted counselor and job placement team when he learned that his job would be ending. With verbal prompting from the EDK Business Account Manager Lenny attended a Job Fair hosted by the Local Area 1 Workforce Investment Board that was planned to help dislocated workers who were losing their jobs due to the closing of Lippert. At the job fair Lenny was hired to work full time as an Assembler in the door component department for Mid Continent Cabinetry/Masterbrand/Norcraft in Newton, Kansas. He has passed his probationary period, is eligible for full benefits, and is earning \$14.75/hr. He is in the process of applying for a forklift position within the company.

When contacted by counselor to ask if he would be willing to share his story Lenny indicated that he would love to do so because he wants to be a role model for others, he is very appreciative of the help that he received through VR, and he wants to be sure that the VR program continues. Other individuals in the community and his employer have told him that they are looking forward to seeing his story on Facebook and/or in the media.

In a face-to-face meeting with Lenny on 03/12/20 he shared that VR counselor and EDK job placement team provided a good support system for him. He said that the supports and services provided helped build his self-confidence and definitely helped his sobriety. He said that he had gotten to the point where he didn't care at times so having people believing in him and pulling for him made a big difference. He said that services helped him complete his education, helped improve his physical & mental health, helped him improve his relationships, and gave him self-confidence. "Stress is the number one cause of relapse. Not having to worry about work clothes

and having what I needed to start a job made a big difference.” “Meeting together helped me feel professional and helped build my self-confidence.”

In working with Lenny VR counselor coordinated with the Adult Basic Education program through Hutchinson Community College (GED), Local Area I Workforce Investment Board (EDK placement services and supports), EES (ongoing eligibility for Food Assistance), Community Corrections/Probation (to explain VR services & supports), Prairie View (housing program, therapist), and community vendors and providers.

Client’s response: Things are going well. I recently moved back to Hutchinson to be more involved in my daughter’s lives. I’m still in Oxford house, and just celebrated 1yr and half of sobriety. Working at the company called Archer Daniels Midland (Adm). I’m loving the job. And finally completed all court required probation. I feel really free. I’m thankful to hear from you. Thank you for being great at your job. It made a big impact on me changing my life, it means a lot to me.

Counselor has signed release and pictures to submit. Lenny has gotten permission from his employer to use pictures of the company. Karolyn Kellogg

Aisha Kirkland

I have been working with Aisha Kirkland. She applied for VR services on May 24, 2017. The last time she had worked was on March 4, 2015. She suffered a herniated disc at L5-S1 while lifting a resident at her job on April 17, 2014. She has not worked since leaving this position on March 4, 2015. Aisha and her spouse, D’Sean, moved to McPherson, Kansas from New York. Aisha began 10th grade but did not finish the year. Attempts at completing a GED program were previously unsuccessful. At the time Aisha applied for VR services, she did not know what she could do, or if she could even work. She was somewhat ambivalent to trying things but did mention she wanted to work in a professional environment. To help with enhancing her computer skills to bring her up to date, and to help boost her self-esteem, she agreed to complete computer training. She successfully completed the Microsoft Office Credentials Customer Service Essentials, Microsoft Word and Excel certification courses through the School of Adaptive Computer Training through Cerebral Palsy Research Foundation. She performed very well in these courses. As a result, she became more motivated and decided to work toward completing the GED. She successfully completed her GED. Aisha’s leg pain became more severe, as a result of her herniated disc. I assisted her with medical appointments to Grace Med. As part of her medical treatment to treat her back and leg condition, I assisted Aisha with an MRI and physical therapy. Aisha reported some improvement with these modalities but continued to struggle. Aisha began having marital conflict which prompted a referral for individual and marital counseling. Through this process, she became motivated to be more independent so that she can provide for herself, financially. Aisha chose to make some lifestyle changes, including weight loss, and better eating habits. Her ambivalence turned to positive change, and she began to see possibilities. Aisha basically had to change her way of thinking. She recently accepted a front desk position at Fairfield Inn in McPherson. She is earning \$10.00 per hour, and is very happy thus far, with her position. There are opportunities for advancement as she continues to grow with the company. Although she has not reached 90-days of employment, for Aisha to reach this point, is certainly a success story in the making. She has overcome many barriers to get to where she is at.

Pre-ETS

Pre-ETS client's success story: I have learned that living with a learning disability is harder because people don't always understand it, so they judge. You get treated differently. For instance, when people learn I have this disability they tend to oversimplify things to the point where it's almost condescending. Almost like being talked down to. I want to tell them go at your own pace and I will get there. Even when I'm working with my closest friends they tend to slow down and stop in order to help me catch up. I want to just tell them to go ahead and I will catch up on my own. I have learned skills that aid me in catching up to where I need to be. I have learned that things are not going to be the same in terms of learning at the same pace my peers do. I understand that getting A's in every class will be harder, but I have learned that if I push myself, I can achieve it.

My older sister has been a very positive influence in my life. Even though she knows I have a disability she has always pushed me further than I ever thought I could go. For example, whenever I get down on myself like when I'm struggling with math (or anything else in life) she never let me give up and insists that I can figure it out. She tells me to keep working hard and I will find a way to figure it out.

In Pre ETS we have spent a lot of time working on workplace readiness skills, post -secondary education and job exploration (She is already very good with her communication skills). She wants to study psychology in college.

This student was a candidate to participate in the KYEA youth leadership forum in Topeka that was cancelled due to COVID-19. She is currently in the process of getting signed up for VR and this month will have a ZOOM meeting/ informational interview with the director of Child Based services of Compass Behavioral in Garden City. A job shadow was not possible due to confidentiality issues. One of the issues to be discussed is the possibility of working over the summer with the children groups while she is in college. Her goal is to become a child case manager with Compass after college.

The Wichita Region consists of 10 Counties. The Region is supervised by one Program Administrator and two Program Managers. Wichita currently have 33 total Staff.

The break-down of staff is;

17 counselors with an average Tenure of 2.8 yrs. There is currently one vacant position.

2 Program Specialists with an average Tenue of 5 years. There is currently one vacant position.

5 Pre-ETs with an average tenure is 6 months.

2 managers with a tenure of one with 12 years and one with 2 years.

1 PA with a tenure of 6 years.

5 Support staff with an average tenure 2 plus years.

Success Stories

VR-Raymond Prochaska

I closed Raymond Prochaska in November of 2019. Raymond has been working at Sam's Club. When I closed him successfully in November he was working as a greeter, working 30 hours a week. By May of 2020, Raymond was able to move to the maintenance department with Sam's

Club and work full-time. Raymond has received many bonuses for his great work at Sam's Club. Raymond received Safety Associate of the Month, Associate of the month, and Safety Associate of the year. When I spoke with Raymond, he said VR services "helped me get a nice job, a really good job, and I get benefits". I asked Raymond what being employed means to him and he said, "I just work hard, I can be more independent, and I don't have to work two or three jobs". Raymond always makes a point to reach out to me and update me on how his job is going. When Raymond first started working with me, he was working two jobs, and wanted to be able to only work one job. Now Raymond is able to work one job, start saving for retirement, and has been successful in his employment. I am proud of the security that Raymond has been able to obtain with employment.

Pre-ETS- Maisie Whyte

Maisie is an active junior at Maize High School. She currently participates in cross country, Fellowship of Christian Students and choir, in addition to the Pre-ETS program. Maisie began receiving services from Pre-ETS in February of 2020.

Over the course of several pandemic filled months, Maisie has taken advantage of the services offered to her – she has come to each meeting prepared to learn something new. During the summer, Maisie requested to receive services...weekly! These services include job exploration, workplace readiness, post-secondary education counseling and self-advocacy. Although she has work based learning on her plan, Maisie has not participated in a paid work- based learning experience, yet. She looks forward to seizing the opportunity, possibly this school year. She shared that she is interested in participating and wants to experience what it's like to have a job.

Maisie has focused a lot on exploring careers of interest to her and identified the positions of child life specialist and kindergarten teacher as her top picks. Using the ONET job database and profiler, Maisie was able to identify her interest areas and learned about the education, job duties and skills needed for the jobs that she wants. She has also been introduced to several other jobs that may be of interest to her. Maisie believes that ONET is a good resource for those seeking to learn more about specific jobs. In her words, ONET is "cool and interesting."

It has truly been a pleasure working with Maisie. She is bright, positive and dedicated – three attributes that will surely take her far! As I continue to work with her, I can tell that she has a passion for children and wants to serve them in some capacity. With her attitude, she can do just about anything! I look forward to helping her develop as she prepares for a career working with children someday.

Quotes from counselors and transition specialists about what their work means to them and their perspective on how meaningful it is to empower individuals with disabilities to have success in employment, and/or a more independent life.

Thanks to Confucius everyone is familiar with the phrase, "Choose a job you love, and you'll never work a day in your life." One of the greatest strengths of our program is our Staff. Our Counselors and Program Specialists have the comprehensive knowledge, expert skills, hands on experience needed to collaborate a profession relationship and address barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities. We take a holistic approach in working with individuals. We provide support that looks at the whole person and not just what their disability needs are. The passion that the Vocational Rehabilitation staff is also a strength and shows in these personal Statements:

Counselor from the East:

"To me, the work I do, means that I have the privilege and opportunity to change Kansans lives who have disabilities, by helping them achieve self-sufficiency, through helping them obtain, maintain, or regain employment in a competitive and integrated workplace, and thus, result in them feeling personally empowered. My perspective on how meaningful it is to empower individuals with disabilities to have success in employment and/or a more independent life, includes what's stated above. Also, I've had family members and friends who have had disabilities, who didn't seek VR Services, and unfortunately, they were unsuccessful in employment and in living a more independent life. It's great to be able to see through my work and my colleagues work, what life can look like, if an individual who has a disability(ies), seeks and receives VR Services, and obtains successful, integrated employment."

Counselor from the West Region:

"Being a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor isn't just work, it's a self-less job that allows me to give back to the community in such a huge and powerful way. Being able to empower individuals with disabilities means giving hope and providing opportunity to bring back life to someone that may feel hopeless and need a bit of a spark to keep going. My goal may not always be to give an individual a 6 figure dream job, but it can be a \$13.00/hr. job for someone to go from helpless to hopeful each day, or it may be assisting an individual to become a teacher or to go back to school to maximize their employment opportunity. I want my clients to be independent and be able to perform their everyday living activities. I believe it so empowering to be able to help someone to take their life back."

Counselor from the Wichita region states:

"I have a strong desire to help and to empower an individual. I believe in the person and I believe if someone is drawing breath, they can be successful and accomplish what they set their sights on. I am a positive person; I believe what consumes your mind controls your thoughts and you become what you believe about yourself, so whatever you put after the words I AM will shape and strengthen your reality. I believe that every human being can live his life with honor and respect for self and others. I am a firm believer in living the life you want and being the person, you want to remember. Don't ever be afraid of what could go wrong instead be excited of what could go right. I want to help a person have a fuller independent life by helping them be positive, set small goals, and secure gainful employment. When I listen to a cx talk about their gratitude towards VR for helping them it is so heart-touching. A happy face is a great letter of recommendation."

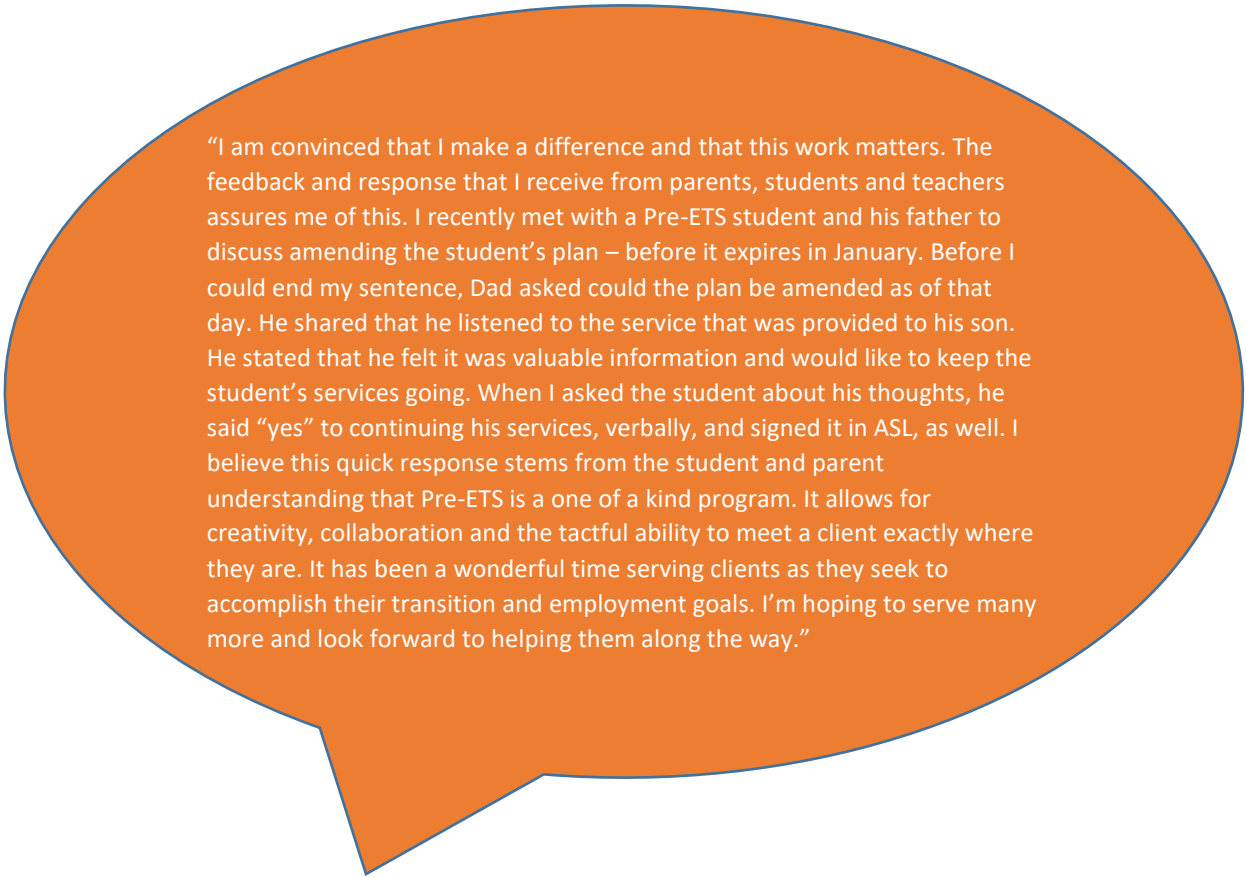
Counselors from the KS City Region States:

"As a person with a disability it means a great deal being able to help others with disabilities in the community to achieve their dreams and to be a part of their growth. It's amazing to see what people can do with a little kindness and resources."

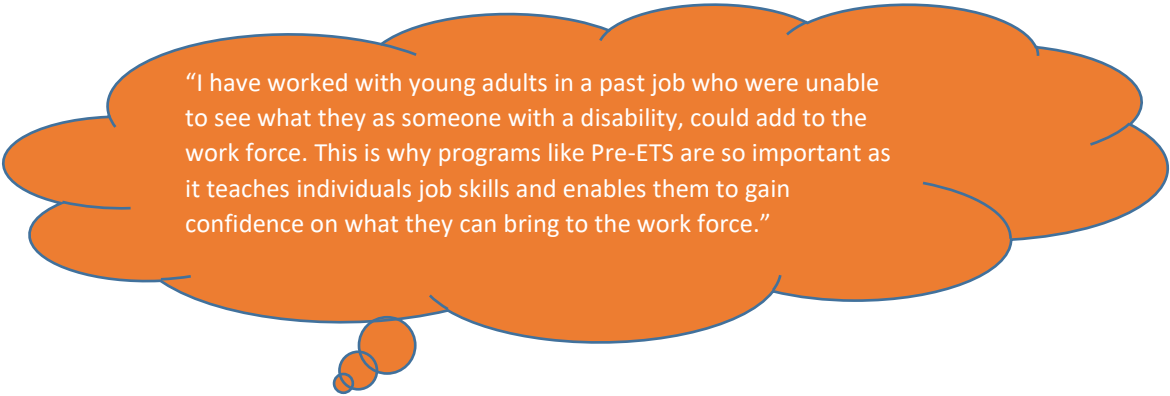
"My work is meaningful in that I am able to help people realize and achieve goals that they may have thought impossible before coming to VR. It's important to me to develop a rapport with my clients, as doing so seems to enhance their experience in VR as well as increase their chances for overall success. Furthermore, it is meaningful to empower individuals with disability-related barriers to employment to achieve their goals because that is indicative of our program making a significant positive impact in people's lives and their dreams of becoming more independent. It's something that we probably take for granted at times, since we do the job day in and day out. So, it's especially rewarding when a client recognizes the difference we make with and for them and takes the effort to thank us and/or tell us how we made the difference. My experience is that it is moments like this that give us the drive we need and want, to continue making substantial differences in people's lives."

"As someone who has been through Vocational Rehabilitation as a client, it gives me a great deal of satisfaction to work on the other side of the line and pay forward all the help that I was given, and to see my clients succeed. I want to empower them as I was empowered by the process and see them thrive."

Pre-Employment Transitional Specialists from Wichita states:

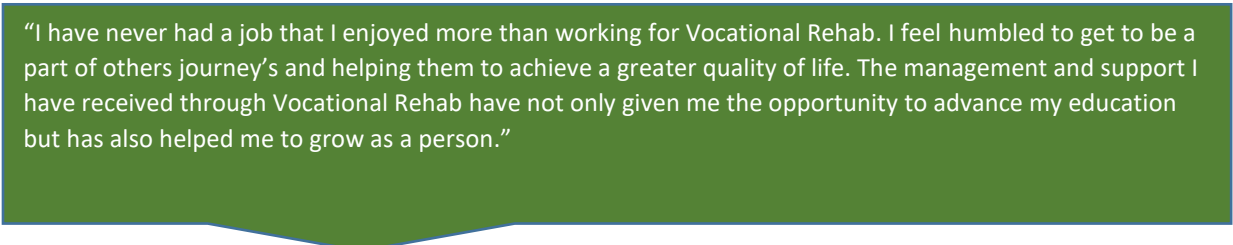


"I am convinced that I make a difference and that this work matters. The feedback and response that I receive from parents, students and teachers assures me of this. I recently met with a Pre-ETS student and his father to discuss amending the student's plan – before it expires in January. Before I could end my sentence, Dad asked could the plan be amended as of that day. He shared that he listened to the service that was provided to his son. He stated that he felt it was valuable information and would like to keep the student's services going. When I asked the student about his thoughts, he said "yes" to continuing his services, verbally, and signed it in ASL, as well. I believe this quick response stems from the student and parent understanding that Pre-ETS is a one of a kind program. It allows for creativity, collaboration and the tactful ability to meet a client exactly where they are. It has been a wonderful time serving clients as they seek to accomplish their transition and employment goals. I'm hoping to serve many more and look forward to helping them along the way."



"I have worked with young adults in a past job who were unable to see what they as someone with a disability, could add to the work force. This is why programs like Pre-ETS are so important as it teaches individuals job skills and enables them to gain confidence on what they can bring to the work force."

Program Specialist from the West states:



"I have never had a job that I enjoyed more than working for Vocational Rehab. I feel humbled to get to be a part of others journey's and helping them to achieve a greater quality of life. The management and support I have received through Vocational Rehab have not only given me the opportunity to advance my education but has also helped me to grow as a person."

Program Specialist from the KS City Region states:

“We all benefit and achieve success when we are able to help someone realize their potential.”

Vocational Evaluator states:

“I have witnessed many clients underestimate their skills & abilities. I have enjoyed showing folks their academic & vocational strengths via vocational evaluation to consider the vocational possibilities. I often point out to VR clients that the vocational evaluation results and subsequent discussion are part of informed choice & consumer’s right to know.”

A newly hired counselor states:

“I believe we each possess beauty and strength, and that we can express it and make this world a better place, if only we have the tools and resources to access those unique and precious qualities. The privilege of empowering individuals with a disability to access and/or harness their strengths as instruments towards living fulfilling and independent lives is truly an honor. It is inspiring to watch those who believed the lie that they are ‘less than’, discover that they have a significant and meaningful place in the world. We are each here for a purpose which only we, as individuals, can fill. I believe that. I am also blessed to work with others in VR who are so genuinely helpful and kind, and who share the vision of empowering individuals with disability find success in employment and in a more independent life!”

A seasoned Support Staff states:

“Since COVID, it has become more apparent to me how important the work that I do to support the Counselors and Consumers. This makes me proud that I can be a part of helping individuals with disabilities to become successful in living a more independent life and giving them a sense of belonging to and being a part of the community.”



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<http://www.dcf.ks.gov/services/RS/Pages/Employment-Services.aspx>