



# Annual Report

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act  
Program Year 2023  
(July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024)

State Rehabilitation Council of Kansas

## Table of Contents

DCF Mission Statement	pg. 3
Kansas Rehabilitation Services Mission & Principles	pg. 3
Note from Rehabilitation Services Director	pg. 4
Kansas State Rehabilitation Council Members	pg. 5
Annual Summary	pg. 6
RS Program Overview & Outcomes	pg. 7
Statewide Successful Closures	pg. 13
Demographics of Individuals Served	pg. 14
Regional Information & Highlights	
• Kansas City	pg. 15
• East	pg. 16
• West	pg. 17
• Wichita	pg. 17
Success Stories	
• Kansas City	pg. 19
• East	pg. 20
• West	pg. 21
• Wichita	pg. 22
Customer Satisfaction Surveys	pg. 23
• Pre-ETS Open Cases Survey	pg. 24
• Pre-ETS Closed Cases Survey	pg. 25
• VR Open Cases Survey	pg. 26
• VR Closed Cases Survey (Stautus 08/30 closures)	pg. 28
• VR Closed Cases Survey (Status 26/28 closures)	pg. 30

## ***Kansas Department for Children & 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 VR operations:

- Competitive, integrated employment is 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 2023 (July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024)*

## ***Note from the Director: Dan Decker***

We are excited to present this year's annual report reflecting the continued changes and positive outcome we've experienced in the last year. With continued advice and support from our State Rehabilitation Council, we continue to enhance our services by partnering with other state agencies to continue our focus on transition youth. Projects in this sector include our Capacity Building Initiative with Kansas Department of Education, and a Pathways to Partnership grant with Department of Education and Centers for Independent Living. We continue to bolster our continuum of service with more collaboration between our Vocational Rehabilitation and our Pre-Employment Transition Services Units. This concentration of effort on this has seen us expand spending for the youth programming and more tightly defined collaborative efforts around service coordination. We continue to participate actively with our federal technical assistance and move closer to our goal of updating our management information system. Within this report, you will see some of the great stories and data that reflect the continued advances that have taken place and help produce a clear picture of the vision moving forward.



## *State Rehabilitation Council Members*

<b>Name:</b>	<b>Representing:</b>	<b>Employer:</b>	<b>Email:</b>	<b>Term Start Date:</b>
Tami Allen <b>(Chair for Year 2023)</b>	Families Together	Families Together (Program Director)	<a href="mailto:Tami@famielstogtherinc.org">Tami@famielstogtherinc.org</a>	01/01/2022
Tawnie Larson <b>(Co-Chair for Year 2023)</b>	Business Industry of Labor	Kansas AgrAbility Project Coordinator	<a href="mailto:Tawnie@ksu.edu">Tawnie@ksu.edu</a>	01/01/2022
Mike Burgess	CAP Representative	Disability Rights Center Director of Policy & Outreach	<a href="mailto:mike@drckansas.org">mike@drckansas.org</a>	01/01/2022
Dan Decker	Ex-Officio Non- Voting Member	Dept. for Children & Families Director of RS	<a href="mailto:Daniel.decker@ks.gov">Daniel.decker@ks.gov</a>	01/01/2022
Stacy Fuller	Community Rehab Program & Disability Advocacy Group	Envision Inc. Director of Rehabilitation Service & Support Programs	<a href="mailto:Stacy.fuller@envionus.com">Stacy.fuller@envionus.com</a>	01/01/2022
LaVonne Geiss	Community Rehab Program Service Provider	Program Manager DSNWK	<a href="mailto:Lavonne.giess@mydsnwk.org">Lavonne.giess@mydsnwk.org</a>	01/01/2022
Grace Hardwick	Counselor	Vocational Rehabilitation Services	<a href="mailto:Grace.harwick@ks.gov">Grace.harwick@ks.gov</a>	01/01/2024
Stacie Martin	State Educational Agency	Education Program Consultant  Special Education & Title Services	<a href="mailto:smartin@ksde.org">smartin@ksde.org</a>	01/01/2023
Tom Page	Disability Advocacy Group	National Federation for the Blind	<a href="mailto:topage@swbell.net">topage@swbell.net</a>	01/01/2022
Neelima Parasker	State Workforce Investment Board	Founder, President & CEO at SnapIT Solutions  Co-Founder Lotus TMS	<a href="mailto:neelima@snapit.solutions">neelima@snapit.solutions</a>	01/01/2022
Heather Popejoy	Interim Director	Washburn University Student Accessibility Services	<a href="mailto:heather.center@washburn.edu">heather.center@washburn.edu</a>	01/01/2024
Shanti Ramcharan	Statewide Independent Living Council	Adult System of Care Administrator  Aetna Better Health of Kansas	<a href="mailto:ramcharans@aetna.com">ramcharans@aetna.com</a>	01/01/2022
Sara Sack	Senior Research Professor Director	Assistive Technology for Kansans & Assistive Technology Programs	<a href="mailto:ssack@ku.edu">ssack@ku.edu</a>	01/01/2024
Robin Santos	VR Manager	Prairie Band Pottawatomic	<a href="mailto:robinsantos@pbnation.org">robinsantos@pbnation.org</a>	01/01/2022
Deb Scheibler	Labor	Workforce One Executive Director	<a href="mailto:deb@workforceone.org">deb@workforceone.org</a>	01/01/2022

These are our active participating members.  
We are currently awaiting governor approval for several of our SRC board members.

# *Annual Summary*

## **Review of Rehabilitation Services (RS)**

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.

### **RS Data Report**

Data Administrator: Deanna Lowe

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.

## ***RS Program Overview & Outcomes***

### **Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)**

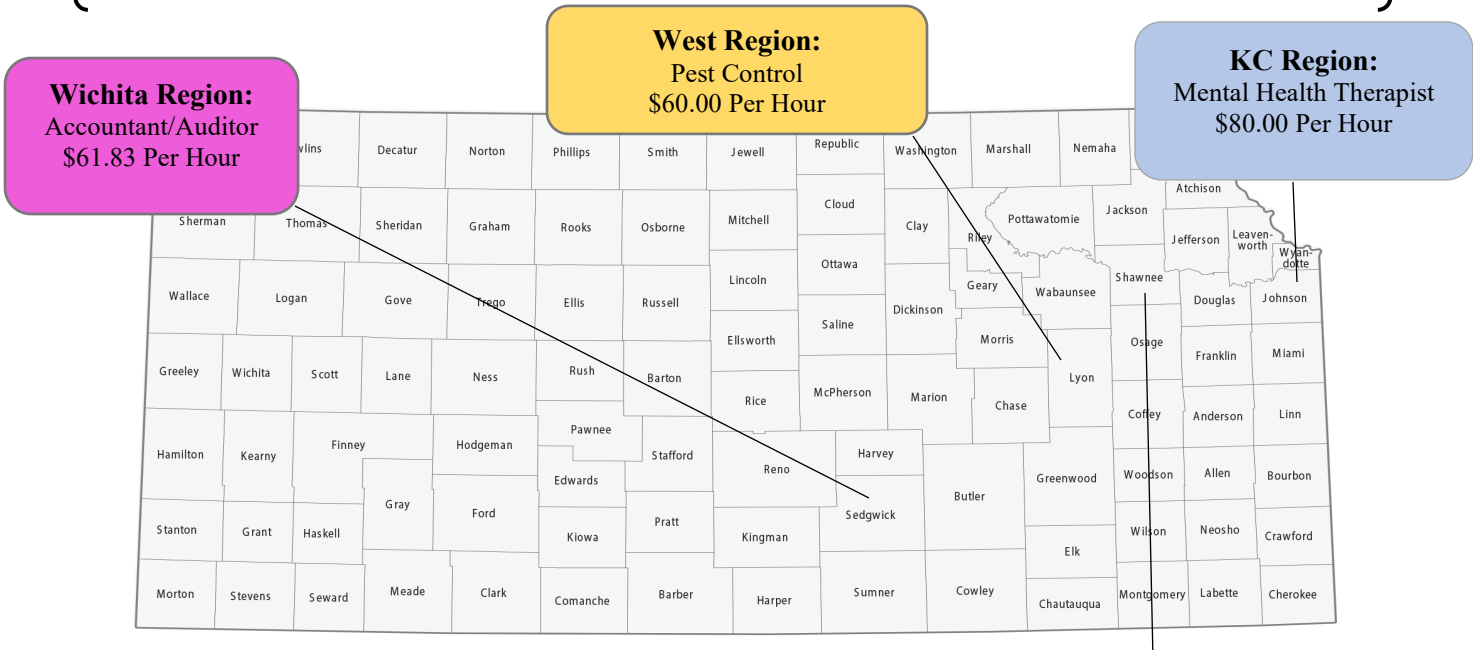
VR provides services for Kansans with disabilities to obtain, maintain or regain employment in the competitive and integrated workplace.

- To be eligible for services, a person must have a physical or mental disability which results in a substantial impediment to employment, and he/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 2023, the number of Kansas' with disabilities that were served was 7,238.

A total of 970 persons achieved competitive integrated employment in PY 2023. Their average earnings were \$15.69 per hour, and they worked an average of 28 hours per week. A total of 74% 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. Subsequently 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 2023 the average timeframe from application to eligibility is 27 days and the average timeframe from eligibility to IPE development is 45.**



**Kansas City Region Consists of the Following Counties:**  
Leavenworth, Wyandotte, Johnson, Douglas

**East Region:**  
Gifted Facilitator  
\$43.94 Per Hour

**East Region Consists of the Following Counties:**

Doniphan, Brown, Nemaha, Marshall, Pottawatomie, Jackson, Jefferson, Wabunsee, Shawnee, Osage, Franklin, Miami, Coffey, Anderson, Linn, Allen, Bourbon, Chautauqua, Cherokee, Crawford, Labette, Montgomery, Neosho, Wilson, Woodson

**West Region Consists of the Following Counties:**

Cheyenne, Clay, Cloud, Decatur, Dickinson, Ellis, Ellsworth, Geary, Gove, Graham, Jewell, Lincoln, Logan, Mitchell, Morris, Norton, Osborne, Ottawa, Phillips, Rawlins, Republic, Riley, Rooks, Russell, Saline, Sheridan, Sherman, Smith, Thomas, Trego, Wallace, Washington, Barton, Chase, Clark, Comanche, Edwards, Finney, Ford, Grant, Gray, Greeley, Hamilton, Harvey, Haskell, Hodgeman, Kearney, Kiowa, Lane, Lyon, Marion, McPherson, Meade, Morton, Ness, Pawnee, Reno, Rice, Rush, Scott, Seward, Stafford, Stanton, Stevens

## **Wichita Region Consists of the Following Counties:**

Barber, Butler, Cowley, Elk, Greenwood, Harper, Kingman, Pratt, Sedgwick, Sumner

## **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)**

Pre-ETS Program Administrator: Tracie Flowers

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 adults prepare for employment and self-reliance.

A major area of emphasis is the provision of summer paid work-based experiences through which youth (second semester junior year and up) can learn the basic skills necessary to succeed in the workplace and experience the benefits of earned income. To carry out this component, Rehabilitation Services has established innovative partnerships with most KANSAS WORKS one-stop workforce centers as well as some Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and recently opened the opportunity to vendors/providers in an effort to serve more students, especially in rural areas. These partnerships leverage the expertise to provide work readiness training and develop opportunities for paid work experiences. The services are funded through Rehabilitation Services provider agreements. KRS is building service provider capacity to ensure statewide access for paid work-based learning experiences. 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. This past summer Pre-ETS kicked off our first summer experience and it was a success! Students were able to participate in a greater number of work hours during the week and were able to focus on learning their new roles without having to juggle daily classes and homework. A lesson that was learned, is to start referrals sooner, around January, to get a jump start on paperwork, especially if the student requires additional supports from Vocational Rehabilitation such as job coaching.

In addition, Rehabilitation Services has established a partnership with the Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy (KYEA). “Empower Me” workshops are conducted statewide 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 virtual event is a panel presentation by people with disabilities who discuss their life and employment experiences.

- **Requested Services: 2,507**
- **Students in Plan: 2,317**
- **Receiving Services: 1,518**
- **Moved into Receiving Services 1,120**
- **VR/Pre-ETS Cases to Date: 887**
- **VR/Pre-ETS Cases Currently Active: 347**
- **Total Services Provided: 14,258**
- **Most Provided Service: Workplace Readiness: 3,675**
- **Paid Work-Based Learning Experiences 2023-2024: 186**



**KRS and KYEA partnered to present 10 Empower Me Workshops in PY 2023, with a total of 214 student participants. According to students, the workshops are a valuable experience, and they live up to the “empower me” goal.**

### **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 to further consideration.

### **Training Department Highlights**

Training Administrator: Lara Bowen

Our Training department has been busy training/on-boarding several new staff members in VR this year. We completed on-boarding training with 25 new VR Counselors, two VR Managers, and one Vocational Evaluator. For Pre-ETS, we trained six new Specialists and one manager. That's a lot of new staff! In addition to new hires, we continue to plan and coordinate our all-staff “Charting the VR Course” meetings, which are monthly trainings/meetings that include ALL KRS staff. We also planned and arranged for monthly Lunch & Learn presentations on a wide variety of topics important to our staff and the clients/students we work with.

In addition to getting to work with new staff that come through our doors, we have some exciting news. Our training team is growing! As of May 13, 2024, we have added a Staff Development Specialist in the Wichita region. Then, as of June 24, we have hired a new Staff Development Specialist in the East region. We have posted for the training/staff development position in the Kansas City and West regions, as well, so we should have a full training staff in soon. This position was developed to allow for more local training resources across the state for our VR Counselors, Pre-ETS Specialists, and Clerical Staff. Our newest Staff Development Specialists have jumped right in and are working with the Deputy Director and the Training Administrator to update and enhance the onboarding process for new staff and to enhance and develop on-going trainings for **all staff** in VR. These Specialists are available to travel to the different offices within their regions to provide more one-on-one/in-person supports to staff, as needed. We are excited to be growing as a team and to be able to provide even more supports to our staff as a whole.

### **Community Engagement and Provider Highlights**

Community Engagement and Provider Manager: Chris Zuercher

KRS is currently collaborating with 87 providers as they go through the renewal process for their unique provider agreements, which occurs every three years. Of those 87 providers, only 12 have opted not to renew their agreements. This is consistent with previous years and what we consider the average renewal rate. As of now, we are approximately halfway through the renewal cycle,

and 34 providers (39%) have participated in provider interviews. This was an additional step introduced during this renewal period. Additionally, KRS conducted online surveys with providers and KRS field staff, incorporating their feedback into our processes. Earlier in the year, we established small collaborative workgroups to help design the survey and interview questions to ensure the best possible feedback from providers.

During this reporting period, 15 providers made amendments to their individual agreements to enhance their services. The majority of these changes involved adding new services or expanding into additional counties, often at the request of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to better meet the needs of the individuals served. Beyond our current providers, KRS received approximately 45 inquiries from organizations interested in becoming new providers, averaging about 5 inquiries per month. Of these, seven successfully completed the process and were approved as new providers for SFY 2023-2024 (roughly 16%).

### **Performance Data for PY 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)**

- Total Successful Closures: 970
- Average Hours Worked: 28
- Average Hourly Wage: \$15.69
- Individuals Successfully Closed using Job Placement Providers: 566
- Average Hours Worked (Job Placement Providers): 28
- Average Hourly Wage (Job Placement Providers): \$15.69
- Supported Employment Successful Closures: 168
- Supported Employment Average Hours Worked: 27
- Average Hourly Wage for Supported Employment: \$15.46

Additionally, I have organized and led semi-annual provider meetings across the state, as requested by leadership and their agendas.

Lastly, I currently represent Rehabilitation Services on the following councils and committees:

- Assistive Technology Council of Kansas (ATK)
- Governor’s Behavioral Health Services Planning Council – Vocational Subcommittee (GBHSPC)
- The National Employment Team (NET)
- Kansas Department of Disability and Aging Services as the KRS Liaison for Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinics (CCBHC) for Individual Placement Supports

## **Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**

RS Management Staff

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 969 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.

### **Disability Determination Services (DDS)**

DDS Deputy Director: Andy West

Kansas 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. Kansas DDS is responsible only for the medical adjudication, and the Social Security Administration determines whether to award benefits. Kansas 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. Kansas DDS is virtually 100% federally funded. In SFY 2024, 27,737 Kansans filed disability claims (all types). The Kansas DDS was responsible for processing 26,985 of those claims. For SFY 2024 Kansas DDS, the average claim processing time for SSI claims is 175 days and for SSDI claims is 179 days. As of June 30th, 2024, Kansas DDS is recognized #1 nationally as one of the best for quality determinations with an accuracy rate of 98.9% for SFY 2024.

### **Independent Living (IL)**

RS Independent Living Grant Manager: Jennifer Graber

RS administers the independent living program, which includes grants to a network of Centers for Independent Living (CILs). CILs are consumer-controlled, community-based, cross disability, nonresidential, private nonprofit agencies. CILs provide information/referral, peer counseling, independent living skills training, advocacy, deinstitutionalization services, and facilitate transition of youth to postsecondary life. In addition, RS oversees grants with community-based organizations to carry out the independent living program for older (age 55+) individuals who are blind (OIB). Services included 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 (SILCK), in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act and implementing regulations.

This past year, the IL Grant Manager along with the Ancillary Initiative Administrator, Matthew Miller, conducted on-site two-day monitoring reviews with seven of the nine CILs. The review team for each review also included an executive or assistant executive director from another center to offer their knowledge and expertise. Each review consisted of file reviews, physical site reviews and interviews with both staff and consumers. A written report was provided to each center as well as to the SILCK. This is a process that had not been completed for a few years, especially due to the pandemic. These reviews will continue on a rotating every 3 year schedule.

New Requests for Proposals for the CILs and OIB programs were required to be completed this year for grants awarded for the program year 2025. Eight centers were awarded continued funding, and three providers were awarded funding for the OIB grant. The CILs also received additional funding approved by legislation, a total of \$2.3 million to be divided between the eight

centers. Along with this increased in funding, the Secretary of DCF expects an increase in consumers served by 1,000 per center.

For PY 2024, Center for Independent Living provided services to 13,830 people with disabilities across all 105 counties. Services ranged from Information and Referral, Independent Living Skills Training, assistance with housing, Youth Transition Services and Assistive Technology.

## **Kansas Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (KCDHH)**

Director: Robert Cooper

KCDHH is established in 1982 by K.S.A. 75-5391 and is overseen by a board of commission members appointed by the Governor. KCDHH offers advocacy, technical assistance, information/referral, registration for sign language interpreters and other communication access services providers, and coordination of communication access services, including the interpreting services. In FY2023, KCDHH expanded its staff to 4, by adding two new FTEs, one Program Manager for Communication Access Services and another Community Collaborative Professional.

- KCDHH staff receive between 500-800 contacts every month (mostly phone calls or email messages) involving many issues on accessibility of services, service needs or specific resources for persons who are deaf or hard of hearing (D/HH).
- KCDHH maintains a registration list of over 400 sign language interpreters in Kansas and is developing other registration process involving other communication access services as authorized by 2022 Legislature amending and adding KCDHH statutes, which also added regulation authority in K.S.A. 75-5393a through 75-5393d. Other communication access services (CAS) include captioning (CART) and support providers for persons who are deaf-blind (SSP/CN).
- KCDHH provides an annual Deaf and Hard of Hearing Day at the Capitol event every March attracting 200 to 300 visitors, including state legislators.
- KCDHH is continuing to monitor the full implementation of the Language Assessment Program (LAP) with Kansas School for the Deaf (KSD) for persons who are D/HH, ages 0-8.
- KCDHH has initiated a pilot Communication Access Fund (CAF) in FY2024 to provide assistance to attorneys, especially in rural areas, in providing communication access to D/HH and two other initiatives addressing communication access gaps in other areas of need. Our pilot for CAF got a bit smaller for FY25, but the efforts to coordinate for greater CAF funding in FY26 is underway including centralizing the coordination point for requests of certain state agencies where disparity is the greatest. Everything else in that paragraph is same.

## **Business Enterprise Program (BEP)**

Program Administrator: Matthew Miller

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 federal, state, county, and municipal buildings. BEP uses funds generated by its operations to match Federal VR funds, rather than using state general funds to operate. The BEP provides the equipment, training, and administrative support as needed. Once the training is complete, the participant receives their

operating license, issued by the program. Some of the more recognizable locations include the Statehouse, Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth, highway rest areas, as well as private entities.

BEP has 10 licensed blind operators at over 100 sites across the state, including vending machines, snack bars, micro markets, and cafes. BEP also has contracts to operate 3 dining halls on two United States Army installations. Since the pandemic, BEP has continued to improve the program, adding micro markets and a military dining contract all within the last fiscal year. The average annual earnings of licensed BEP participants was \$32,900, an improvement of 14% from the previous fiscal year.

### Statewide: Successful Closures

	<b>PY 2022 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)</b>	<b>PY 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)</b>
<b>Total Successful Closures</b>	905	970
<b>Average Hourly Wage</b>	\$14.69	\$15.69
<b>Highest Hourly Wage</b>	\$183.83	\$80.00

### Statewide: Job Placement Successful Closures

	<b>PY 2022 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)</b>	<b>PY 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)</b>
<b>Total Successful Closures</b>	525	566
<b>Average Hourly Wage</b>	\$14.68	\$15.69
<b>Average Hours Worked</b>	28	28

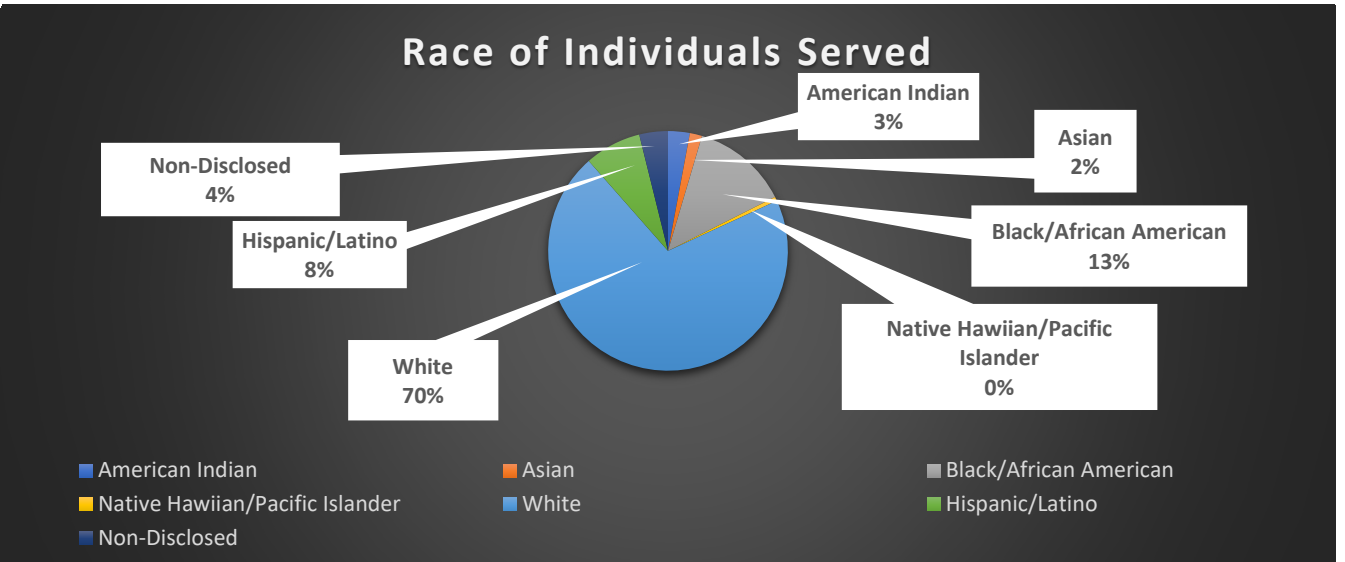
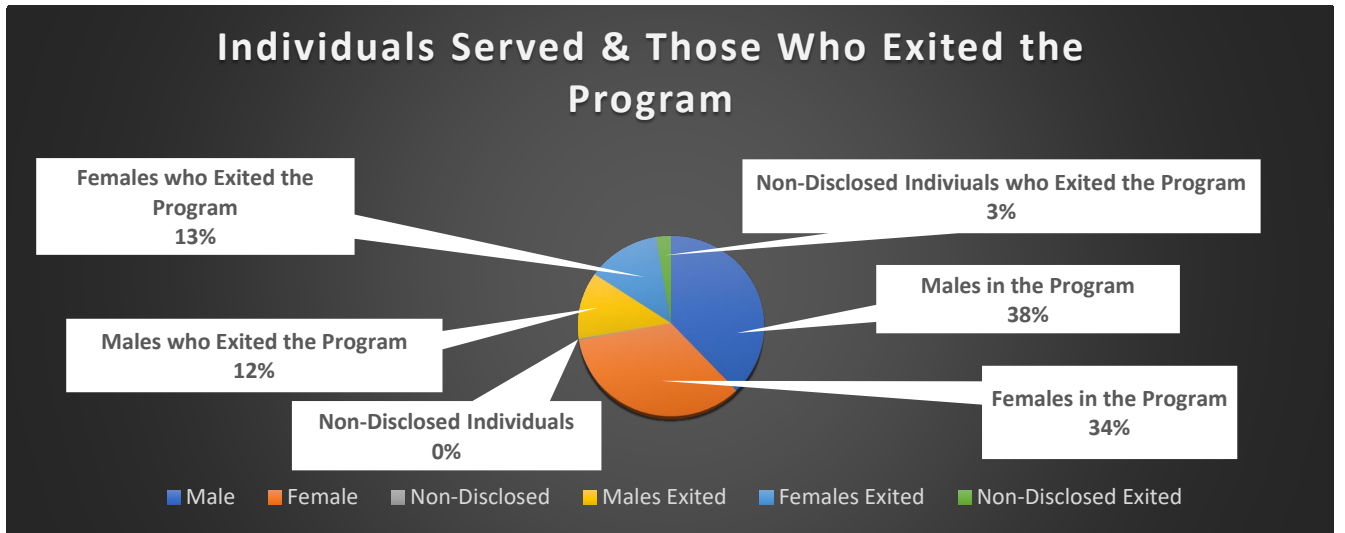
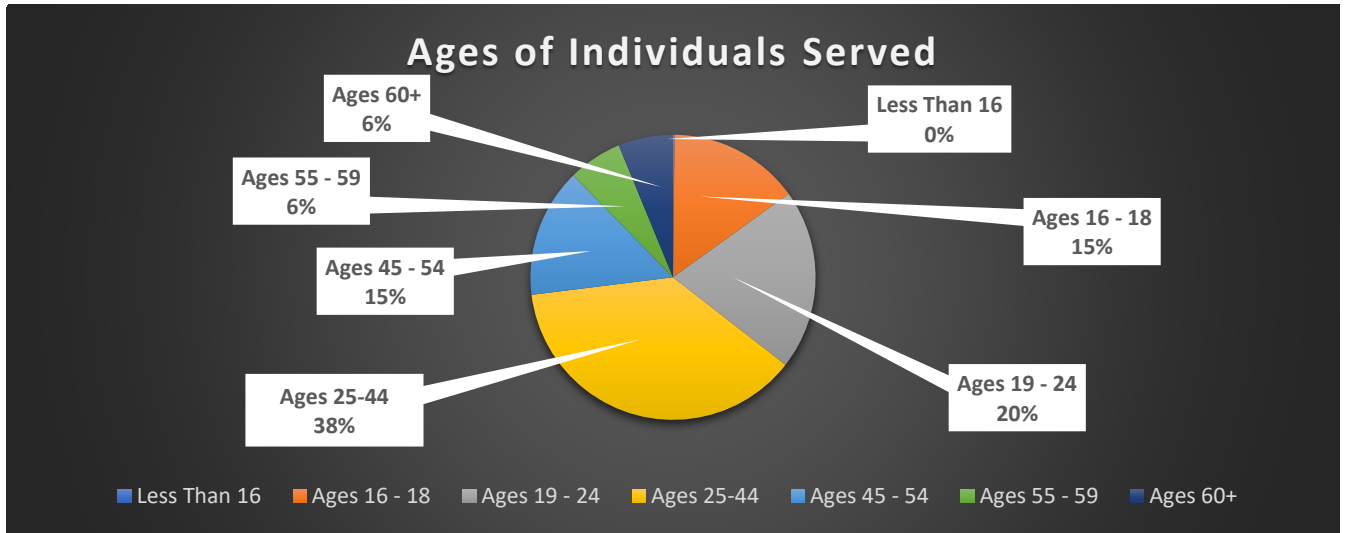
### Statewide: Supported Employment Successful Closures

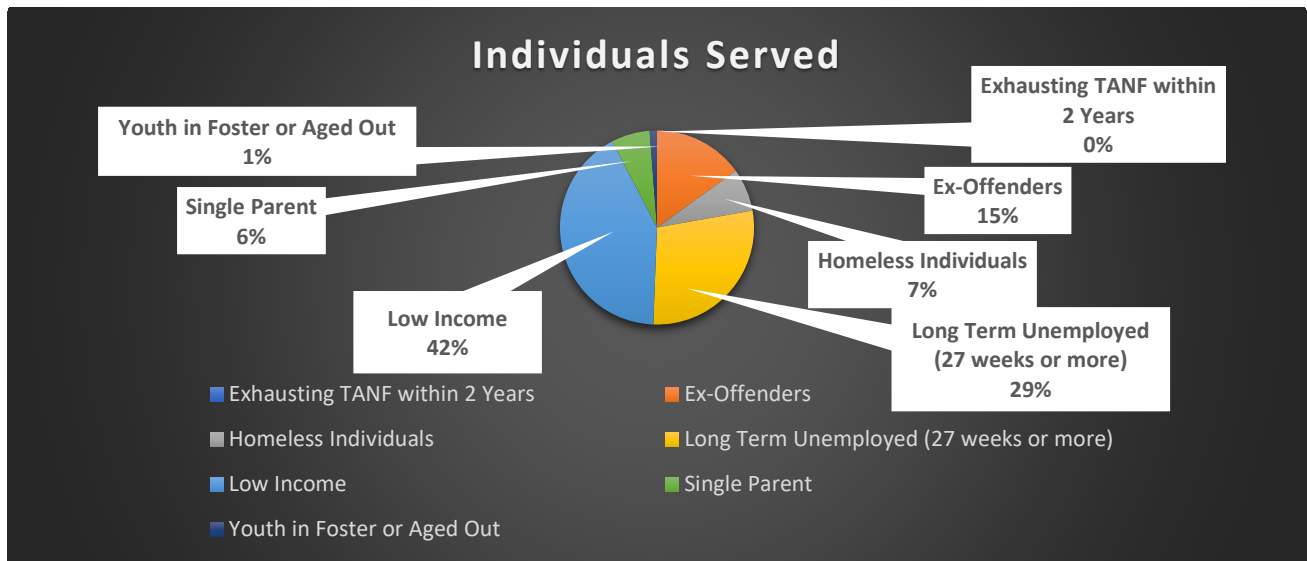
	<b>PY 2022 (July 1, 2022 – June 30, 2023)</b>	<b>PY 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)</b>
<b>Total Successful Closures</b>	151	168
<b>Average Hourly Wage</b>	\$14.68	\$15.46
<b>Average Hours Worked</b>	28	27

### Disabilities of Persons Rehabilitated

<b>Impairment</b>	<b>PY 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)</b>
Mental Illness	322
Orthopedic/Neurological Impairments	96
Other Cognitive Impairments	1
Learning Disabilities	28
Intellectual Disabilities	120
Other Physical Impairments	37
Deaf and Hard of Hearing	87
Blindness and Other Visual Impairments	13
General Physical Debilitation	30
Other	169
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>903</b>
TBI as the cause of disability	7
Autism Spectrum as the cause of the disability	60

## Demographics of Individuals Served





## Regional Information and Highlights

### KC Region:

The Kansas City Region includes: 5 counties with 5 service centers: Johnson, Wyandotte, Lawrence, Leavenworth, and Atchison. Counselors in each office.

- County Population: JO: 610,472 (most populous county in Kansas) WY: 167,989, DG: 119,094, LV: 82,050, AT: 16,309
- Square Miles: AT: (432), DG : (457) Johnson (477), Leavenworth (463), Wyandotte (151): Total
- Major Cities: Kansas City, Overland Park, Lawrence, Leavenworth
- Community Developmental Disability Organization: 5 (one for each county)
- Community Independent Living Centers: The Whole Person (Jo, Wy, and Lv), Independence Inc (DG), and Three Rivers (AT)
- MHC: 4: Bert Nash, The Guidance Center, Wyandot Mental Health, Johnson County Mental Health

### Unique demographics:

- Large population of Deaf and Hard of Hearing, large number of referrals from Kansas School for the Deaf, which serves ages 3-21. In 1866, it became the first school for the deaf established in the state of Kansas, and it is the only one in KS. Kansas State School for the Blind is in Kansas established in 1867.
  - Diverse community with urban and Rural counties
  - Transportation difficulties for these counties.
  - Total Number served: Currently at 1,756 consumers currently, up about 107 from this time last year.

### Staff in the KC Region:

- VRC's and Program Specialists: Average Tenure about 4.5 years. Our average without our long-term counselor is 3 years.

- Counselors with under 2 years in their position: 8 counselors
- Counselor over 2 years in their position: 12 counselors
- VR Manager: Average Tenure about 1 year, One manager vacancy since May 2024.
- PA Tenure: 10 years

Focus of KC Region :

- Quicker Service Delivery: The quicker an individual can receive Vocational Rehabilitation services, the more likely there will be employment success. Therefore, a major goal of RS is to facilitate expedited processes for applications, eligibility determination, development of individual plans for employment and delivery of services. A variety of actions will be undertaken. Counselors are scheduling initial interviews (intakes) as quickly as possible. We send letters to potential applicants (and/or providers with releases of info) to help them understand vocational rehabilitation eligibility. We encourage them to bring supporting documentation to their first appointments. Staff training will be provided on eligibility and assessments to assure that best practices are utilized. We are working with our active partners on this measure as well as developing new ones on our communities.
  - Provider Accountability especially with Supported Employment Services and helping clients get connected to waiver services when possible.
  - Strengthen partnership with our vendors, WIOA partners. WF center meetings at least once/year, sharing opportunities throughout programs, discussing how to apply, who is eligible. Statewide Quarterly meetings with providers and Chris Zuercher. Monthly meetings with most providers within region. Quarterly meetings with some community partners.
  - Continuing to build relationships with referral sources including high schools, colleges trying to get into additional schools for informational meetings.
  - Reducing closures before eligibility and closures before IPE developments.

**East Region:**

The East Region consists of 25 Counties which are divided into a North and South Region.

- Program Administrator: Jennifer Augustine
  - Avg Tenure: I have been in this role since May 2020 (4 years)
- RS Managers: Melanie Standley & Deborah Simon
  - Avg Tenure: Melanie has been in her role since July 2020 (4 years) and Deborah has been in her role since August 2023 (1 year).
- Human Services Supervisor: 1
  - Avg Tenure: She has been in her role since August 2022 (2 years).
- Counselors: 12 Counselors in this Region.
  - Avg Tenure: Average tenure is around 2 1/2 years. The longest tenure is 33 years & the shortest tenure is 10 months.
- Program Specialist: 1 Program Specialist in this Region.
  - Avg Tenure: 2 years. She has been in this position since August 2022.
- Support Staff: 5 Support Staff in this Region (2 in the north and 3 in the south)
  - Avg Tenure: 1.5 Years-3 have been hired and trained in the past 6 months.



- Vocational Trainer: Neva Rowland. Neva has been in her role since 6/24/2024.

There are currently 9 openings in the East Region. 8 Counselor Positions and 1 part-time clerical position.

We currently have 1,663 open VR cases within our region. The average caseload right now is approximately 75 cases. Currently myself and both my managers are also carrying caseloads to alleviate some of the workloads of our newer staff. We do not have specialized caseloads in my region, rather, everyone works with a variety of clients with different diagnoses.

On average, we are able to make individuals eligible within 34.23 days which is slightly higher than the statewide average of 26.74 days. We are also completing IPEs on eligible individuals on average by day 76.49 days and the statewide average is at 70.34 days.

### **West Region:**

The west region consists of 65 counties and is divided into two regions for other programs by the Northwest and Southwest. There are 16 services centers with 8 in each region for consumers to access staff and services. Each service center does have Vocational Rehabilitation representation, however due to vacancies staff may travel to those offices or cover that area remotely.

We currently have 1 Program Administrator, 2 VR managers, 1 Clerical manager, 4 clerical assistants, 1 Vocational Evaluator, 19 Counselors and 1 Intern. We have 9 total vacancies, 6 of those consisting of VR counselors, a VR Trainer and a Vocational Evaluator. Our SW manager will be retiring in October and we are actively recruiting for that position.

The West region had a total of 354 successful closures for the fiscal year, July 1 2023 through June 30 2024. This is two less than last year, so we are remaining steady compared to last year. Our highest hourly wage was \$60.00 per hour as a self employed pest control worker. We served 2,206 consumers last fiscal period, which increased by about 200 consumers. Our average timeframe to determine an individual eligible for services was 17 days and to implement Individualized Plans for Employment was 47 days from the date of application. We continue to increase the number of consumers served and we are hopeful for a continued increase as we bring on more staff and strive to maximize employment and provide quality services.

VR staff and managers continue to build and maintain strong relationships with our providers and community partners. Staff have attended job fairs community engagement meetings or conferences, and we remain committed to meeting with our contracted providers to review mutual cases and identify ways to assist our clients in moving toward their employment and self sufficiency goals.

### **Wichita Region:**

The Wichita Region consists of 10 counties with four service centers:

- Counties – Sedgwick, Butler, Cowley, Sumner, Greenwood, Elk, Barber, Harper, Kingman and Pratt
- Service Centers are located in Sedgwick, Butler, Cowley and Pratt
- Region population is around 665,000 with over half in Sedgwick County
- The region has both a large urban and a large rural population

- Other than the Wichita Metro area, transportation is a significant barrier for VR clients

Staff in Wichita Region:

- One Program Administrator (PA) – Tenure 10 years
- Two Program Managers and Two Pre-ETS Managers – Avg. tenure 4.5 years
- Sixteen VR Counselor positions – Avg. tenure 4 years (3 vacancies)
- One Staff Development Specialist – less than a year
- One Vocation Evaluator – less than a year
- Five Support Positions – Avg. tenure 3.5 years (1 vacancy)
- Eight Pre-ETS Specialists – Avg. tenure 2 years (1 vacancy)

The Wichita Region is the largest city in Kansas and has the largest industries which include: aircraft, health care, agriculture, transportation and logistics. The unemployment rate in the region is slightly higher than the statewide rate. There are many job opportunities in the region.

The Wichita Region has served 1913 clients this past year, from 7/1/23 thru 6/30/24 there have been 245 successful closures, an increase of 68 from the previous year with an average wage of \$15.08 which is almost \$.70 higher than the average wage the previous year. Some of the higher wage jobs Wichita VR clients have obtained this past year are:

- Accounting Director - \$61.83/hr
- Software Engineer - \$33.65/hr
- Respiratory Therapist - \$31.00/hr
- Speech Pathologist - \$25.96/hr
- Substance Abuse Counselor - \$24.04/hr

The Wichita Region has increased successful client closures by over 38 percent over the previous year. The region has added two additional positions to the staff this year; a Staff Development Specialist who will be providing training to new counselors and Pre-ETS Specialists to prepare them for their jobs. This person will also be providing training to all positions as procedures, policies, and other requirements are changed and/or updated. We have also added a Vocational Evaluator to the region staff. This will help in decreasing the wait times for clients to be assessed and will move their cases along faster. Five of our counselors have one year or less time on the job. As they become more experienced, we would expect to see the successful closure numbers improve even more. Our counselor positions in El Dorado and Winfield had been vacant for multiple years requiring counselors from Wichita to work them, which caused some inconvenience for the clients. Recently, experienced counselors from the Wichita office have moved to those offices full time which should help move client's cases forward quicker and increase successful closures.

# ***Kansas Rehabilitation Services Success Stories***

## **KC Region VR Success Stories:**

Lindsay is a passionate, young, 21 year old entering her Junior Year of College at Colorado Christian University. She's been studying pre law with the goal of becoming a lawyer. Lindsay has faced many barriers, but has never let that get in the way of fulfilling her educational and career goals. She meets challenges with optimism and a persevering attitude. Last winter, when discussing the snow on campus causing obstacles for her wheel chair, Lindsay laughed and focused on how uplifting it was to have so many people on campus who were willing to assist her when she got stuck in the snow.



Lindsay continues to move forward in her courses and reaching her future goals of going to law school and becoming a lawyer. She is an exceptional student with a GPA of 3.7. Lindsay believes that representation is important and wants to be able to bring that to communities that need it through her future career in law.

## **KC Region Pre-ETS Success Story:**



Avery graduated this year from Blue Valley Post High School. She was accepted to Missouri State University Bear Power program and will be attending this Fall. Avery completed her application, interview and Bear POWER Leadership Retreat and received an acceptance letter stating she would be a great addition to the program.

Previously, Avery worked at Prairie Elder Care thru the CDOP program and plans to continue future work goals as an activity's director at an elderly facility. She will most likely receive a certificate in Hospitality with an emphasis in Gerontology. She will also be able to study some marketing and social media. Communication classes will also help to fine tune her social interactions. Currently, they have an internship in place at an elderly facility in Springfield close to campus that can be part of her work study program. Specialist has worked with Avery on all five required services. She has cultivated her teamwork skills, effective communicating, and problem-solving skills for the workplace. At length, we practiced interviewing questions and answers, skills, strengths, and accomplishments and student attained this objective. Specialist and student worked on self-advocacy skills and how to feel good about yourself. She was able to identify her strengths, achievements, how to help someone, and how to make yourself feel better. Student commented that she is good at talking to people and is reliable. She helps her mom at home with chores and feels good about

helping. She makes herself feel better by hanging out with friends. Avery participated in the Empower Me Workshop and Specialist received constructive feedback from Carrie Greenwood, Program Coordinator for Kansas Youth Empowerment Academy (KYEA). Avery is a very optimistic, affable, and a free-spoken young lady and will be an asset to her future pursuits.

### **East Region VR Success Stories:**

Allison's VR case started after initially working with Pre-ETS. While attending high school she had already completed her CNA course, and she worked part-time as a CNA. She enjoyed the nursing field and applied for VR-services to get assistance with completing LPN and RN training.

Things took a while, particularly completing the prerequisites for the nursing training, as she had a baby in the meantime.

At this time, we are proud to report that Allison completed / graduated from her LPN training and had her pinning ceremony. She is currently working at a nursing facility nearly full-time, and she will take the licensing exam very soon and start the RN program in Jan.

VR assisted with counseling & guidance, tuition & fees, books, transportation, childcare, and the fees for the licensing exam.



### **East Region Pre-ETS Success Story:**



Kira is an outstanding student that has a bright mind and future ahead of her. Kira has overcome many obstacles in the past year that had been holding her back from finding employment. Kira has since dealt with her disability and figured out ways to manage her setbacks. Last month, Kira mentioned that she would like to look for employment. We started the journey of job exploration and soon Kira stated that she would enjoy working with children. Kira agreed that she would love to look into working at a local daycare facility, so I showed her how to contact the company and fill out her application and wait for the interview process. As a few weeks went by, Kira contacted me and said that she had not heard anything from the daycare and was concerned that she might not be a candidate for the position. I then met with Kira in person and we called the director personally so that she could ask about her application. At the end of the call, Kira was asked to come in for an interview and boy was she excited!

Kira is very self sufficient and I was extremely proud of her for reaching out to me and self advocating for what she wanted. When asked what it was that she liked about the Pre-ETS program, Kira responded, “ I like that your program is inclusive and makes everyone feel like they can do anything. I know that when I first entered your program, I felt like everything was taken away from me, especially my independence. I think that your program helps students

regain their confidence and their individuality. Your program made me feel like I was able to enter back into society again.”

### **West Region VR Success Story:**

Kurtis reached out to Vocational Rehabilitation Services in December 2023. He was employed as a welder for McIntire Welding. Kurtis came to VR to obtain help on maximizing his employment by obtaining a CDL because it would increase his duties and wages for his current employer. Kurtis did report a history of drug/alcohol addiction as well as legal issues. All of these issues Kurtis has taken responsibility for and has worked to improve his life choices and move onward.



VR was able to assist Kurtis in being able to provide a chrome book for him to use for the book/theory portion of the course work. Working with both Kurtis and Fort Hays Technical College/Beloit – VR was able to assist with the CDL training. VR was able to support the blood/alcohol testing through the Mitchell County Hospital that was arranged through Fort Hays Technical College/Beloit; as well as mileage to be able to help Kurtis attend the in person course work/driving.

Kurtis has appreciated the support & encouragement that VR offered him to be able to complete his goal and assist him in obtaining his CDL to maximize his employment opportunities for now and for the future. Kurtis received a raise after obtaining his CDL & indicated he would be getting another raise soon, as he is able to help with transportation needs for his employer. Kurtis reported that he is very appreciative of having the opportunity to maximize his employment. Kurtis is working as a welder/laborer & driver, making \$27 an hour and working 40 hours a week.

### **West Region Pre-ETS Success Story:**



I have only been working with Izic a few short months, I have been proud to see him come out of his shell. When I first met with Izic he was pretty quiet and relied a lot on his mom to answer questions. We have worked really hard on self-advocacy skills and getting him to talk more. He is a smart, energetic young man that works hard in all he does. Izic is on the local school football team and wrestling team. He currently has a job at a local grocery store bagging groceries and taking them out for customers. Izic told me that he really likes this job because he gets to meet new people and it has really helped him in communicating with other people. He always comes to our meetings and works hard to learn new skills to help him be successful in the future with whatever path he chooses to do. He has expressed interest in becoming a welder or a construction worker and we will continue to look at different training opportunities for him to attend after High School. With his hard working nature, I have no doubt that he will succeed in whatever he chooses to do and I can't wait to see where life's journey takes him.

### **Wichita Region VR Success Stories:**

Ciara continues to excel. Ciara has been steadily losing her sight and is currently attending the Colorado Center for the Blind. We have monthly meetings and updates to evaluate her progress. Ciara is excelling at the center and is even a peer mentor now. When she originally went to the Colorado Center for the Blind, Ciara had fallen down her stairs and experienced extreme anxiety whenever she had to leave her home and struggled with her orientation and mobility. At our last meeting they stated that she is doing so much better and is no longer having panic attacks when she is traveling. Just the smallest successes can make the biggest differences.



### **Wichita Region Pre-ETS Success Story:**



On the Right, is Khamani McNeal. He is a Senior at Southeast High School. Khamani has many interests: Agricultural, Going to Church, and Flying. When he graduates, he wants to be either one of the three things, a pastor, a pilot, or a farmer. As he approaches his senior year, he has really struggled on what to do after high school. Specialist and Khamani have done many activities to explore different Careers.

About February, Khamani and Specialist came to a conclusion that Khamani can become all three one day but one of the careers need to be the first one.

Khamani picked being a private pilot and getting his license first. He will then try to work as a ranch hand for one of his friends. He hopes one day that he can be a leader to his church and congregation. With this plan, he is able to do all three things he desires for his future.

With the Help of Pre-ETS. Khamani was able to navigate his future and find his calling.

# *Customer Satisfaction Surveys*

KRS is conducting the surveys to collect responses from current and previous consumers to see how KRS can improve services.

Customer satisfaction surveys are sent out to VR consumers with cases that have been closed in which they provided email addresses for on their application during the previous quarter; VR consumers that currently have opened cases in which we have email addresses for; Pre-ETS consumers that currently have opened cases in which we have email addresses for and Pre-ETS consumers that have been closed during the previous quarter in which we have email addresses for on their application. Any consumer that did not provide an email address – 5% of those consumers will be contacted via phone call by a KRS staff member.

All survey responses are collected online via Microsoft TEAMS. Both the email and phone calls will provide the option for the consumers to participate in the survey. The consumers that are called will have the option to participate in the survey via phone call or provide their email address and participate in the survey electronically.

The surveys will take no more than nine minutes; often less, depending on individual circumstances. All respondents will be asked the same questions; all closed cases will have the same questions and all open cases will have the same questions for both VR & Pre-ETS consumers. Majority of the questions have options where the consumers can rate their experience on a satisfactory scale. There are a couple questions at the end where consumers have the option(s) to provide more detail/ feedback that they wish to share. Respondents will be given the option to provide their name and contact information if they want someone to contact them to further discuss their experience. If they do not wish to receive this follow up; their responses will remain anonymous.

Quarterly reports summarizing customer satisfaction survey responses will be provided to the Director, Deputy Directors to review. After the Director and Deputy Directors have reviewed the information; the results will be sent out to field management to share with field staff.

## **Instruments Used:**

- TEAMS (survey/survey dashboard)
- Microsoft Word
- Outlook
- Phones
- Microsoft Excel

Survey responses are shared in the quarterly SRC meeting; and is also shared with management and field staff on a quarterly basis via email from the data administrator/deputy director. The results that are sent out will be in a PDF document and the data will be from the previous quarter. The results will also be posted on the intranet for staff to go back and look at.



## **Customer Satisfaction Survey Results PY 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024) Open Cases (Pre-Employment Transition Services)**

**I understand the services that are available through Pre-ETS can help assist me to gaining employment skills.**

- Strongly Agree: 44%
- Agree: 44%
- Strongly Disagree: 7%
- Disagree: 1%
- Not Sure: 4%

**My transition specialist provides/provided me with support and encouragement to gaining pre-employment skills.**

- Strongly Agree: 31%
- Agree: 47%
- Strongly Disagree: 4%
- Disagree: 31%
- Not Sure: 5%

**Overall, how satisfied are you with Kansas Pre-Employment Transition Services so far?**

- Very Satisfied: 27%
- Satisfied: 36%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 13%
- Neutral: 12%
- Somewhat Dissatisfied: 3%
- Dissatisfied: 6%
- Very Dissatisfied: 2%

**Pre-ETS Transition Specialists responded in a timely manner to my questions and requests.**

- Strongly Agree: 40%
- Agree: 49%
- Strongly Disagree: 3%
- Disagree: 8%

**How likely is it that you would recommend Pre-ETS to a family member, friend, or colleague?**

- Definitely Yes: 48%
- Mostly Yes: 39%
- Mostly No: 10%
- Definitely No: 1%





## **Customer Satisfaction Survey Results PY 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024) Closed Cases (Pre-Employment Transition Services)**

**My transition specialist provides/provided me with support and encouragement to gaining pre-employment skills.**

- Strongly Agree: 24%
- Agree: 45%
- Disagree: 11%
- Strongly Disagree: 15%
- Not Sure: 5%

**Overall, how satisfied are you with Kansas Pre-Employment Transition Services?**

- Very Satisfied: 22%
- Satisfied: 33%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 7%
- Neutral: 9%
- Somewhat Dissatisfied: 7%
- Dissatisfied: 11%
- Very Dissatisfied: 11%

**Did Kansas Pre-Employment Transition Services meet your expectations?**

- Exceptional: 13%
- Exceeds Expectations: 16%
- Meets Expectations: 33%
- Improvement Needed: 15%
- Unsatisfactory: 22%

**Pre-ETS responded in a timely manner to my questions and requests.**

- Strongly Agree: 5%
- Agree: 18%
- Disagree: 2%
- Strongly Disagree: 4%
- Not Sure: 2%

**Based on my experience, I would recommend Pre-ETS to a family member, friend, or colleague.**

- Definitely Yes: 35%
- Mostly Yes: 29%
- Mostly No: 13%
- Definitely No: 16%
- Not Sure: 7%



## **Customer Satisfaction Survey Results** **PY 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)** **Open Cases (Vocational Rehabilitation Services)**

**I understand the services that are available through VR can help assist me to become employed.**

- Strongly Agree: 54%
- Agree: 33%
- Strongly Disagree: 5%
- Disagree: 3%
- Not Sure: 5%

**Were you involved in choosing your employment goal?**

- Strongly Agree: 56%
- Agree: 31%
- Strongly Disagree: 5%
- Disagree: 7%
- Not Sure: 11%

**Are you satisfied with the employment goal in your plan?**

- Strongly Agree: 46%
- Agree: 31%
- Strongly Disagree: 5%
- Disagree: 7%
- Not Sure: 11%

**VR responded in a timely manner to my questions and requests?**

- Strongly Agree: 43%
- Agree: 29%
- Strongly Disagree: 12%
- Disagree: 12%
- Not Sure: 4%

**My VR counselor listened to my needs and concerns.**

- Strongly Agree: 51%
- Agree: 29%
- Strongly Disagree: 7%
- Disagree: 9%
- Not Sure: 4%

**Overall, how satisfied are you with Vocational Rehabilitation so far?**

- Very Satisfied: 43%
- Satisfied: 22%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 7 %

- Neutral: 7%
- Somewhat Dissatisfied: 6%
- Very Dissatisfied: 10%
- Dissatisfied: 3%

**How likely is it that you would recommend VR to a family member, friend, or colleague?**

- Definitely Yes: 54%
- Mostly Yes: 27%
- Mostly No: 8%
- Definitely No: 10%



## **Customer Satisfaction Survey Results** **PY 2023 (July 1, 2023 – June 30, 2024)** **08/30 Closures (Vocational Rehabilitation Services)**

**My Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor provided me with information about Vocational Rehabilitation Services to determine whether this program is a good fit.**

- Strongly Agree: 31%
- Agree: 35%
- Disagree: 13%
- Strongly Disagree: 11%
- Not Sure: 9%

**When I applied for Vocational Rehabilitation services, I had the opportunity to explain my story.**

- Strongly Agree: 32%
- Agree: 38%
- Disagree: 8%
- Strongly Disagree: 15%
- Not Sure: 7%

**Did you receive information about community resources that might be available and/or helpful?**

- Yes: 46%
- No: 32%
- Not Sure: 21%

**What is the reason you did not pursue services?**

- I obtained employment on my own: 23%
- I was not eligible for services: 3%
- The process to receive services took too long: 2%
- After I learned more about the program, it was not a good fit: 11%
- Other: 57%

**Overall, how would you rate the experience you had with Vocational Rehabilitation Services?**

- Very Satisfied: 26%
- Satisfied: 22%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 8%
- Neutral: 17%
- Somewhat Dissatisfied: 4%
- Dissatisfied: 13%
- Very Dissatisfied: 10%

**Based on my experience, I would recommend Vocational Rehabilitation Services to a family member, friend, or colleague?**

- Definitely Yes: 41%
- Mostly Yes: 28%
- Mostly No: 18%
- Definitely No: 13%

**Were you contacted by Vocational Rehabilitation Services before your case was closed?**

- Yes: 59%
- No: 17%
- Not Sure: 24%



## **Customer Satisfaction Survey Results PY 2023 (July 1, 2023– June 30, 2024) 26/28 Closures (Vocational Rehabilitation Services)**

**My Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) counselor provided me with support and encouragement to obtain employment.**

- Strongly Agree: 51%
- Agree: 31%
- Disagree: 5%
- Strongly Disagree: 8%
- Not Sure: 5%

**My VR counselor involved me in decision making throughout my case and helped me understand the pros and cons of my options.**

- Strongly Agree: 49%
- Agree: 30%
- Disagree: 8%
- Strongly Disagree: 6%
- Not Sure: 6%

**The services I received, helped decrease or remove challenges I had related to employment?**

- Strongly Agree: 36%
- Agree: 32%
- Disagree: 13%
- Strongly Disagree: 7%
- Not Sure: 12%

**Did your VR counselor help in connecting you with people and services you need to reach your job goal?**

- Strongly Agree: 37%
- Agree: 34%
- Disagree: 13%
- Strongly Disagree: 8%
- Not Sure: 7%

**VR responded in a timely manner to my questions and requests.**

- Strongly Agree: 39%
- Agree: 33%
- Disagree: 13%
- Strongly Disagree: 7%
- Not Sure: 7%

**Overall, how satisfied are you with your overall VR experience?**

- Very Satisfied: 38%
- Satisfied: 27%
- Somewhat Satisfied: 8%
- Neutral: 10%
- Somewhat Dissatisfied: 3%
- Dissatisfied: 0%
- Very Dissatisfied: 7%

**How likely is it that you would recommend VR to a family member, friend, or colleague?**

- Strongly Agree: 52%
- Agree: 25%
- Disagree: 5%
- Strongly Disagree: 7%
- Not Sure: 11%



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