

# Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Division for the Visually Impaired

Annual Report – Federal Fiscal Year 2017

Enclosed is a copy of the Delaware Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council for the Division for the Visually Impaired Annual Report to Governor John Carney and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

Thank you for your interest in and support of programs that provide and promote the use of vocational rehabilitation and independent living programs for Delawareans who are blind or visually impaired.

For questions or comments regarding report contents or to request a copy in an alternative format, please contact the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired:

Michele Hamilton  
Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired  
1901 N. DuPont Highway, Biggs Building  
New Castle, DE 19720  
Phone: (302) 255-9800  
[Michele.hamilton@state.de.us](mailto:Michele.hamilton@state.de.us)

## Contents

<b>Message from the Division for the Visually Impaired Director .....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Message from the Chairperson.....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC) .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Description.....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Council Composition .....</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>VRAC Accomplishments .....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Mission.....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Vision .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Executive Summary .....</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Strategic Plan Goals.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Success Story – Deanah.....</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>DVI FY2017 in Review.....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Achievements &amp; Program Highlights .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Administrative .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Vocational Rehabilitation Services – Pre-Employment Transition &amp; Transition.....</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Success Story– Transition Students Learn to Skimboard .....</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Business Enterprise Program .....</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Independent Living Services .....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Outreach &amp; Communication .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Consumer Satisfaction .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Impact Data .....</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Success Story – Josephine .....</b>	<b>21</b>



1901 North DuPont Highway, Biggs Building/New Castle, DE 19720/302-255-9800

December 29, 2017

U. S. Department of Education, OSERS  
Rehabilitation Services Administration  
Attn: Larry Vrooman, Vocational Rehabilitation Program Specialist  
400 Maryland Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20202-2800

Dear Mr. Vrooman:

On behalf of Delaware Health and Social Services, Division for the Visually Impaired and the Delaware Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council, I am pleased to present the 2017 Annual Report as required by Section 105(C) (4) of the 1992 Amendment to the Rehabilitation Act. In accordance with 34 CFR 361.17, a copy of this report has been submitted to the Honorable John Carney, Governor of Delaware. This report represents the 2016-2017 federal fiscal year. It includes details the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council activities and recommendations, the Division for the Visually Impaired highlights, and significant achievements made by Delawareans with blindness.

The Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired continues to play an integral role in helping people with blindness achieve their vocational goals; however, their successes would not be realized without consumer determination, community advocates, excellent vendor partnerships, and the evolving corporate culture that continues to improve inclusion practices and value diversity in the workplace.

Through the efforts of the Division for the Visually Impaired, in conjunction with the guidance and input of the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council, we will continue to build on our solid foundation through educational workshops, community outreach, employer partnerships, and training to ensure the visually impaired and blind population of Delaware have the tools and knowledge needed to successfully gain employment and remain independent, productive citizens.

Sincerely,

Elisha Jenkins  
Director  
Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired

cc: Office of Governor John Carney



STATE OF DELAWARE  
VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION ADVISORY COUNCIL FOR THE  
DIVISION FOR THE VISUALLY IMPAIRED

October 21, 2018

U. S. Department of Education, OSERS  
Rehabilitation Services Administration  
Attn: Larry Vrooman, Vocational Rehabilitation Program Specialist  
400 Maryland Avenue SW  
Washington, DC 20202-2800

Dear Mr. Vrooman:

Greetings! It has been my pleasure to serve as the chair for the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC) for the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI). The work in which this council spends its volunteer time, effort, and sweat equity is essential to the continuous objective to elevate and highlight improvements in the vocational services offered and delivered through DVI. The work is both warranted and rewarding, but has endured some hardships along the way. Allow me now to highlight some of the instances which encompass the council's year.

During the 2017 year, the VRAC took strides to increase its presence and stance on key issues from collaboration on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) to the response on the 2016 annual report to a granular evaluation of the state plan to a successful White Cane Day celebration. More notably, the council conducted an engaging public meeting held at the Delaware School for the Deaf. During this public meeting in conjunction with the council's annual retreat, the council provided access and pathways for consumers, caretakers, and families to express concerns, raise questions, and make direct contact with the appropriate DVI resource. Moreover, the council covered key issues regarding policy changes, vocational closure rates from DVI, and the need for creative and more intense services and identification of financial support. Further to these efforts, the council attended and spoke passionately at the 2017-2018 Joint Finance Committee meeting and urged Delaware legislators to fund an oversight committee for DVI and support resources for an independent audit of service execution and effectiveness. Moreover, the council reached out into the community to identify and recognize outstanding service by awarding the Sharon Sutlic "Winds of Change" Award and the Debbie Briddell Excellence in Education Award.

The year, however, did not come without its fair share of challenges, difficult conversations, and impasses. A few examples of this are burned into history. There remains a concern that the CSNA was not conducted in a collaborative and scientific methodology in order to maximize the results obtained or optimize the importance of what this key document represents. The CSNA is conducted every three (3) years and is a guide to how

service execution and delivery is evaluated and delivered for the subsequent three (3) years. In addition to a myopic charter and the lack of performance goals versus needs alignment, concerns about the qualifications of the DVI resource assigned to this task remain in question. Notably, this resource possessed no data analysis experience nor was familiar with any data analysis tools or best practices. Additionally, focus groups were not conducted in a confirmed scientific manner and conclusions drawn from the data remain suspect. It is unclear to the council how such an important document can ever be used to set the direction of the agency regarding service delivery, execution and continuous improvement.

Another example of ongoing concerns with the effectiveness of the agency deal directly with the misrepresentation of facts and views from the council. For example, the council received a state plan where the response from the VRAC (i.e. SRC) was pre-populated by DVI. The words used in this section were not conveyed by, dictated by, or endorsed by any member of the council. As a council, we proactively asked to see the state plan and were shocked at the discovery. However, taking the high road, a communication was immediately sent to DVI demanding that the language be removed. Ultimately, during our annual retreat, the language was created by the council, which is our direct charge. This was only completed after we conducted a thorough and collaborative meeting with the agency to understand its thoughts on goals, the capability and capacity to deliver services, and its resourcing and prioritization of objectives.

There remain other examples where time, energy, and needless banter are wasted correcting blatant oversights, gaps, errors, and misinterpretations of policies. Ultimately, these barriers precluded the council from conducting its annual and highly successful annual retreat in 2017 (which was postponed until 2018), continuous backlog, schedule conflicts, and delayed responses from RSA, no identification or realization of new grants for VR, and an inability or resistance of the agency to acknowledge gaps and create measures for success and forward progression. All these concerns add up to one road block: consumers fail to receive or do not benefit from the maximized and optimal service delivery.

As a council, we will continue to highlight and drive for change in a constructive, yet firm, manner. We are keenly dedicated to the consumer and the success of our visually impaired and blind community. We hope that the agency will take a moment to consider the reflections offered and instead of internalizing them as a personal attack or resolving to be defensive, understand a different perspective, revise the service playbook, challenge itself to improve on year over year closure goals with some stretch goals, and rely on strong advocates individually and collectively in the council to improve the life of VR consumers in Delaware.

Thoughtfully submitted,  
Kevin P. McAllister, Chair  
Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (2017-18)

# Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council (VRAC)

## Description

Mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the VRAC is comprised of advocates, consumers, government representatives and the business community located throughout the state of Delaware. The VRAC serves in an advisory capacity to DVI and acts as the liaison between the state agency for the blind and Delawareans who are blind or visually impaired. The VRAC meets monthly and focuses on Council priorities and DVI services. A great deal of emphasis is placed on areas that the Council perceives as lacking substance, needing improvement, or requiring immediate attention by DVI.

The VRAC provides the following assistance to DVI:

- Review, analyze, and evaluate the performance, effectiveness and quality of services provided by the VR program.
- Collaborate with state and private agencies to ensure that the needs of individuals with visual impairments are appropriately identified and addressed by state and federal legislators, service providers, employers, and relevant members of the community.
- Maintain partnerships with local and national organizations (i.e. State Rehabilitation Advisory Councils, National Federation of the Blind, etc.) to promote services to underserved populations.
- Develop and review the goals and priorities related to the allocation of resources for VR. The Council also assists DVI with preparation of the VR State Plan in accordance with the federal regulations.

## Council Composition

Code Requirement	Individual	Council Role
State Independent Living Council	Suzanne Howell	Vice-Chairperson
Parent Information Center		
Client Assistance Program	Blake Roberts	Member
VR Counselor	Genelle Fletcher	Ex Officio
Community Rehabilitation Program	Darryl Garner	Member
Labor/Industry	Carma Carpenter	Member
Labor/Industry	Kevin McAllister	Chairperson
Labor/Industry		
Labor/Industry		
State Workforce Development Board		
Blind Disability Advocate	Walter Harper	Member
Disability & Blind		
Parent	Sonya Lawrence	Member
Recipient		
Education Representative		
Director of Division for the Visually Impaired	Elisha Jenkins	Ex Officio

## VRAC Accomplishments

- Established legislative agendas used to promote the need for increased employment opportunities, better assistive technology availability, improved transportation options, and employment sustainability.
- Coordinated with DVI to analyze consumer satisfaction surveys; used analysis to determine strengths and define areas in need of improvement.
- Coordinated with DVI to co-host the biennial Technology and Community Resource Fair. The fair provided attendees with the chance to experience the latest technology products and learn about community resources.
- Participated in disability awareness activities throughout the state and served on DVI interview panels.
- Collaborated on strategic initiatives, the Combined State Plan, evaluation of needs, and other joint-participative activities.





# Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired



## Mission

To provide educational, vocational and technical support to employers and foster independence for Delawareans with visual impairments.

## Vision

A leader in creating a world without barriers for individuals with vision loss.

## Executive Summary

The Division for the Visually Impaired annual report describes the highlights and achievements of the past year and provides compelling evidence of the tremendous impact DVI vocational services have on the blind community in Delaware. Much of the success can be attributed to the fact that all programming encourage workplace inclusion, promote career development, present opportunities for consumers to gain marketable education and/or training to obtain gainful employment, and strive to eliminate barriers to independence.

DVI is appreciative of the U.S. Department of Education Rehabilitation Services Administration, the Honorable Governor Carney, and the Delaware General Assembly for providing the resources to efficiently serve all Delawareans with blindness. Since FY2011, the Division has operated without an Order of Selection. DVI recognizes the value in having the ability to provide services to all eligible consumers and continue act as responsible stewards of program funds. When compared to other states, the Delaware blind and visually impaired population is relatively small; however, the effect services have on the lives of consumers is equally impactful. DVI will continue to diligently maintain fiscal integrity, produce high-quality programs, and uphold our commitment to continual improvement. Most important, the Division is dedicated to the success of the consumers and privileged to offer assistance while they continue to bravely overcome obstacles along their journey to independence.



## Strategic Plan Goals

### **Goal 1: Highest Consumer Achievement**

Coordinate and secure high-quality training, education, work experiences and partnerships that create opportunities for blind and visually impaired Delawareans to obtain and maintain independence, post-secondary education credentials, and successful employment outcomes.

### **Goal 2: Seamless Coordination and Maximum Access**

Create a comprehensive service delivery system that fosters accessibility and provides positive experiences for blind and visually impaired Delawareans enabling them to progress from school/training to work.

### **Goal 3: Skilled Workforce and Economic Development**

Assist blind and visually impaired Delawareans with obtaining, maintaining and advancing in competitive integrated employment.

### **Goal 4: Quality Efficient Services**

- a. Continue to develop an accountable and exemplary division workforce that provides customer-oriented, high-quality services.
- b. Reduce barriers to independence by streamlining assistive technology procurement process and reducing device acquisition time to fourteen days.
- c. Develop a comprehensive outcome management system designed to efficiently collect data, effectively analyze programs and identify gaps, and serve as a vehicle for service improvement.

## Success Story – Deanah

Deanah began losing her vision halfway through her senior year and required DVI intervention while in high school. Deanah knew she wanted to be a social worker and worked with her transition counselor to determine the best route. She transitioned from high school to community college with plans to graduate and move on to a four-year college.

Deanah was in a financial situation that required she earn income while attending school, so with DVI's assistance she obtained two part-time jobs. She never let the roadblocks in her way remain a barrier. Her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor also helped her work with the college to implement accommodations and assistive technology so she could confidently attend classes. Deanah became a Student Government Association Officer while in school and continued to work her part-time jobs.

Deanah graduated from community college in 2017 and was very proud of her accomplishments. When she walked across the stage, she had obtained an Associate Degree in Human Services, graduated Summa Cum Laude, was a member of the Phi Theta Kappa Honor Society, and was recognized in Who's Who Among Students in American Junior/Community College. In addition to her scholastic accomplishments, Deanah's love of music prompted her to audition for the local Blind Idol competition. In true Deanah form, her audition won her a chance to move to the next level to compete against talented contestants throughout the country. She journeyed to North Carolina to proudly represent the region.

DVI provided Deanah with transition services, supported her during her time in community college, as she continues along her journey today. Currently, she attends one of the oldest universities in Delaware as a senior, finishing her requirements as she continues to pursue her goal of becoming a social worker.

## **DVI FY2017 in Review**

It has been a very busy year for DVI. In addition to significant changes in the federal law, the DVI team of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Orientation & Mobility Specialists, and Vision Rehabilitation Specialist collectively served 666 people who were actively engaged in employment activities, technology, independent living and orientation/mobility training.

DVI maintains a very strong community presence and offers balanced programming to engage consumers during their employment journey. The 2017 achievements and program highlights include the following:

### **Achievements & Program Highlights**

#### **Administrative**

**Partnership Results in AmeriCorps VISTA Opportunities** – DVI and the Delaware School for the Deaf partnered to creatively solve a mutual need; reducing poverty of the blind and deaf/blind communities. The partnership resulted in an approved application for AmeriCorps VISTA volunteers. Unlike AmeriCorps, VISTA volunteers do not perform direct services. They have skills related to project management and program development. The VISTAs receive a stipend and benefits from AmeriCorps so they can commit to one year of service while further developing their skills. DVI was approved for two full-time VISTA volunteers. They will recruit volunteers with diverse skills and backgrounds in business or special education to provide instruction to DVI consumers and students and transitioning adults who are deaf/blind.

**Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Implementation** – On August 19, 2016 WIOA was adopted and published in the Federal Register as Final Regulations (81-FR-55791) and took effect on October 18, 2016. This Act amended facets of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Rehabilitation Act as amended by Title IV of WIOA, and the Wagner-Peyser Act as amended by Title III. WIOA promotes integrated services with the Department of Labor to ensure employment and training opportunities for citizens who are visually impaired, legally blind, and totally blind. DVI worked diligently to update Division Policies, ensure staff were fully trained, and actively participate in the Unified State Plan development. The Combined State Plan includes input from the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council that includes recommendations, analysis of consumer satisfaction, goals that focus on areas such as transition services, professional development, outreach/marketing strategies, coordination and interagency agreements among various entities, resources and a statewide assessment.

**Healthy Vision Summit** – DVI was happy to be a part of the first Healthy Vision Summit in May. The meeting brought together professionals and constituents to discuss access to vision services and prevention of eye disease. Hosted by DVI, Simon Eye, and the Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council, the summit had a wonderful turnout. Dozens of dedicated professionals united to take a hard look at prevention of eye disease in both adults and children.

**Stakeholder Planning Meeting** – DVI hosted a planning meeting with Division stakeholders. Attendees consisted of consumers, advocates, parents, VRAC members, vendor representatives and DVI employees. The meeting was facilitated by a trainer from the State Office of Human Resources who specializes in strategic planning. The robust agenda included time for feedback, suggestions, brainstorming and program review. DVI leadership compiled the information and developed small work groups for additional information and objective development. The information was ultimately utilized in the development of the DVI standard goals and aligned with the strategic plan.

### **Vocational Rehabilitation Services – General**

**WINTAC Provides WIOA Training to VR Staff** – VR invited the Workforce Innovative Technical Assistance Center (WINTAC) to provide instruction for VR staff. The two-day comprehensive training focused on the new WIOA performance measures and the impact the new regulations will have on workflow and services.

**Department of Education (DOE) Provide Training to VR Staff** – Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC) received training from a Transition Specialist from the DOE about Individualized Education Programs (IEP). The training reviewed the entire IEP process and allowed time for VRC to ask questions specific to transition planning.

**VR Consumer Orientation Video and Consumer Handbooks Developed** – The VR team developed an orientation video outlining and explaining services in detail. Although designed to be self-paced, VR counselors provide technical assistance and respond to questions throughout the orientation process. Complementing the orientation process, the new Consumer Handbook thoroughly explains the vocational rehabilitation history, process and procedures. Additionally, the handbook outlines expectations of the VR staff and consumers, includes Client Assistance Program information, explains the Individual Plan for Employment process, and much more. DVI developed both tools to streamline new consumer orientation process, ensure information is properly explained and provide consumers with reference material.

**VR Program Recognized by Volunteer and Internship Host Sites** – St. Francis Hospital presented the VR program with *The St. Francis Volunteer Award for Community Partnership*. VR partnered with the hospital to develop consumer career exploration opportunities which resulted in several volunteer roles for program participants. The VR program was also recognized by Delaware Technical Community College (DTCC) for coordinating the most desired intern program during the college's annual community partnership breakfast.

**Self-Employment Initiative** – VR partnered with Manifest Business Consultants to help more consumers obtain their self-employment goals. Manifest Business Consultants work with DVI consumers to assess business concept feasibility, assist with business plan development and action items.

**Employer Recognition Planning** – DVI is excited to host an employer recognition event to kick off FY2018. The Division partnered with the New Castle County Chamber of Commerce and will present awards to several businesses and consumers to celebrate success and workplace diversification. In addition to awards, DVI will provide the group with a video about the Americans with Disabilities Act and a key note speaker from the American Foundation for the Blind.

## **Vocational Rehabilitation Services – Pre-Employment Transition & Transition**

**Services Provided to Students at Age 14** – In an effort to enhance transition program, students who meet DVI eligibility are provided the opportunity to work with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors and receive comprehensive pre-employment services. Students work with their counselors to develop an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), identify services, participate in assessments, obtain summer employment or internships, and explore careers and colleges. Although still in its infancy, this initiative has already expanded interdivisional collaboration between the Education and VR staff, aligned services, and eliminated program duplications.

**Programming for Transition Youth During Spring Break** – The VR, Education and Independent Living programs developed spring break activities for transition students. The activities were designed to reinforce Expanded Core Curriculum skills, enhance daily living skills, encourage peer interaction and explore careers. The group toured local colleges and businesses and were treated to a comprehensive tour of a music studio.



**Ten Students Participated in 2017 Mission Transition Program** – Every summer for over a decade, the VR and Education programs organize the Mission Transition program. The program is designed to give college-bound students with blindness and visual impairments a real taste of college life. DVI arranges for the participants and staff to live in college dorms for the career-focused multi-day event. Attended by ten transition youth, the 2017 program was once again hosted by Wesley College in Dover, DE. Upon arrival, the group receives a brief orientation of their dorms before beginning the first of many independent living tasks; plan a menu, prepare a grocery list and go shopping. Throughout

the trip, students participate in activities in the dorms and around town. Some activities include meeting college advisors, preparing meals, arranging transportation, planning evening leisure activities, experiencing life in a dorm with a roommate. The jam-packed trip is rounded out with multiple education lessons (via games or lectures) conducted by DVI staff. By the end of the trip, students have been introduced to budgeting, networking, research, safety and reliability, controlling their social media footprint, tuition and living expenses, credit, loans, interest, and realistic salary expectations.

**DVI Sponsors Camp Abilities Delaware** – Camp Abilities Delaware is part of an international organization of educational adaptive-sports camp for DVI consumers between the age of 5 and 21. The day camp was held at Killens Pond State Park and staffed with volunteers who are certified teachers for the visually impaired or orientation and mobility specialists. The volunteers spend their summers assisting the camps taking place throughout the U.S. and South America. Twenty-four students attended the 2017 camp where they were introduced to a variety of sports, including cross-country running, field events, golf, football, and much more. Designed for transitioning youth, the educational component includes work-related topics including careers, work readiness activities, teambuilding, and conflict resolution. The purpose of the camp is to encourage physical activity, develop awareness of health and wellness, enhance teamwork skills and improve confidence and self-esteem.

### **Government Partners Provide Summer Youth Employment Opportunities for DVI Transition Students**

DVI partnered with the City of Wilmington and state government to create paid summer internships for transition students. Youth placed at the city were afforded the opportunity to work in the Public Works Department and the Hicks Center, while those working with the state were with the Division of Social Services.



**DVI Youth Participate in Disability Mentoring Day** – DVI transition students had the opportunity to be mentored during the annual Disability Mentoring Day in Kent and Sussex Counties. Four students were placed at three sites including, Dover Downs and Woodbridge High School.

**Parent Information Sessions** – Throughout the year, DVI hosted several evening meetings designed for transition students and their families. Topics included how to navigate the education system, career and college discussions, what to expect from the adult system, FAFSA, financial coaching and much more.

### **Beach House Weekend Benefits Students (See Skimboard Article on following page)**

Each year DVI partners with the Children’s Beach House to host a weekend of learning and fun. The purpose of Beach House Weekend is to expose students to everyday situations that reinforce skills learned and allow an opportunity for DVI professionals to observe skill application. The Skimboard lesson provided students with the opportunity to practice skills related to the Expanded Core Curriculum which is specialized instruction designed to compensate for decreased opportunity to learn incidentally and through visual observation. The weekend also allows plenty of opportunities for students to naturally transfer skills that are considered useful and marketable in the workplace.

## Transition Students Learn to Skimboard

In May, the Delaware Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) partnered with Alley-Oop to provide expert skimboarding instruction during a weekend camp in Lewes for students with blindness or severe visual impairments. **Skimboarding** (or skimming) is a board sport in which a slim board (much like a surfboard but smaller and without fins) is used to glide across the water's surface to meet an incoming breaking wave, and ride it back to shore. Alley-Oop began teaching the sport during summer camps in 2000. A few years later they opened a shop in Dewey Beach and expanded their services to include a variety of camps and lessons. Alley-Oop works with professionals in the sport and have been recognized as a leader in the skim instruction industry. They were eager to expand their services to include instruction for youth with blindness.



During the lesson, the enthusiastic students were introduced to all aspects of skimboarding, including board maintenance, safety, and technique. Alley-Oop instructors Jason Wilson, Lucas McCoy, and Alex Yokley assisted all of the students as they bravely mounted the boards for a slide in the surf. Alley-Oop employees were impressed by the participants' positive attitudes and willingness to experience such a difficult sport despite having limited or no vision. "We had a few participants who were completely blind that went for a slide! It was great to see how happy everyone was when they hit the water and tried skimboarding for the first time!" said Jason Wilson, Alley-Oop owner.



The purpose of the DVI/Children's Beach House Weekend is to expose students to everyday situations to reinforce skills learned while allowing an opportunity for DVI professionals to observe students' skill application. The Skimboard lesson provided students the opportunity to practice skills related to the Expanded Core Curriculum which is specialized instruction is designed to compensate for decreased opportunity to learn incidentally and through visual observation. The weekend also allows plenty of opportunities for students to naturally transfer skills that are considered useful and marketable in the

workplace. For example, the board maintenance portion of the lesson required students to use their sensory efficiency skills to explore and identify all parts of the skimboard and become familiar with a wax bar. Skimboarding also provided students with the opportunity to develop their social skills, demonstrate self-determination, and explore leisure-time activities. "Overall this activity was fun, challenging and very educational. I would like to give a special thank you Alley-Oop for having such wonderful employees and for inspiring our students to really step outside their comfort zones!" said Erin Weaver, DVI Statewide Education Coordinator.

You can find additional information about Alley-Oop and a complete listing of their services on their [website](#), by phone 302-227-7087, or through email: [info@alleyoopskim.com](mailto:info@alleyoopskim.com). DVI is a division of the Department of Health and Social Services. To learn more about DVI services including eligibility requirements or to schedule training for your organization, call 302-255-9800 or visit the [DVI website](#).

## **Business Enterprise Program**

**BEP Awarded College Cafeteria** – BEP obtained a contract to manage the cafeteria and catering for Delaware Technical Community College (DTCC). DTCC is the statewide community college system in Delaware. BEP was awarded the contract for one of the four facilities.

### **Program Evaluation and Strategic Planning Completed** –

Management and staff for the Business Enterprise Program (BEP), along with the Blind Vendors Committee, participated in a thorough program evaluation and comprehensive strategic planning process. DVI enlisted the assistance of the National Federation of the Blind Association of Blind Merchants Entrepreneurs Initiative (NFBEI) to obtain BEP-specific tutelage and expertise. The NFBEI consultant guided the team through a strategic plan; completed a comparative analysis of the Delaware program measured against those in other states; provided a review of the Randolph Shepherd Act; and made recommendations for enhancements.



**Healthy Options Integrated into Vending Machines** – In response to an initiative set forth by Governor Carney, BEP successfully integrated healthy vending options into a sampling of machines during the latter part of FY17. The pilot was intended to gauge buyers' purchasing habits, assess product reception and analyze potential loss and/or increase of income. In addition to the Governor's Office, BEP also consulted with the Division of Public Health and the American Heart Association. Once prices and products have been finalized (based on pilot), BEP expects to add healthy options to all vending locations during the next fiscal year.

**BEP Events** – DVI hosted a grand opening celebration for **Frankie's on French**, the newest café operated by BEP at the State building in Wilmington, DE. The festivities included a ribbon cutting ceremony and special lunch deals for patrons. In addition, BEP hosted two information sessions to recruit new operators. DVI marketed the events to the Delaware Blind Registry and the general public. Both sessions offered in-depth discussions about eligibility, program logistics (contracts, process, etc.), operator training and commitment and customer expectations.

**Blind Vendors Coordinate Food Trucks for State Employees** – BEP developed a unique way to offer breakfast and lunch for DHSS employees in New Castle, DE. The campus encompasses more than 100 acres and functions as the administrative headquarters for the Secretary of Health & Social Services (DHSS), several DHSS Divisions and nearly 2,400 employees. BEP pursued food trucks because of the convenience of economical and offered delicious options including healthy choices. The food trucks were introduced to the campus as a pilot program so BEP and the vendors could assess the interest. Proceeds benefited the BEP. The project became permanent at the beginning of FY18.



## **Independent Living Services**

**DVI & VRAC Community Technology Fair** – DVI and the VRAC co-hosted a Technology & Community Resource Fair in October. Historically the fair generated mediocre attendance from the blind community. This was the first year the event was open to the public. An email marketing campaign targeted nearly 2,000 representatives from community nonprofit agencies, government entities, and the DE Libraries to promote the event and recruit additional vendors. More than 150 people attended the fair – the largest crowd since its inception several years ago. Efforts also attracted a greater number of vendors. Twenty-five exhibitors provided numerous technology solutions and community resources. Attendees were afforded plenty of time to meet with vendors, attend specialized break-out sessions, network and participate in celebrations in recognition of White Cane Day and National Disability Employment Awareness Month. Activities included the presentation of the Sharon Sutlic *Winds of Change* and Debbie Briddell *Excellence in Education* Awards. In addition, opening the event to the public promoted community inclusion and increased awareness for the blind and visually impaired community.



**Independent Living Workshops** – DVI Independent Living program coordinates workshops every month throughout the year. The majority of workshops are offered in person or by conference call ensuring accessibility to all residents.

**DVI Continues Implementing Transition to Unified English Braille Plan** – Unified English Braille (UEB) is the revised code used internationally for transcribing Braille in the English language. The revised code encompasses revisions and extensions to the previous international literary code (English Braille American Edition). Literary materials transcribed in UEB are more compatible with braille readers and UEB is now the official code in eight English speaking countries including the U.S. DVI developed a five-year comprehensive plan to successfully transition to UEB by the end of FY2020. During 2017 training was initiated; expert instructors were invited to conduct sessions and all DVI Braille Educators were enrolled in the Hadley Institute for the Blind and Visually Impaired training program. In addition, the production team was certified in UEB and new transcriptions, literary materials and statewide assessments were transcribed using the new code. In addition, DVI ensured devices and software were upgraded, Braille educators received training and the new code was introduced to school students.

**DVI Routinely Engages the Community at Statewide Outreach Events** – DVI works closely with the Diabetes Prevention and Control Program to provide information about programs and raise awareness of diabetic related vision complications. DVI also assists with the planning and conducts presentations at the annual Diabetes Wellness Expo.

## **Outreach & Communication**

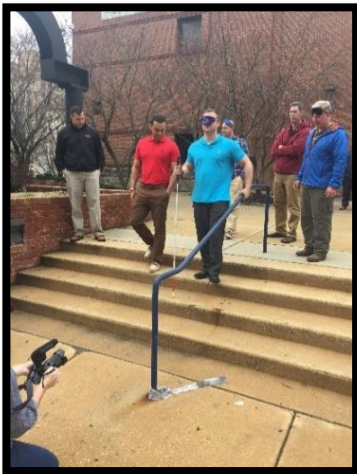
DVI maintains a registry of over 3,000 people who meet the division eligibility requirements and regularly communicates with those who wish to be contacted. Information is routinely sent in various formats, according to consumers' desired media preferences. This includes electronic, automated phone calls, Braille and the US Postal Service. DVI utilizes an electronic marketing system, to create fully accessible newsletters and announcements and an automated phone system to send quick informational messages. In 2017 consumers received 26.6 automated calls and 15.3 newsletters and announcements.

The number of people on the DVI registry may seem high; however, data suggests that Delaware could have anywhere from 17,000 to 21,000 who meet DVI eligibility mainly because of degenerative diseases such as Macular Degeneration, Glaucoma & Diabetic Retinopathy. As a result, a great deal of outreach and education efforts target older adults, who are losing or have lost their vision. DVI staff are frequent exhibitors at community events, health fairs and local conferences. During the last three years, DVI has been a vendor at or sponsor of, more than 50 community outreach events effectively providing vision-related information to hundreds of people. In addition, DVI uses Facebook to connect with other people who may need services. In 2017 the DVI Facebook page increase followers by 14%. More important is the number of vision related inquiries directly through the social networking site also grew by 14% during the same time period. Ultimately, the DVI Facebook page was created to reach underserved populations and the public at large. The uptick in followers, increase in service-related inquiries, and innovative use of the site features prove this will continue to develop into a valuable outreach tool.

Vision-related healthcare professionals are often the number one referral resource for people with severe vision loss. DVI routinely exhibits or attends Delaware Optometric Association's annual conference affording the opportunity to speak with approximately fifty medical professionals. DVI staff are active members of six large community resource sharing organizations. Each group offers organized time to learn about services and all are very well-attended. Collectively the groups have nearly 800 members throughout the state. Meetings average anywhere from 15%-40% membership attendance and group facilitators will distribute all information such as events and newsletters. The group environments have afforded DVI the opportunity to educate nearly 300 potential referral sources about DVI services annually.

**Smart Glasses Demonstration** – DVI invited representatives from three different companies to demonstrate their high-tech smart glasses. The afternoon featured presentations by NuEyes, OrCam and AIRA smart glasses. Although similar, each product had unique features and offered different consumer experiences. DVI partnered with Easterseals who provided space in their Assistive Technology Center. DVI also invited Easterseals and ServiceSource to inform attendees of AT financial solutions they may wish to pursue. Easterseals offers low-interest loans and limited grants. The ServiceSource presenter is a Social Security Work Incentives Benefits Counselor who explained different scenarios for working members of the audience. The event was attended by nearly 70 people and resulted in the provision of NuEyes demonstration glasses and equipment for the DVI Technology Center at no charge.





**Orientation and Mobility (O&M) Train Law Enforcement** – In February & March 2017, DVI partnered with the Wilmington Police Department to provide two days of interactive training designed to help officers understand the difference between individuals who are blind and legally blind; how to approach and assist people with visual impairments; and how to develop awareness of everyday barriers. One activity included blindfolding participants and providing them with a white cane and sighted guide before sending them to navigate the halls, stairs, and the outside front area of the City of Wilmington Police Headquarters on Walnut Street in Wilmington. Ultimately training 64 police officers, several news media outlets (WHYY, the News Journal, and 6abc) observed and documented the second day of training. The community-oriented story was featured in two television newscasts, an online video newscast, and one print article. After the groundbreaking experience with the Wilmington Police

Department, the staff proceeded to train an additional 60 officers between New Castle County and Delaware State Police cadets.

**Community Invited to Interactive Microsoft Accessibility Workshop** – DVI invited the accessibility specialist from Microsoft to conduct an in-depth review of Microsoft built-in accessibility features. The interactive workshop was attended by more than 40 people and was one of the ways DVI recognized World Blindness Month, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and White Cane Day.

**DVI Provides Vision Resources at the LIFE Conference** – DVI exhibited at the annual LIFE (Legislation, Independence, Families, and Education) Conference. This well-attended (500+) event offers guests a variety of breakout sessions and an opportunity for people with disabilities and their families to meet with vendors, state agencies and community resources.

**Healthy Vision Family Night at the Delaware Children’s Museum** – DVI was thrilled to be a partner at the first Healthy Vision Family Night on May 17<sup>th</sup> at the Delaware Children’s Museum (DCM). Hosted by Vision to Learn and DCM, dozens of vision-related organizations set up informational booths throughout the museum. In addition to participating in regular museum activities, exhibitors offered the opportunity to learn about maintaining healthy vision and accessing services.

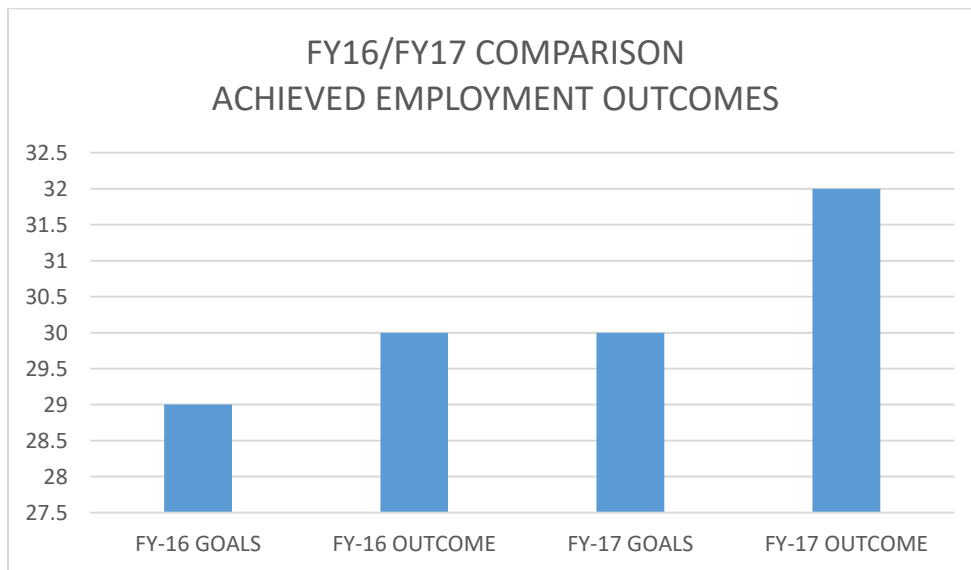


## Consumer Satisfaction

The consumer satisfaction survey gathers perspectives of DVI clients concerning program services, levels of satisfaction, and areas for program improvement. Historically DVI provided traditional mechanisms by which to provide feedback; either in-person or on the phone. In an effort to increase the rate of response and streamline the data analysis process, the Division began using Survey Monkey during FY2017. Survey Monkey is an electronic data collection and analysis program that is user-friendly and provides a mechanism to solicit feedback from a broader sampling of stakeholders. In addition to program-related surveys, DVI developed a general agency questionnaire to capture data related to customer service and agency interaction unrelated to services. All DVI leadership and staff added survey links to email signatures and the requests for feedback are often included in publications. After using the system for one year, DVI will analyze the program related feedback and measure the effectiveness of the survey system by comparing overall response rate.

## Impact Data

Caseload	286
Number determined eligible during FY17	56
Number/percent new completed plans for VR services	53/95%
Total number of individuals in training/higher education	68
Total number of transition age students (14-24)	114
Total number of students receiving VR services	94
Total number closed with successful outcomes	32
Average hourly wage at closure	\$12.85
Average hours worked at closure	33 hours per week



## **Success Story – Josephine**

Josephine, a local professional, had been progressively losing her vision for several years. She became increasingly aware that she needed assistance to maintain her employment and was unsure how to approach her employer to discuss her accommodation needs. During medical leave from work, she received the news that she may lose her employment.

Josephine turned to the Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI) for assistance and was assigned a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC). The VRC immediately contacted her employer's Human Resources Department to discuss Josephine's needs and enact a plan to add workplace accommodations. The VR counselor and DVI Technology Trainer evaluated Josephine's workplace needs, recommended assistive technology devices to improve her work performance, and trained Josephine to implement the new devices so she could independently perform all of her duties. The DVI staff worked with Josephine until she regained her confidence and her employer was satisfied with her performance. Josephine continues to work at the university and is grateful for the intervention she received from DVI.