# j. Statewide Assessment

## 1. Provide an assessment of the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities residing within the State, particularly the VR services needs of those

##

## j. 1. A. With the most significant disabilities, including their need for supported employment services;

**Current Narrative:**

**Summary Outline of CSNA Methods, Results, Gaps, and Implications for State Plan**

The Rehabilitation Act, as amended in 1998, requires each state to conduct a statewide needs assessment every three years. The current triennial needs assessment is statewide and jointly conducted by The Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) and the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). The activities for the comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) were completed during calendar year 2020. The following summary of the CSNA is being used to develop many of our goals and strategies for PY 2021, 2022 and 2023.

**Introduction**

The goals of this needs assessment are to determine the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals in Vermont who are blind or visually impaired.

### Methodology

Information gathering included the use of:

* Existing disability population statistics including the Cornell Study;
* Consultation with Data Analyst at Department of Disabilities, Aging & Independent Living, including report of Medicaid claims data;
* Disability population estimates from available data including the American Foundation for the Blind;
* Population projections and economic forecasts from federal and state data; Department of Labor projections by state;
* Existing DBVI data, studies and experience; 911 data, type of service, cost, whether people currently served by DBVI are representative of the racial and ethnic minority distribution of people with disabilities within the state; data provided by CRPs; and Counselor input;
* State level statistics from other federal programs; WIOA, IEP, 504, Social Security,
* State and local data and reports;
* Stakeholder input: Surveys, focus groups, SRC meetings, interviews, Vermont Employer Awareness Summit, Customer—Centered Culture Focus Groups, and public hearings.
* Meetings and surveys with the statewide network of Teachers of the Visually Impaired.
* Statewide Customer Satisfaction and Needs Assessment Survey conducted by Market Decisions— The current survey began in December 2021 and the final report will be complete at the end of March 2022. The full results and report will be included in the CSNA for CY 2021-2023.
* Review of Journal of Visual Impairment articles by DBVI staff, 2017 to 2020
* Participants included DBVI Staff, State Rehabilitation Council, Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) Staff, and individuals who are blind or visually impaired from around the state. Dissemination plans included group meetings and individual interviews.

### Results

### Current Population Survey

**Prevalence Rate**(Disability at the Vermont Population Level): The percentage of a man and a woman, aged 18-64 who report a work limitation in Vermont from 1981 (8.9%) to 2018 (10.1%)

**Labor Market Activity Rate:**The percentage of a man and a woman, aged 18-64 with a work limitation in Vermont who worked more than 52 hours in the prior calendar year from 1981 (53%) to 2014 (24%).

**Employment Rate:**The percentage of a man and a woman, aged 18-64 with a work limitation employed in Vermont from 1981 (40.8%) to 2018 (37.6%).

Erickson, W., Lee, C., VonSchrader, S (2021). Disability Statistics from the 2018 American Community Survey (ACS). Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Yang-Tan Institute (YTI). Cornell University Disability Statistics website: www.disabilitystatistics.org (Links to an external site.)

**2018 Disability Status Report--Vermont**

**Summary of Overall United States and Vermont Data**

**Age--**In 2018, the prevalence of disability in the United States was:

* 12.6 percent for persons of all ages
* 5.4 percent for persons ages 5 to 15
* 6.3 percent for persons ages 16 to 20
* 10.4 percent for persons ages 21 to 64
* 24.4 percent for persons ages 65 to 74
* 47.5 percent for persons ages 75+

**Age--**In 2018, the prevalence of disability in the Vermont was:

* 14.2 percent for persons of all ages
* 7.4 percent for persons ages 5 to 15
* 7.7 percent for persons ages 16 to 20
* 11.5 percent for persons ages 21 to 64
* 24.6 percent for persons ages 65 to 74
* 45 percent for persons ages 75+

**Disability Type--**In 2018, the prevalence of the six disability types among persons of all ages in the United States was:

* 2.3% reported a Visual Disability
* 3.6% reported a Hearing Disability
* 6.8% reported an Ambulatory Disability
* 5.1% reported a Cognitive Disability
* 2.6% reported a Self-Care Disability
* 5.6% reported an Independent Living Disability

**Disability Type--**In 2018, the prevalence of the six disability types among persons of all ages in Vermont was:

* 2.6% reported a Visual Disability
* 4.7% reported a Hearing Disability
* 6.7% reported an Ambulatory Disability
* 5.8% reported a Cognitive Disability
* 2.3% reported a Self-Care Disability
* 5.4% reported an Independent Living Disability

**United States and Vermont Data –**

* Vermont DBVI met with Data Analyst from Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living and reviewed empirical data from researchers Flaxman, A. D. et al. 2021, in JAMA Ophthalmology.
* In the United States, recent empirical data from the Vision and Eye Health Surveillance System from the CDC suggest higher estimates of vision loss and blindness than were previously reported (Flaxman, A. D, et al. 2021).
* In the United States, consensus of definition of blindness and vision loss in youth and adult populations is needed to identify the scope of needs and to promote specific models (Flaxman, A.D, et al. 2021).
* In Vermont, DBVI will continue to work with Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living, Data Analyst to review empirical data and refine MMIS data for youth and older blind populations at the Medicaid claims level among other data sets.
* In Vermont, this CSNA finds that small, innovative best practice models may hold the key to improving employer relationships and public perception of individuals who are blind and visually impaired.
* In Vermont, one small best practice model is Pre-ETS, LEAP, a work-based learning model that may lead to improved employment, post-secondary outcomes.

Flaxman, A. D., Wittenborn, J. S., Robalik, T., Gulia, R., Gerzoff, R. B., Lundeen, E.,

Saaddine, J., & Rein, D. B. (2021).*Prevalence of Visual Acuity Loss or Blindness in the United States: A Bayesian Meta-analysis.* JAMA Opthalmology.

### Vermont MMIS Data –

DBVI has obtained Vermont MMIS Data for Annual Needs Assessment and Reporting.DBVI consultations with Data Analyst, Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL)

**Report Description:** This report includes data aggregated from the Vermont Medicaid Management Information System (MMIS) examining Vermont Medicaid claims with the primary diagnosis of one of five vision related disorders as defined by the ICD-10 criteria. Data in this report include claims with beginning dates of service from 07/01/2020 to 06/30/2021.

**Data Analysis Information:** Data were extracted from Gainwell’s Claims Analysis View Universes using the web-based Business Intelligence tool (WebBI) on 11/24/2021 by Leslie C. Johnson. Limiting parameters for all data extracts include:

1. Dates of Service: 07/01/2020 to 06/30/2021
2. Claim Status: 6 (paid claims)
3. Recipient Date of Birth: less than or equal to 07/01/2006
4. Provider Address Type: 04 (physical address)
5. Diagnosis Codes: ICD-10 codes for primary diagnostic categories of Age-Related Macular Degeneration, Glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy, Cataract, Amblyopia/Strabismus, Refractive Errors, and Low Vision/Blindness (excluding diagnosis with one “normal vision” eye)
* **Data Analysis Information:** Data were extracted from Gainwell’s Claims Analysis View Universes
* **Data Analysis Method:** Raw data were aggregated using IBM’s SPSS. Resulting analyses on pages 2-5 of the report show the number of total unique people for whom claims were submitted with primary diagnoses in the categories indicated at the state and county-levels. Cell sizes of less than 11 people are denoted as "<11" per CMS federal reporting guidelines.
* **Diagnoses Identified as Top Five Associated with DBVI Programs/Services:**

Age-Related Macular Degeneration, Glaucoma, Diabetic Retinopathy, Cataract, or Low/Vision Blindness:

TotalUnique People=5686

* **Primary Diagnosis** of Refractive Errors:

Total Unique People=12254

* **Primary Diagnosis** of Low Vision (both eyes affected):

Total Unique People 173

**Gender -**In 2018, 18.4 percent of females of all ages and 15% percent of males of all ages in Vermont reported a disability.

**Hispanic/Latino -**In 2018, the prevalence of disability among persons of all ages of Hispanic or Latino origin in the United States was 8.9% and the prevalence of disability among persons of all ages of Hispanic or Latino origin in Vermont was 9.5 percent.

**Race -**In 2018, in the United States, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

* 10.4 percent among Whites
* 13.3 percent among Black / African Americans
* 4.3 percent Asian
* 9.7 percent among persons of some other race(s)

**Race--**In 2018, in Vermont, the prevalence of disability for working-age people (ages 21 to 64) was:

* 11.6 percent among Whites
* 5.6 percent among Black / African Americans
* 0.8 percent Asian
* 18 percent among persons of some other race(s)

**Populations in Households in Vermont**

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2019 and 2020.

Suburban Stats (2019). Census Population Demographics for Vermont. https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont

* Ages 15 to 17=12,648
* Ages 18 to 19 = 6,392
* Ages 20 = 3,244
* Ages 21 = 3,615
* Ages 22 to 24 =11,034
* Ages 25 to 29 = 17,175
* Ages 30 to 34 = 16,550
* Ages 35 to 39 = 17,699
* Ages 40 to 44 = 20,309
* Ages 45 to 49 = 24,165
* Ages 50 to 54 = 25,494
* Ases 55 to 59 = 23,675
* Ages 60 to 61 = 8,773
* Ages 62 to 64 = 11,666
* Ages 65 to 66 = 6,249
* Ages 67 to 69 = 8,027
* Ages 70 to 74 = 9,391

### Number of Individuals who are minorities

Content provided by the US Census bureau for the years 2019 and 2020.

Suburban Stats (2019). Census Population Demographics for Vermont. https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont

* Total population of Vermont= 625,741
* White- 596,292
* Two or More Races=10,753
* Hispanic or Latino=9,208
* Asian=7,947
* Black or African=6,277
* American Indian=2,207
* Another Race=2,105
* Three or More Races=610
* Native Hawaiian=160

### Summary of Visual Disability Data in Vermont

This CSNA references estimates for working age adults by the US Census bureau as well as data from the American Community Survey which provides us with specific data for visual disability.

**Working Age Adults**

DBVI estimates that there are approximately 5,550 Vermonters of working age (18-74) who are blind or severely visually impaired, and that this is a conservative estimate of total numbers due to preliminary MMIS data review. DBVI provides RSA defined services to approximately 3.7% of these individuals annually (200 in FFY21).

**Visual Disability Total= 16,269**(2.6% of 625,741 Vermont population)

**Ages 18-74= 5,550**- Vermonters of working age who are blind or visually impaired.

US Census bureau for the years 2019 and 2020. Suburban Stats (2019). Census Population Demographics for Vermont. https://suburbanstats.org/population/how-many-people-live-in-vermont

**Employment Rate**

In 2018, data from the American Community Survey references the following

employment rates of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 18 to 64) with disabilities in Vermont.

* In 2018, the employment rate of working-age people with disabilities in VT was 49.5 percent.
* In 2018, the employment rate of working-age people without disabilities in VT was 82.2 percent.
* The gap between the employment rates of working-age people with and without disabilities was 44.1 percentage points.

**Gap--**Employment Rate--Visual Disability

* The gap between the employment rates of working-age people with a visual disability (49.5%) and without disabilities (82.2%) was (32.7%) percentage points.
* In 2018 over half, 2,803 of approximately 5,550 working-age people with a visual disability were not employed in Vermont.

**Not Working but Actively Looking for Work**

The percentage of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 18 to 64) with disabilities in Vermont who are not working but actively looking for work.

* In 2018 in Vermont, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities who were not working but actively looking for work was 4.5 percent.
* In 2018 in Vermont, the percentage of working-age people without disabilities who were not working but actively looking for work was 16.3 percent.
* The difference in the percentage of not working but actively looking for work between working-age people with and without disabilities was 11.8 percentage points.

**Gap--**Not Working but Actively Looking for Work--Visual Disability

* The difference in the percentage of not working but actively looking for work between working-age people with a visual disability (3.7%) and without disabilities (16.3%) was 12.6 percentage points.

**Working Full-Time/Full-Year**

This section presents the percentage of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities working full-time/full-year in Vermont.

* In 2018, the percentage of working-age people with disabilities working full-time/full-year in Vermont was 22.5 percent.
* In 2018, the percentage of working-age people without disabilities working full-time/full-year in Vermont was 62.8 percent.
* The difference in the percentage working full-time/full-year between working-age people with and without disabilities was 40.3 percentage points.

**Working Full-Time/Full-Year: Gap--Visual Disability**

* The difference in the percentage working full-time/full-year between working-age people with a visual disability (24.3%) and without disabilities (62.8%) was 38.5 percentage points.
* This represents about 1,349 out of approximately 5,550 people with a visual disability who are working Full-Time/Full-Year.

**Annual Earnings**

The median annual earnings of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities who work full-time/full-year in Vermont.

* In 2018, the median earnings of working-age people with disabilities who worked full-time/full-year in VT was $45,600.
* In 2018, the median earnings of working-age people without disabilities who worked full-time/full-year in VT was $47,600.
* The difference in the median earnings between working-age people with and without disabilities who worked full-time/full-year was $2000 annually.

**Gap--**Annual Earning--Visual Disability

* The difference in the median earnings between working-age people with a visual disability earned $40,500 and people without a disability earned $47,600 showing that people with a visual disability earned $7,100 less annually than people without a disability.

\*Caution: Estimates based on a very small sample size (less than 40 individuals).

**Poverty**

The poverty rates of non-institutionalized working-age people (ages 21 to 64) with disabilities in Vermont.

* In 2018, the poverty rate of working-age people with disabilities in VT was 28.2 percent.
* In 2018, the poverty rate of working-age people without disabilities in VT was 8.1 percent.
* The difference in the poverty rate between working-age people with and without disabilities was 20.1 percentage points.

**Gap—**Poverty—Visual Disability

* The difference in the poverty rate between working-age people with a visual disability (25.1%) and without disabilities (8.1%) was 7.0 percentage points
* In 2018, approximately 1,393 out of 5,550 people with a visual disability who are working age live in poverty in Vermont.

**Education Level**

* In 2018, in Vermont, age 21 to 64 years with a visual disability have an educational attainment of less than high school education = 649 (11.7% of 5,550)
* In 2018, in Vermont, age 21 to 64 years with a visual disability with a high school diploma or equivalent = 2,259 (40.7% of 5,550)
* In 2018 in Vermont age 21 to 64 with a visual disability with some college/associates degree = 1,171 (21.1% of 5,550)
* College Bachelor Degree or higher =1,471 (26.5% of 5,550)

**Gap—**Education Level--Visual Disability

* The majority of individuals with a visual disability do not get a college degree.

**Information About DBVI Agency Resources:**

The Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI) operates in the Department of Disabilities, Aging, and Independent Living (DAIL) in the Agency of Human Services (AHS).  DBVI employs 11 full-time positions.  DBVI is organized to allow a structure for advancement within based on increased professional abilities, knowledge, leadership, improved services and outcomes. DBVI has four regional offices.

DBVI collaborates with CRPs including The Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired (VABVI) and The Vermont Association for Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation (VABIR); and Supported Employment programs (i.e. Developmental Services Agencies and Mental Health programs) that results in the following collaborative team approach.

* DBVI Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors serve each of the four regions;
* VABVI Vision Rehabilitation Therapists serve each of the four regions;
* VABVI Orientation and Mobility Instructors serve the north and south regions of the state.
* DBVI Blind Service Rehabilitation Associates serve each of the four regions and support the Independent Living Program.
* Technology services are provided by the Blind Services Assistive Technology Coordinator and a contracted professional Rehabilitation Technology expert. The Assistive Technology Coordinator provides services for DBVI clients and covers the entire State.
* A position of LEAP program Coordinator was added in FY2020 to provide increased capacity to serve Pre-ETS students year round and to support DBVI’s Business Enterprise Program.

**The type, percentage, and cost of services provided by CRPs to individuals who are blind or visually impaired and who are minorities.**

* DBVI contracts with the Vermont Association for Business, Industry, and Rehabilitation to provide job development services for DBVI customers in all four regions of the state ($70,000 annually).
* DBVI customers have access to supported employment services through an agreement with the General VR agency to access those programs as needed. In PY 2020, 4 DBVI customers participated in supported employment programs.
* DBVI contracts with the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired for Low Vision, Rehabilitation Teaching, and Orientation and Mobility services ($175,000 annually).

**The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council**

**The SRC for DBVI reviewed and agreed to the following goals and priorities in CY 2020:**

1. DBVI will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.

Leading Measure One: The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.

Leading Measure Two: The use of blindness adaptive skill evaluation and training.

Leading Measure Three: The use of blindness assistive technology evaluation and training.

1. DBVI will increase the percentage of consumers earning more than minimum wage at closure.
2. DBVI will increase consumer opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training and gain industry recognized credentials.
3. In partnership with DOL and community partners, DBVI will create more opportunities for DBVI consumers to participate in DOL programs.
4. DBVI will improve the outcomes for students and youth.
5. DBVI will continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).
6. DBVI will continue to seek opportunities to expand and/or improve services for underserved populations including individuals who need supported employment.
7. DBVI will continue to track consumer satisfaction with the program’s services through the Tri-annual consumer satisfaction survey.

The SRC agrees with the priorities and added emphasis in some areas. They agreed with the importance of career assessments, building adaptive blindness skills, and focusing on assistive technology training. The SRC would also like to see more apprenticeship and career training opportunities for consumers like the one being explored for customer service at CCV. There is also strong support for DBVI helping the DOL Career One Stop to become more accessible. The State Plan was submitted with SRC approval in March 2022.

### Customer Satisfaction Data—Key Findings and Discussion

### Statewide Survey

The survey instrument for this research was developed jointly between the Vermont Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired and Market Decisions Research. It is based on question topics that Market Decisions Research has used in conducting satisfaction research among Vocational Rehabilitation consumers in six states. The goal of this research was to provide an accurate assessment of the views of consumers that could be used to assess satisfaction with services with VT DBVI overall. The target population for this research consisted of all consumers with open and closed cases.

**Goals:**

* The Customer Quality Assurance Survey and Needs Assessment is designed to allow customers to provide feedback about the services they have received.
* The survey provides a tool to measure satisfaction with the agency and the services provided.
* The survey is designed to gather information to allow quality improvements.
* This administration allows comparisons to the 2003, 2011, 2015, and 2017 research and the opportunity to see trends in customer satisfaction.

The current survey began in December 2021 and the final report will be ready at the end of March 2022. The original plan was to have the survey conducted in CY 2020, however, there were delays due to the timing of Covid-19. Many DBVI consumers were socially isolating during this time period and the decision was made to postpone the survey until 2021. The full results and report will be included in the CSNA for CY 2021-2023.

Included here are the preliminary results of the current survey.

Customer Satisfaction: The most recent preliminary results of the 3-year statewide random survey of all participants in the DBVI Vocational Vision Rehabilitation program (Conducted by Market Decisions in December 2021:

* 93% of respondents said they are satisfied with the DBVI vocational rehabilitation program.
* 93% of respondents said overall, they are better off as a result of the services they received from DBVI.
* 98% of respondents said that DBVI staff treated them with dignity and respect.
* 97% of respondents said that DBVI helped them achieve their vocational rehabilitation goals,
* 81% of respondents said that DBVI services met their expectations.
* 91% of respondents said that DBVI vocational rehabilitation services helped them become more independent.
* 94% of respondents said that DBVI helped them reach their job goals.

### Pre—Employment Transition Skills Planning

### Includes:

* Statewide Survey of all Teachers of the Visually Impaired.
* Statewide survey sent to all students.
* Data-Mapping of Child Count data.
* Calculation of current Pre-ETS Expenditures and Forecasting of future needs.

Statewide Survey of all Teachers of the Visually Impaired in Vermont—Survey Results**October 29, 2020.**

What needs do your students have in job exploration counseling?

Most Popular Responses:

* I have many students who are interested in technical school related fields so a partnership with a technical school would be helpful
* Receiving hands on job experience and job exploration
* Developing background knowledge about job choices and job possibilities
* Learning about money management, banking skills
* Being able to go to places in their community
* Learning about time management, professional attire, attitude, timeliness
* Many students I work with don’t have a basic understanding of the kinds of jobs that might be available to them
* I would love to start even younger than transition age with basic concepts around work
* Awareness of case studies of young adults with visual impairments in the workforce and profiles of challenges and accommodations successfully addressed. My students would also benefit from being able to connect with peer models, either virtually or in person.

Key Answers:

* “I have many students who are interested in technical school related fields so a partnership with a technical school would be helpful. Knowledge of actual jobs, the opportunity to "see" (hands on) how jobs are performed, the opportunity to understand how assistive tech and strategies can allow them to do jobs successfully.”

In your experience, what skills do students need to be prepared for work experiences?

Most Common Responses:

* Common job expectations, proper etiquette and social skills (How to ask questions, make friends, etiquette etc.)
* Personal Communication skills
* Time management
* Technology
* Soft skills primarily. My students are intelligent and more than capable of learning the hard skills of many jobs. It’s more about the social piece, navigating interpersonal conflicts, understanding the expectations around work that are difficult for them.
* Travel adaptability, independent problem solving, use of scheduling and using transportation

Key Answers:

* “Time job shadowing with hands on experience... Social skills, constructive criticism, making friends, etiquette, problem solving (not waiting for others to step in), assertiveness, transportation options, assistive technology, handling downtime appropriately, annual resume writing and updates. Understanding and identifying the list of job skills needed within each job.”

How are your students' strengths and weaknesses currently assessed in the area of work-basedlearning?

Most Common Responses:

* Through observation and a transition checklist
* Observation and evaluation by students, teacher and the employer
* I think the work-based learning experiences have been positive for all of my students. Sometimes my most capable students are not challenged enough by the placement.

Key Answers:

* “We were given a readiness list, but other lists are also out there in the areas of independent living, social skills, technology, etc. APH has a book on assessment and goals toward transitioning students successfully as well. I currently have students in middle school and under, and I have not been using a formal list with my current students. I definitely need to be thinking more about this with my middle schoolers though it really starts in the younger years with exposure and experiences.”
* What needs do your students have for work-based learning and workplace readiness training given the current virtual nature of learning?
* Better tech skills
* Any kind of review of how you present yourself, social skills, receiving feedback from managers, accepting new skills and job exploration
* The vast majority of my students do not have the computer skills needed for remote work. This is partially due to reliance on Chromebooks at school. Chromebooks do not teach students critical computing skills.
* There is an ongoing need for targeted, task-specific assistive technology tools and training and their use in both workplace situations and post-secondary education.
* They need to know how to keep track of a calendar and time management within the day.

What would help your students learn more about post-secondary options? Is there anything DBVI could do in order to help?

Most Common Responses:

* My student would benefit from regular check-ins and interest surveys to tailor some job exploration and review of job expectations.
* I think the biggest challenge right now is students who are interested in trade schools. The same colleges seem to have a good understanding of visual impairments and are helping our students but the trade schools not as much.
* There is an ongoing need for targeted, task-specific assistive technology tools and training and their use in both workplace situations and post-secondary education.
* Meet directly with guidance counselors before team meetings.
* DBVI is already doing it.

Key Answers:

* “I think the biggest challenge right now is students who are interested in trade schools. The same colleges seem to have a good understanding of visual impairments and are helping our students but the trade schools not as much.”

What skills do your students need to be prepared for post-secondary education?

Most Common Responses:

* Independence
* Regular check ins and interest surveys to tailor some job experiences
* Technology
* Problem-solving
* Self-advocacy
* How to log onto online content, record for interview and access accessible documents.

Key Answers:

* “They need to be conversant in assistive technology. Equally important are personal management skills in terms of basic consumer banking, time management ad daily living skills.”

What do your students need to get ready for employment?

Most Common Responses:

* Independence
* Training in technology and soft skills. With those two skills down, the training on the hard skills of the job is easy
* Students need to know how to put together a resume. They would benefit from interview coaching and role play. They also need to have a strategy for solving their personal transportation needs for traveling to and from work.
* Be able to get up in the morning, get ready for the day without assistance from anyone else.

Key Answers:

* “Opportunities to perform jobs. Training around how to go about getting the training necessary to obtain a paying job in the community, communication skills training, conversational skills training, personal care skills training, etc.”

What job readiness skills do you think your students need to succeed in the workplace?

Most Common Responses:

* Often, people referred back to their answers from previous question
* Interpersonal skills, problem solving, reducing of an egocentric worldview
* Less reliance on adults, improved independence, good self-esteem
* Communication skills
* Problem solving skills
* Orientation and mobility skills to allow for maximum independence

Do your students receive the help needed to advocate for themselves? Why or why not?

Most Common Responses:

* It varies from school to school but learned helplessness is alive and well in schools all across Vermont. Students are so used to having things done for them that the advocacy piece can be impacted.
* DBVI rehab counselors and TVIs do play a role in meeting self-advocacy goals and needs. Parental facilitation and engagement in the transition years makes for positive outcomes and needs to be encouraged
* This is a frequent discussion among school teams

Key Answers:

* “It varies from school to school but learned helplessness is alive and well in schools all across Vermont. Students are so used to having things done for them that the advocacy piece can be impacted.”
* “Students depend on the school staff and outside sources to help guide them to improve self-advocacy skills.”

Is there anything you would like to see DBVI do with self-advocacy services?

Most Common Responses:

* Help students identify what they need to advocate for
* Provide education for parents
* Run more workshops, gatherings for teens headed into the workforce
* Continue to hold kids accountable
* High expectations are what kids need
* Continue to try to afford the establishment of peer relationships between DBVI students for peer modeling, socialization and mutual support.

What services have been successful for your students? Why?

Most Common Responses:

* Camps, get togethers
* CCS, Howard, LEAP, HAPI
* Job placement services
* Work experiences and assistive technology consultations
* Job exploration because they often have limited life experience
* The HAPI services. I have seen independence at home translate to changes at work and school. As TVIs it is difficult for us to fit in those independent living services. I have seen kids’ entire demeanor change when they can come to school or work and say that they made their own breakfast, packed their own bag, and put on their own clothes which they washed the night before. Kids with high self-esteem are more likely to self-advocate.
* Coordination with out-of-state agencies to support students going to school out of Vermont

Key Answers:

* “Collaboration with VABIR employment specialists have been instrumental in seeking and securing successful work experiences and part-time employment for some of transition-aged students over the years. The college credit reimbursement program has likewise encouraged some of my more tentative young adults to try out the concept of attending college and try a course. And obviously the assistive technology support affords an increased quality of life and better prospects for employment.”
* Where are there gaps in services?

Most Common Responses:

* Inconsistent coverage of job coaches for students
* Opportunities to get together across the school year
* Persistence of being in contact with school personnel
* Not many outlets for real job experience
* Funding for personal transportation
* Assistive Technology
* Daily living skill services
* More interaction from DBVI with the students and educational teams to ensure students know what services you are able to provide
* Independent living skills at home
* Parent involvement, getting parent buy-in on high expectations
* Students with additional disabilities.

Key Answers:

* “I think the biggest challenge right now is students who are interested in trade schools. The same colleges seem to have a good understanding of visual impairments and are helping our students but the trade schools not as much.”
* I would love to start even younger than transition age with basic concepts around work
* “Based on conversations I have had with parents the most challenging thing seems to be the inconsistent coverage of job coaches for students who need extra support in the community or at work”
* “There are certainly no obvious caps and services. However, funding for personal transportation expenses and access to efficient transportation remains a challenge in our largely rural community.”

###

### Vermont DBVI Employment Awareness Summit.

In October and November 2020 DBVI held a statewide Vermont Employment Awareness Summit as part of the CSNA. The focus group included State Rehabilitation Council full representation and participants from all regions of the state. The event had three main objectives. First, to learn about employer needs (Labor Market Information) from the Vermont Department of Labor. Second, to match strengths of consumers served with employer needs. Third, to share ideas about how DBVI and the SRC can stay current with Labor Market trends and Department of Labor initiatives.

**October 26, 2020 - Employment Awareness Summit:**

* Economist from the Department of Labor (DOL) indicates labor sectors most severely affected by the coronavirus pandemic, include hospitality and restaurant sectors.
* Economist (DOL) reports Vermont employers may be more open to accommodations and remote work opportunities and innovation than they have ever been before.
* Economist (DOL) reports this may create an opportunity for DBVI dialogue with employers, including leadership from employers in apprenticeship.

**November 9, 2020 - Employment Awareness Summit:**

* Participants of the summit discuss strengths and needs of consumers with Blind Services National Consultant, David Denotaris.
* Participants discuss strengths and areas of need for the blind and visually impaired, including: access to information and technology, braille and literacy and use of orientation and mobility skills to participate in the community.
* DBVI and national consultant, David Denotaris held follow-up forums with all staff from Vermont Association of Business, Industry and Rehabilitation (VABIR), to improve employer outreach, job match and job development to DBVI consumers.

**Pre-Employment Transition Student Survey Results**

Vermont students participating in the Learn, Earn and Prosper program completed the Transition Survey in May 2021. State partners discussed Transition Survey results at the student facilitated meeting of the State Rehabilitation Council on June 24, 2021.

### Pre-Employment Transition—Survey Results from Students

Youth Ages: 14 (1), 15 (3) 16, (2), 17 (1), 18 (2), 20 (1), 22 (2), 24 (2)

What are you most successful at at school (high school or college)? \*Select up to 3

* 64.3% selected - Academics (communicating w/ teachers, learning about new ideas, completing assignments and projects, attending class, etc.)
* 50% selected - Socializing with peers
* 42.9% selected - Navigating the building/campus
* 35.7% selected - Independently completing homework
* 21.4% selected - Advocating for use of accommodations
* 7.1% selected - Other (Extracurricular activities)

What is the most difficult part of school (high school or college) for you? Select up to 3.

* 57.1% selected - Advocating for use of accommodations
* 42.9% selected - Independently completing homework
* 28.6% selected - Socializing with peers
* 21.4% selected - Other (socializing during COVID, gym class, virtual learning)
* 21.4% selected - Navigating the building/campus
* 14.3% selected - Academics (communicating w/ teachers, learning about new ideas, completing assignments and projects, attending class, etc.)

Why is the above selection the most difficult part of school for you?

* COVID has made socializing and connecting more difficult, beyond COVID I'm pretty comfortable socializing and making friends.
* I have a hard time getting stuff done with time management and I have a hard time paying attention in class and understanding what is happening. The whole academic thing is not my strongest skill.
* At the beginning of high school, it was difficult to advocate for accommodations, as I was meeting all new teachers and asking for assistance was hard because I don't like asking for things in general. Once I ended up talking to them, I got more comfortable asking for help. At the beginning, navigating the building was difficult because it was a new space. The hallways were crowded and the font on the signage was small so it was hard to get to class on time. In middle school, the building was smaller which made it easier.
* I'm not using all the tools that your visually impaired specialist has given me for homework because I choose not to use it depending on my mood. When I'm frustrated and angry, I don't want to use my accommodations.
* Completing my homework is difficult for me because it isn't fun, especially global studies. There's a lot of writing, and I don't like writing. Advocating for use of accommodations is difficult because there's a lot of people who do it for me (TVI, paraeducator). Identifying needs are also a challenge.
* Navigating campus is hard because it takes a while to get used to it and I have to get used to my schedule. If an event or something is happening, it can be stressful to find a new place. I can't read signs which makes it hard. Advocating for use of accommodations is difficult because it can be hard to find something that works for both myself and my professor, especially when the class has been set up and is structured for sighted people. The accommodations office was helpful, but collaborating with teachers to brainstorm ways to implement my accommodations was difficult. For online tests, it was hard when things came up in the moment that weren't accessible and there was time pressure to get it figured out.
* Academics -- this is hard for me because none of the subjects are interesting, and it's hard for me to complete the work if it is not interesting to me. Independently completing homework -- I have no motivation to do it because I don't like it that much. Math gives a ton of homework, I don't feel like I'm good at ELA, Spanish is hard because it is learning a completely different language. Even getting worse grades does not make doing homework worth it for me. Socializing with peers is difficult because I am not a very social person -- I'd rather spend time by myself. Advocating for use of accommodations is difficult because I feel like I can usually just get used to doing it how everyone else is doing it, and it's just easier to do that.
* I think because I want to know myself when I look at an assignment. I think I'm lacking what the teacher wants. I second guess myself in a way, thinking I'm not doing what the teacher wants me to do.
* I was pretty good at advocating for what I needed, but it was hard to educate your teachers on how to best serve you. I worked with the accomodations office, which was pretty successful, but still challenging. Without their help, I don't think I could have done it on my own. There were a lot of times I had to work with my teachers to navigate accommodations, such as explaining how to create power points and send me materials in an accessible format, such as sending me videos ahead of time. Most teachers were supportive, they just didn't know how to support me. Navigating on campus was difficult because I only learned the routes that were essential for me to learn, I didn't learn the whole campus.
* Independently completing homework: I had an aid with me in school, so I haven't had much practice with independence. Socializing with peers: I have a hard time doing this, because I am shy and nervous. Advocating for use of accommodations: I have a really hard time speaking up for myself; I usually have someone else speaking for me.
* I'm very introverted and struggle to seek out new relationships. I don't feel comfortable in unfamiliar social situations
* Gym class because games like dodgeball are played a lot and they make me really nervous. In general I prefer to do things independently and figure things out on my own so I don't always seek out help or advocate for myself. I am really shy so I don't really like to socialize and struggle to talk with peers.
* It was boring for me to be at home alone and do my homework. I would get bored and distracted. I would rather work in a team or group of people than by myself.
* Virtual learning was difficult for me because I had a harder time explaining my accommodations to my teachers, as I couldn't show them the tools I use like I normally would.

Social Confidence (5 being Very confident, 1 being not confident at all)

* 5 – 7.1%
* 4 – 42.9%
* 3 – 21.4%
* 2 – 28.6%
* 1 – 0%

Social Confidence w/ Peers (5 being Very confident, 1 being not confident at all)

* 5 – 16.7%
* 4 – 33.3%
* 3 – 25%
* 2 – 16.7%
* 1 – 8.3%

Social Confidence w/ Teachers & School Resources (5 being Very confident, 1 being not confident at all)

* 5 – 16.7%
* 4 – 50%
* 3 – 33.3%
* 2 – 0%
* 1 – 0%

Social Confidence w/ Employers (5 being Very confident, 1 being not confident at all)

* 5 – 16.7%
* 4 – 41.7%
* 3 – 33.3%
* 2 – 0%
* 1 – 8.3%

Please select as many post-secondary education options as you are interested in.

* 64.3% College (associates or bachelor’s degree)
* 21.4% Technical School
* 21.4% Graduate School
* 21.4% Not interested in post-secondary education
* 14.3% Apprenticeships

If you are interested in attending college, what kind of experience would you be most interested in having?

* 64.3% Living on campus
* 21.4% Not interested in college
* 7.2% Attending online classes
* 7.1% Commuting to campus

What would help you achieve the above college experience? Please select as many as apply.

* 57% Mobility
* 43% College readiness workshops
* 35% Independent living skills instruction
* 28% Assistive technology instruction
* 14% N/A – Not interested in college

Notes: Mobility was emphasized as the most important to achieving the above college experience.

What is the most important thing to you at this moment of your life? Select up to 3.

* 64% Spending time with friends
* 43% Making money
* 43% Getting good grades
* 43% Independent travel
* 29% Being active
* 28% Extracurricular activities

Other: Learning the ropes of adulthood: taxes, transportation, scheduling doctors appt., etc.

Why is the above the most important thing to you at this moment in life?

* Going into my Junior year of High School\, in Sophomore year I think grades were pretty consistent but my freshman year was difficult because I did not have a strong support system and the school wasn't very understanding of my visual impairment so my grades slipped and it's important to me to get them back up.
* I would say Making Money, because I need the money; however, Spending Time With Friends is more important to me right now because of the isolation I experienced from COVID-19. I had a professor who had an opening question in the start of the class "where were you in the start of the pandemic" and I realized I was in high school, so there have been people I have not seen since high school!
* At my age, it's a good time to work on those so that when I move out of my parent's house I will know what I'm doing and am more comfortable with doing it by myself
* I have a lot of friends I like to see, and it's important to me to spend time with them because I've missed spending time with them during COVID. They bring me a lot of joy. Independent travel is important to me because I want to live in a city, so I want to know how to get around. Extracurricular activities are important to me because I really enjoy acting -- I love being on stage and getting to perform.
* Good grades -- this will help me achieve the career I want (being a lawyer). I have to try to get good grades, but I am a good student. Spending time with friends -- because I want to and it's important to have people that are close to you. My friends and I like to walk around and explore, and get bubble tea together. Independent travel -- I know I need to work on this skill and I need to have this skill to go anywhere and live on your own.
* Making money -- this is important to me because it can set me up for my future by allowing me to save for a house and things like that. Right now I like spending my money on drinks from a vending machine, and bicycle parts. Being active -- this is important for me because it gives me something to do, and adds something for me that I can do (like playing basketball).
* I was debating why they were. Independence tends to provide happiness because you feel accomplished; friends because you need to have that network and connections; and extracurricular activities because it's good for me not to do the same thing every day to keep your mind and body seeking new challenges.
* These are the most important because I feel like I'm not getting enough of those.
* Spending time with friends: You never know what could happen to your friends, so you'll want to spend time with them. Independent travel: it kind of goes with O&M because I want to get a guide dog one day and be more independent when traveling.
* I am about to graduate college, it's important to me that I make money so I can pay off my student loans. Also, as I get older I know it's really important for me to maintain friendships as it gets more difficult to see people regularly. I recently went on a trip with friends that I really enjoyed, so I really want to make sure I do more things similar to that.
* Getting good grades is important, I really enjoy school and doing academic work so it's important to me that I keep my grades up. Even though I'm not thinking about getting my own place or being independent right now, I think it's important that I start saving money for the future.
* Getting good grades is the most important thing to me because it's important for my future, as I need good grades to get into college or technical school.
* Making money is important to me because money is the foundation of living, and will help me to be successful later in life. I'm saving money for college right now. Getting good grades is important because it will help me get into college, which will also set me up for a better life. Spending time with friends and family is important to me because I think that having good relationships with those people will help me be more successful. Good relationships help me to build my own confidence.

What is the most difficult for you to accomplish at this moment in your life? Select up to 3.

* 57% Independent travel
* 36% Being active
* 21% Making money
* 21% Getting good grades
* 21% Extracurricular activities
* 14% Spending time with friends
* Other: Using my cane in public places

Why is the above the most difficult for you to accomplish at this moment in your life?

* Living in Huntington it is really hard for me to get places without relying on my parents, I would really like more independence but it's hard to find transportation without relying on my parents/others.
* Well, there are multiple reasons. COVID, firstly. Second, we do not have amazing public transportation, and our train line is closed because the bridge is closed. There are plenty of people who will give me rides, but it is not independent.
* I can't drive so I have to rely on family and friends for rides, or the bus. My house is far from the closest bus station so it is tricky.
* Being active is difficult because I don't have a lot of energy because I spend a lot of time by myself. Getting good grades is hard for me because I'm not doing assignments and have been turning them in late because I feel tired a lot. Making money is difficult because I have to make my own money, I don't get any from my parents. Finding a job is hard because I don't have a lot of ideas for what I would want to do for a job.
* Independent travel -- it's hard to do something new when you feel uncomfortable with it. It's stressful to try new routes. Trying it with someone first is hard to because sometimes they want to help too much, and then you don't feel independent/have a hard time when you are on your own. I have anxiety around going out by myself because I have a fear of failing (not getting to where I'm going) and being late. Joining extracurricular activities -- normally (in-person) this is hard because I have to deal with accommodations and getting there. It makes me nervous. I don't want to deal with accommodations/logistics in extracurriculars, because I already do that so much in my academic/personal life.
* Getting good grades -- this is the most difficult because I don't have the motivation to do schoolwork. I don't think that there is anything that could motivate me to do schoolwork. Spending time with friends -- this is the most difficult because I don't have any friends because I'm not a very social person. I don't really wish that I had more friends though.
* Making money is difficult because it difficult to find a job as a visually impaired person I have difficulties seeing my value in the workplace. Getting good grades the ability to balance time and achieve the proper amount of knowledge to get an assignment to where I want it, I find it difficult to produce this balance in school. I think I'm missing something there.
* Independent travel, I have trouble mapping routes. With my cane, it's easy walking in front of me, but I cannot plan a journey. "Within independent travel with my cane, I can map out my routes and "see" my surroundings, but I have difficulty identifying in urban orientation".
* Limited resources because I live in a rural area. It's hard at this point in my life to go out and meet new people because I'm not in school anymore. Independent travel is difficult because there are limited mobility services in my hometown. Being active is difficult because I don't particularly enjoy exercise and my limited mobility makes it difficult. Transportation is limited, which effects all of the above.
* Being active: I have a really hard time trying it, because I have difficulty pushing myself. Joining activities: I kind of don't really do many activities, because there's not much to do up here. Using my cane is difficult because most people who have a cane are totally blind, but I still have some vision, and I can see people looking at me, and my confidence goes down, and I get really anxious.
* I'm not very motivated to stay active. I don't really like sports or being super active so even when I maybe should, I don't have a lot of motivation to be active.
* There's very little public transportation so I rely a lot on others. The most I am really able to get around is from the school bus stop, to and from school.
* Joining extracurricular activities is the most difficult for me because I don't want to.
* Independent travel is difficult for me because there are "weirdos" who ride the bus (people on drugs) so I don't really trust the bus.

What do you enjoy most about your life at this moment?

* Despite COVID, I've enjoyed having the freedom and flexibility to manage my own schedule and have all my accommodations/accessibility needs met without relying on the school. I like the structure and environment provided by school, but because the lighting is not ideal, and not all teachers are understanding of the accommodations I need, I have enjoyed being able to manage my own schedule, pace, and accessibility needs.
* Well, a lot of the options were being active, and I am a lot more active at home not in school; so, at home I have a lot more free time to spend with friends and be active.
* Being around family, with all that's been going with COVID. We like to do campfires, we're going to go camping this summer, doing sports outside together, biking together, playing with the dogs.
* Acting -- I take an improv class where we learn dance combinations and learn more about theatre. I have acted in "The Little Mermaid" and "Legally Blonde". I love being on stage and singing.
* My friends -- my roommate is one of my best friends so I spend a lot of time with her, and I've been spending more time with people lately after moving to Boston, because I know more people here than in Vermont. We like to go out and explore Boston together.
* I enjoy that I have good mental health -- I enjoy this because I know that some people struggle with this but it's not something that really affects me.
* I really enjoy the ability to go somewhere during the day, knowing that my time is being put towards something. I feel like there is black-and-white instruction, where there is instruction and work time, and my own free time in a structured manner. I am currently in a training program that provides this.
* I enjoy the fact that I just graduated from college, and I have a lot of free time to explore my options for future plans.
* My sister is graduating this weekend and all of our relatives are coming up, so I am happy to see them. And I am happy to start O&M again, and I am that much closer to getting a guide dog.
* I enjoy having new experiences, gaining new knowledge, and challenging myself. I am starting an internship that I think I'll enjoy because it is all new to me. I'm excited about gaining new knowledge and challenging myself to take on more responsibility.
* Listening to music. I enjoy music a lot and so when I can, I really enjoy just listening to music.
* I enjoy most everything -- there's not much to hate. I'm grateful for what I have, and I get along well with my family and friends.
* I really enjoy baking and cooking and hanging out with my friends. I like baking and cooking because I can escape from the world around me and just focus on the task at hand.

* Share about the best work experience you have ever had. Why was it the best?
* I enjoyed LEAP's storytelling project last year, it was really interesting to connect with older people who had been recently diagnosed with visual impairments. I enjoyed being able to interview them and learn more about their experiences.
* The Overlook Cafe in Burlington, Vermont, with LEAP! I loved the cafe and working with the trainees and helping them and watching them improve. Getting to know them was fun too. When I would set goals with the trainees and try to accomplish them, it was rewarding. It was good for me too, because now I can cook. I've honestly never cooked before.
* Working at the Barre ReSOURCE -- everyone is welcoming and happy to help if I have any questions. They make me feel comfortable and I don't feel nervous asking them questions. Everyone is down to earth and close to my age, which makes me less nervous to ask them questions. In my past work areas, I've been at least 15-20 years younger than everyone I've worked with, so it is nice to be working with people close to my age.
* I have not had any work experience until this summer.
* I did an internship at Umbrella, an organization that helps with community outreach, especially for women/families living in poverty. The internship focused on helping younger people achieve healthy relationships. The employer was really accommodating and willing to work with me in order to help me be successful (they would email me papers, they would let me dictate to them when I had to hand write things).
* Helping my dad with work has been my best work experience -- my dad can do pretty much anything (he has renovated condos, he has built decks, etc.). I enjoy working with my dad because I learn a lot from him that will help me in the future, because I'd like to do something like he does.
* The best work experience was working at the Waterbury Cafe in the Summer of 2018; I really enjoyed the people I worked with, and I could really see the value I was giving the cafe, and I was really excited to go into work every day.
* My favorite work experience was working at Spring Brook Farm in Reading. I had fun tending to the cows and gardens, learning how to make cheese, and prepping food.
* Volunteer! I volunteered at a nursing home, and I really enjoyed that. I really liked the activities I did with the elderly people and engaging with them.
* I had a work experience at Sangha yoga studio that I really enjoyed. It was a good learning experience for me, all the staff were welcoming and helped me work on new things and achieve goals. I felt like I experienced a lot of new learning there.
* I have not had a job prior to this summer.
* My only job has been at ReSOURCE, and I really liked my co-workers because they were nice and honest and were available if I had questions.

Share about the best LEAP/DBVI Program you have participated in. Why was it the best?

* I really liked LEAP's assistive technology program with Allie Futty last summer. I really liked how many topics, apps, browsers, and tools we explored. I really liked the variety and that it did not specifically focus on one thing.
* I feel like last summer we had the Youth Advisory Council (YAC) group and I had a lot of fun doing that. It was nice to meet other people who were visually impaired my age. I felt like our projects were pretty cool too.
* Last year's LEAP Program where I worked at the cafe in Waterbury -- it was fun and challenging. It was fun because I knew the people who I was working with prior to work, and they were fun to be around and helpful. Transportation was challenging because I had to take two buses to work and it took me awhile to remember which buses to take and how to get there after the bus dropped me off, which was hard because I have short term memory loss.
* My favorite program is VABVI's summer program I went to two summers ago. We learned a lot and did some fun activities.
* Summer Residential Program at LEAP -- real life job/independent living skills (commuting, etc.)
* Summer trips -- two years ago we went on a trip to Connecticut, and visited New York, where we saw the Lion King. We also went to Killington a few years ago. I liked these because I liked feeling independent. Sometimes we were all together, but other times we were able to do things on our own.
* There have been so many! I would say my second year... 2015 or 2016, and it was my first time being an intern. They made an exception so I could move up to the interns group, and that gave me a sense of pride and accomplishment. It was a tight knit group of people, and I felt safe.
* My favorite DBVI events are the picnic/sporting events.
* Storytelling Program, because it was fun constructing a story and interviewing my grandfather about it and hearing everyone else's stories.
* I enjoy LEAP's Internship programs, it's always a welcoming environment where I feel like I can learn a lot. I also enjoyed gaining more independence and meeting new people. The program challenged me and helped me learn a lot.
* The program starting in June is my first experience with LEAP.
* I like the winter retreats because I love skiing. I also like it because there are no workshops in it.

What are you most excited about for future? Select as many as apply

* 78% Living on your own or with roommates
* 57% Having a job
* 57% Traveling
* 43% Getting a guide dog
* 36% Going to college
* 7% Going to trade/technical school
* Other: COVID being over; taking college courses on acting, forensics, and dance; life after college… getting some kind of graduate degree and having a career/family ie. the American Dream w/o the picket fence

On a scale of 1 – 5, how well do you feel you know yourself, your values, and your goals?

* 1 (I don’t know myself very well at all) – 0%
* 2 – 0%
* 3 – 50%
* 4 – 28.6%
* 5 (I know myself very well) – 21.4%

Which programs would you be most likely to participate in? Choose 4

* 85% In-person work experience
* 64% Job readiness training workshops
* 57% Assistive technology instruction
* 50% Career/Interest assessments
* 50% Mobility instruction
* 21% Virtual work experience

### Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness JVIB Articles

The highlights of previously cited in CSNA articles are cited here because they are still relevant. Please refer to the previous CSNA for a more complete summary. Several JVIB articles are new and include more complete summaries below.

The previous CSNA (CY 17) referenced several Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness (JVIB) articles that have identified several “Needs” of people who are blind or visually impaired related to students and employment. Here are some of the main highlights:

**Transportation:**

* The most frequently cited barriers for visually impaired individuals regarding transportation are: the availability of public transportation, travel time, cost, safety issues, and stress associated with transportation.
* Engage clients in problem-solving discussions to generate transportation options; sharing of client success stories and innovative strategies implemented to overcome transportation barriers.
* In an effort to continue to support consumers around transportation issues DBVI could survey consumers to obtain information on effective transportation solutions and share with other consumers. Showcase success stories on creative transportation solutions.
* Participating in efforts to improve the overall transportation system.
* Providing consumer’s transportation expenses for at least 60 days after the Customers are employed.
* Encouraging customers to relocate (when needed) and network with co-workers and community agencies to hire drivers.
* Encouraging customers to car pool, meet somebody, post messages on bulletin boards, run an ad in the newspaper and try to find somebody in community.

**Employer Attitudes/Educating the Public:**

* Disability awareness training and assistive technology were two of the top five strategies identified by employers that would be helpful in hiring persons with disabilities.
* There are multiple theories about how attitudes are formed and changed, and many of them propose a link between knowledge and attitudes.
* What level of knowledge do employers have about how someone who is blind or visually impaired can perform specific job functions (that is, knowledge about job accommodations or available assistive technology)?
* Do employers know where to seek help with accommodating someone who is blind or visually impaired?
* In an employer survey a majority of managers mistakenly believed there were few jobs in their organizations that visually impaired people could successfully perform. They also thought it was more expensive to hire someone with impaired vision compared to someone without a disability. The majority of managers made it a lower priority to recruit, train, and retain employees with disabilities than to recruit, train, and retain executives, senior managers, young employees, and minorities.
* Involving the employer in advocating for the creation, modification, or expansion of transportation programs. Systems change when employers also advocate for more transportation options.
* Providing education to employers and human resources professionals about job accommodations, including where to find additional information, is necessary and would be an appropriate strategy to use when interacting with employers.
* Encouraging job seekers to volunteer information about how they perform specific activities and their transportation options. Answering the unasked question is important because what the employer is imagining probably is not accurate.
* Educating employers about visual impairment and how it affects functioning.
* Creating opportunities for increased contact between employers and persons who are visually impaired.
* Sharing testimonials and newspaper articles of success stories.
* Doing presentations each month to describe the whole process and the benefits of hiring a blind person.
* Offering training about the Americans with Disabilities Act to employers.
* Providing community education days.
* Facilitating educational activities particularly targeted for October because it is National Disability Awareness Month.
* Taking tours and publicly recognizing businesses that employ visually impaired persons.
* Facilitating employer mentoring programs and breakfast meetings.
* Developing long-term relationships with employers, particularly those with large businesses.
* Sharing success stories about competent blind people on the job and publicize them in many ways. Include consumer organizations in these efforts.

**Soft Skills/Interviewing Skills**

* Making sure everyone has practice interviews so the person is ready.
* Making sure DBVI customers are competent in discussing their skills, qualifications, and visual impairment with employers.

**Assistive Technology**

* Access to assistive technology
* Providing high-quality training in adaptive skills and assistive technology are vital aspects of preparation for employment.

**Progressive Employment**

* The need for a transitional period to full-time employment during which they engage in progressive employment including volunteer work, part-time work, work experiences, or on-the-job training.
* Providing on-the-job training programs and job coaches to promote positive integration into the workplace.
* Finding ways to keep valued older employees.

**Benefits Counseling/Guidance**

* Fear of losing benefits.

**Peer Support/Job Clubs**

* Creating job clubs for promoting appropriate work behavior and increasing knowledge about employment options.
* Promoting peer support as a powerful force in assisting DBVI customers through the training and employment process.

**Adjustment to Blindness**

* Individual adjustment to blindness

Recent Journal of Visual Impairment and Blindness Literature Review 2017 to 2020 **indicates the following employment, transition, post-secondary education and transportation needs of individuals who are blind and visually impaired:**

**Employment**

Losing Employment: At-Risk Employed Vocational Rehabilitation Applicants with Vision Loss

Crudden A, McDonnall MC, Sui Z. Losing Employment: At-Risk Employed Vocational Rehabilitation Applicants with Vision Loss. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2018;112(5):461-474. doi:10.1177/0145482X1811200504

* This study examined working people with visual impairment who received vocational rehabilitation services. The authors examined a sample of employed vocational rehabilitation applicants with visual impairment using logistic regression to analyze consumer attributes and services received for competitive employment. Results identified attributes that were associated with higher rates of job loss, including: being female, having multiple disabilities, working less hours, lack of education, or having had a previously unsuccessful vocational rehabilitation case. The authors also identified a relationship between case length and the age of the client, finding that the clients who had been working with vocational rehabilitation longer tended to have worst outcomes, especially among older clients. The authors suggest that the promptness of service delivery is an important factor in client success. Further, they suggest that maintaining client contact and motivation may influence job retention.

Factors Associated with Employer Hiring Decisions regarding People who Are Blind or Have Low Vision

McDonnall MC. Factors Associated with Employer Hiring Decisions regarding People who Are Blind or Have Low Vision. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2018;112(2):197-203. doi:10.1177/0145482X1811200207

* McDonnall examines employer hiring decisions involving people with visual impairment. The author endeavored to identify factors that impacted these decisions. This study involved data collected from online surveys of hiring managers. The results showed that communication with a vocational rehabilitation agency increased hiring by 24.1 percent. Further, the results showed that attitudes about visual impairment also was impactful in terms of employment.

Services for Consumers Who Are Deafblind: Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Service Models Utilized and Their Effectiveness

McDonnall MC, Cmar JL. Services for Consumers Who Are Deafblind: Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Service Models Utilized and Their Effectiveness. Published online 2019:13.

* The study examined service models for clients who are deafblind used by vocational rehabilitation agencies.  The authors utilized a mixed-methods approach combining data from interviews from vocational rehabilitation agency administrators and Rehabilitation Services Administration data on case services. McDonnal and Cmar identified four service models employed for clients who are deafblind: specialist, professional collaboration, specialist plus professional collaboration, and miscellaneous. Results showed that the specialist and professional models were superior to the miscellaneous model in terms of competitive employment closure rates. These results support prior recommendations that vocational rehabilitation agencies establish a deafblind coordinator or specialist and utilize a dual-case approach.

McDonnall MC, Antonelli K. A Second Look at Factors Associated with Employer Hiring Behavior Regarding People Who Are Blind or Have Low Vision. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2019;113(6):538-550. doi:10.1177/0145482X19887642

* The study investigated employer hiring decisions with regards to people with visual impairments. Analyzing responses of hiring managers from an online survey, the authors conducted logistic regression analysis using several factors relating to hiring. This analysis showed that several factors were associated with hiring behavior, including past communication with a vocational rehabilitation agency, the employer’s attitude, company policy, personal relationships, and application receipt. McDonnall and Antonelli suggest these results highlight the importance of application submission and communication with vocational rehabilitation agencies.

McDonnall MC, Cmar JL, Antonelli K, Markoski KM. Professionals’ Implicit Attitudes about the Competence of People Who are Blind. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2019;113(4):341-354. doi:10.1177/0145482X19865391

* McDonnall et al. examine perceptions and implicit attitudes pertaining to the competence of people with visual impairments among employers and blindness professionals. The authors utilized responses from an online survey and the Implicit Association Test for blindness and visual impairment from a large group of blindness professionals and employers. Results showed that employers displayed a strong implicit association towards sighted competence and blind incompetence, while blindness professionals displayed the same associations to much smaller degree. The authors suggest this is likely due to exposure to people with blindness and visual impairment. Further, they suggest that both employers and blindness professionals would benefit from increased exposure to blind and visually impaired people. Lastly, the authors suggest that blindness professionals should play a role to promote positive attitudes about blindness.

McDonnall MC, Sui Z. Employment and Unemployment Rates of People Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired: Estimates from Multiple Sources. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2019;113(6):481-492. doi:10.1177/0145482X19887620

* This study examined employment rates of people with visual impairments. The author’s utilized data from four national surveys to examine changes in employment rates over time. Their results showed that employment and unemployment rates for people with visual impairment have not significantly increased or decreased over time. McDonnall and Sui highlight that while rates have not significantly changed for people with visual impairment, the gap between employment rates of people with visual impairments and those with other disabilities have decreased over time.

Overview of Vocational Rehabilitation Data about People with Visual Impairments: Demographics, Services, and Long-Run Labor Market Trends

Clapp CM, Pepper JV, Schmidt R, Stern S. Overview of Vocational Rehabilitation Data about People with Visual Impairments: Demographics, Services, and Long-Run Labor Market Trends. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2020;114(1):43-56. doi:10.1177/0145482X20901380

* Clapp et al. examined rates of employment and earnings among people with visual impairments who were receiving vocation rehabilitation services. The authors compiled a unique data set that combined information from 3 state rehabilitation agencies with state unemployment records. Their results showed that while vocational rehabilitation services increased an individual’s earnings, these services did not influence employment. Further, the authors found substantial differences in client attributes, the provision of services, and the costs across the three state agencies.

Employed Vocational Rehabilitation Applicants with Visual Disabilities: Factors Associated with Timely Service Delivery

Crudden A, Sui Z, Lund E. Employed Vocational Rehabilitation Applicants with Visual Disabilities: Factors Associated with Timely Service Delivery. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2020;114(1):31-42. doi:10.1177/0145482X19900617

* Crudden, Sui, and Lund examined the time interval between the application of a Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) case and the signature of the Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) for employed people with visual impairment. The authors created a combined data set to investigate this time interval, combining RSA data on over five thousand employed VR applicants with survey data from 51 VR agencies. The results showed that the time interval was smaller for those applicants working with separate VR agencies compared to those applicants working with combined VR agencies. Further, the time interval also increased for younger applicants, non-White applicants, and those applicants who had received disability benefits. The authors suggest that VR professionals should endeavor to accelerate service delivery for youth, non-white, and those receiving disability benefits. Further, they suggest that the creation of specific policies for job-retention and career-advancement may help to expediate services.

Relationship of Employment Barriers to Age of Onset of Vision Loss

Steverson A. Relationship of Employment Barriers to Age of Onset of Vision Loss. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2020;114(1):63-69. doi:10.1177/0145482X20901382

* Steverson examines how age of onset of vision loss affects employment barriers. Using data from a national transportation survey, Steverson utilized descriptive statistics to summarize the sample data and Analysis of Variance and Turkey’s honestly significant difference test to analyze the responses. Their findings showed the participants with early onset of vision loss experienced more barriers than other respondents. The author suggests these result support earlier findings in the field which posits that those with early onset of vision loss may not have opportunities in early life to develop job related skills. Steverson explains that blindness professionals and other service provides may be able to play an important role in limiting employment barriers for people with visual impairments.

**Pre-ETS**

Postschool Outcomes of Youths with Deafblindness in the United States: Building Further Understandings for Future Practice

Petroff JG, Pancsofar N, Shaaban E. Postschool Outcomes of Youths with Deafblindness in the United States: Building Further Understandings for Future Practice. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2019;113(3):274-282. doi:10.1177/0145482X19860005

* This study examines outcomes for people with deafblindness following completion of formal education. The authors utilized survey data collected form 80 young people with deafblindness in the United States. Their findings showed that very few respondents were employed or living independently. Further, the results demonstrate a correlation between higher skills in reading and problem solving and better post school outcomes, rather than a correlation between better post school outcomes and transition planning. The authors suggest that these results indicate a need for future research into transition services for students with deafblindness. They recommend that blindness professionals focus on inclusion efforts to better prepare students for paid employment.

Supporting Students with Visual Impairments Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse: The Role of the Cultural Liaison Within Educational Teams

Gee S, Zebehazy KT. Supporting Students with Visual Impairments Who Are Culturally and Linguistically Diverse: The Role of the Cultural Liaison Within Educational Teams. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2020;114(4):249-262. doi:10.1177/0145482X20939471

* Gee and Zebehazy examine the role of cultural liaisons in educational teams of students with visual impairment. The authors utilized focus groups of classroom teachers, cultural liaisons, and teachers of the visually impaired to create dialogs on this topic. The discussions were then analyses for recurrent and divergent themes. Results showed the need for a better understanding of the role of cultural liaisons, better communication among the educational team, and the need for increased cultural competency for teachers. The authors use this data to make several suggestions for classroom teachers, including seeking out professional development from cultural liaisons. Further, the authors also make suggestions to cultural liaisons, including clear communication of cultural viewpoints to team members.

**Mentoring**

Participant Experiences in an Employment Mentoring Program for College Students with Visual Impairments

Antonelli K, O’Mally J, Steverson A. Participant Experiences in an Employment Mentoring Program for College Students with Visual Impairments. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2018;112(3):274-286. doi:10.1177/0145482X1811200306

* Antonelli, O’Mally, and Steverson examine mentorship activities in the context of college students with visual impairments preparing for employment and job seeking. The authors utilized data from a nationwide mentoring program to investigate job seeking activities, participant evaluation of mentorship programs, and the most valued experiences for mentees. Their results showed that participants identified several activities of value, which included disclosure, accommodation planning, assistive technology skills, career exploration, and professional development. The authors recommend that mentorship programs focus on these aspects of job readiness for college students.

College Graduates with Visual Impairments: A Report on Seeking and Finding Employment

Antonelli K, Steverson A, O’Mally J. College Graduates with Visual Impairments: A Report on Seeking and Finding Employment. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2018;112(1):33-45. doi:10.1177/0145482X1811200104

* This study investigates how career mentoring effects outcomes for college students with visual impairment. The authors utilize a longitudinal study to compare job outcomes and job readiness activities between two groups of college students with visual impairment, one group which participated in career mentoring and one group that did not. The results showed that students that participated in career mentoring spent less time and effort on job seeking and were able to do so independently (rather than utilize job agencies, etc.). Despite limited statistical evidence, the authors suggest a link between college mentoring and better job outcomes for college students with visual impairment.

**Transportation**

Drivers with Low Vision: Characteristics and Transportation Issues

Crudden A, Steverson AC, Cmar JL. Drivers with Low Vision: Characteristics and Transportation Issues. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2018;112(2):131-142. doi:10.1177/0145482X1811200202

* Crudden, Steverson, and Cmar surveyed a small group of drivers with visual impairments. The authors used an online survey to gather information about employment, activity limitations, public transportation use, services received, and transportation self-efficacy. The study results suggest that drivers with low vision may not be getting vocational rehabilitation services or orientation and mobility (O&M) training. The authors encourage low vision drivers to be evaluated by O&M trainers and vocational rehabilitation professionals to assure that relevant services are delivered

Transporting People with Visual Impairments: Knowledge of University Campus Public Transportation Workers

Fast DK, Wild TA. Transporting People with Visual Impairments: Knowledge of University Campus Public Transportation Workers. Journal of Visual Impairment & Blindness. 2019;113(2):156-164. doi:10.1177/0145482X19844078

* This study examined the perceptions and knowledge of blindness of bus drivers. 55 campus bus drivers were assessed as part of their mandatory job training using the Social Responsibility and Blindness Scale and an instrument created gauge driver knowledge of visual impairments and interactions with blind and low vision travelers. The researchers found that knowledge of visual impairment was limited among the study participants. Fast and Wild suggest that training on interacting and accommodations for passengers with visual impairment may be necessary.

Nearly all DBVI consumers are considered to have a most significant disability. The CSNA included many of these individuals in focus groups, interviews, and customer satisfaction surveys to determine their employment needs. The findings from all of these assessment methods plus a review of the JVIB research show some major categories of need. They include needs for training and work experiences that lead to good jobs, adaptive skills training, and assistive technology computer training. There is also a significant need to educate employers about the abilities of people who are blind, and to provide mentoring opportunities to youth and adult populations. Of concern to the Statewide Rehabilitation Council and constituency groups is the need improve access and create new pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship opportunities for youth who are blind and visually impaired.

DBVI has strong partnerships with Developmental Services and Mental Health providers for individuals who need supported employment. Eligible consumers can access programs through Developmental Services agencies and Vermont JOBS programs through Mental Health. DBVI consumers who are not found eligible for these programs, can access natural supports as long term supports provided by employers with guidance from DBVI rehabilitation staff. DBVI strives to have all individuals participate in trial work experiences using supported employment when appropriate.

**j. 1. B. Who are minorities;**

**Current Narrative:**

The CSNA assessment data show the Vermont demographics. It shows that people are spread throughout our rural state and are not necessarily living in certain communities. The exception is Burlington which has the most diverse population in Vermont. These data guide our outreach efforts and indicate a need for DBVI to outreach to all communities. The most challenging region for outreach is the Northeast Kingdom which is very rural. The CSNA indicated a need to do more public outreach on the radio using a Public Service Announcement across the state.

The DBVI Director is also a member of the Agency of Humans Services Committee to make sure the agency is accessible to all individuals. Several initiatives of the group include sharing resources about translation services and connections with community agencies that assist diverse groups. Some specific needs and strategies include:

* Interpretation and translation service available to all AHS staff.
* Tools for working with Limited English Proficient clients.
* Specialized training for communicating across cultures and communicating effectively through an interpreter.
* The Diversity, Equity and Inclusion group has been meeting across state government, and DBVI is an integrated partner within the work of this group.
* DBVI State Rehabilitation Council has formed a policy revision group and will update DBVI policies to better reflect the needs of diverse backgrounds in 2022.

## j. 1. C. Who have been unserved or underserved by the VR program;

**Current Narrative:**

The CSNA data shows 3 categories of individuals who are unserved or underserved.

**Aging population**

Vermont is the 2nd oldest average age population in the country. Vermont DBVI is located within the Department of Disabilities, Aging and Independent Living (DAIL). The mission of the department is to make Vermont the best state in which to grow old or live with a disability – with dignity, respect and independence. Many of these older individuals desire to stay in the workforce to meet their financial needs. Losing vision can be part of the aging process and this becomes a major adjustment and often causes feelings of loss and denial. DBVI is available to help these individuals stay in the workforce as they learn new skills to adapt to their vision loss.

**Deaf-blind population**

The data also shows that individuals who are deaf-blind have unique and specific needs due to their dual sensory impairment. Services like Support Service Providers are helpful to access the community and lesson isolation. There are very few professionals in the country who can teach adaptive blindness skills like Orientation and Mobility who can also communicate using tactile sign. There is a need to build more of that capacity in Vermont. The ICANNECT program is beginning to grow in New England and Perkins is providing important technology through that program. There is a need to build strong partnerships with the Helen Keller National Center who can provide specialized training for staff and services for deaf-blind individuals.

**Rural youth apprenticeship**

Vermont is a rural state and youth who are blind and visually impaired are underserved in the areas of pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship statewide. DBVI encourages youth throughout the state to participate in the LEAP summer residential work experience program and the residential school year retreats so they can participate in job readiness training and work experiences in an area where there are more work opportunities. There is a need to build strong partnerships with partners, to develop new apprenticeship models throughout the state and expand the successful LEAP model to reach rural areas of the state. One example of an underserved population is the Northeast Kingdom of the state. This area is very rural and has very few jobs.

## J. 1. D. Who have been served through other components of the statewide workforce development system; and

**Current Narrative:**

WIOA has been a great way to bring together all of the partners of the American Job Centers. Workgroups including all of the partners have met to determine the priorities and best ways to make the workforce programs available.

The workgroup has identified the following needs.

* Maximize access to the workforce development system through seamless coordination and communication among the different partners to provide a quality, consistent experience for all Vermonters.
* The workforce development system will prioritize pathways to livable wage employment for all Vermonters, with an increased focus on low income Vermonters.
* Strengthen the Vermont economy by increasing the number of Vermont women employed in the skilled trades, STEM fields, advanced manufacturing and other Vermont priority sectors.
* Ensure all students who graduate from high school are college ready, career ready, or both; increase the number of Vermonters who pursue and complete post-secondary education, training and career opportunities with the education and specific skills necessary to keep Vermonters competitive in the economic sectors critical to the Vermont economy.
* Align the workforce development system to the needs of employers, as well as job seekers, through systematic and ongoing engagement and partnership.
* Expand virtual access to DOL programs.

j. 1. E. Who are youth with disabilities and students with disabilities, including, as appropriate, their need for pre-employment transition services or other transition **services.**

**Current Narrative:**

The research and feedback from students and families identify work experiences, work readiness, and assistive technology skills as most helpful for future employment success. When students have the opportunity for several work experiences during high school they learn what types of jobs they like and don’t like. They also learn transferable skills they can use for future jobs. The challenge for Vermont students is that they have very limited opportunities for these work experiences in their small rural town. Fourteen years ago, DBVI created a strategy to meet that need. It was necessary to create a summer residential experience for students from across the state to live in a larger community where there is a wide variety of work experience jobs available. The program has expanded and now includes weekend retreats during the school year. These retreats focus on self-advocacy and job readiness training. Most recently all LEAP activities are including some aspect of assistive technology that is built into the curriculum. Proficiency with technology is also a predictor of future employment success. DBVI counselors have identified the need for students to have better technology skills for the workplace. For that reason, DBVI developed and assessment tool to evaluate technology skills. This information can then be used by schools and DBVI staff to create opportunities to improve these skills before college, vocational training, or employment.

Students also learn important self-advocacy skills and independent living skills at the LEAP work experiences and job readiness retreats which are also strong predictors and essential for future employment success.

For students who do not choose to participate in summer LEAP or school year retreats, DBVI staff work with several partners to establish work experiences in a students’ local community. In some situations, a DBVI Counselor can make connections with the school-based employment specialist to assist a student or connect them with employment related workshops and other school-based activities. It is the intent of DBVI to make sure all visually impaired students have the opportunity for multiple work experiences before the exit high school.

The combination of these strategies and DBVI Counselor involvement makes it possible for Vermont students to access the 5-core Pre-ETS as identified in WIOA.

The five required activities are:

* Job exploration counseling
* Work-based learning experiences
* Counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
* Workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
* Instruction in self-advocacy, including peer mentoring

**DBVI considers a student with a disability to be:**

* Between the ages of 14 and 21;
* Is in an educational program; and
* Is eligible for and receiving special education or related services under IDEA or is an individual with a disability for purposes of section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

**DBV Pre-ETS Budget Forecasting**

Pre-employment transition services are comprised of the five required activities and nine authorized activities. There must be enough funds available to be able to offer the five required activities to students with disabilities. If there is any money remaining, that money is used towards the nine authorized activities.

**FFY 2021--As of September 30, 2021:**

* $230,000 (15% reserve requirement + carry over/re-allotment)
* $10,000 was spent on staff time and associated expenses
* $100,000 for Coordination In contracts (LEAP contract)
* $120,000 was spent on the 5 required Pre-ETS Transition Service Areas.
* $3,500 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 35 students).
* $0 was spent/encumbered on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services

**Calculation:** Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= $230,000; Number of students served=35; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= $120,000 divided by 35 students equals an Average Cost Per Student= $3,500; Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= $110,000; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= $230,000; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= $0

**Projections for FFY 2022 and 2023:**

* $221,200 (15% reserve requirement + carry over/re-allotment)
* $10,000 for staff time and associated expenses
* $90,400 for Coordination In contracts (LEAP, CCS)
* $120,800 was spent on the 5 required Pre-ETS Transition Service Areas.
* $3,500 Average Cost Per Student for the 5 required Pre-ETS Services (based on 35 students).
* $0 was spent/encumbered on the nine authorized pre-employment transition services

**Calculation:** Agency 15% Reserve Requirement= $205,000; Number of students served=35; Total Pre-ETS Required Activities= $120,800 divided by 35 students equals an Average Cost Per Student= $3,500; Total Pre-ETS Coordination Activities= $100,400; Total Pre-ETS Expenditures= $221,200; Amount Available for Authorized Activities= $0

A statewide estimate of students exiting/graduating high school at the end of SY 2022 is 11 students. There were 17 students statewide who graduated in SY 2021.

**j. 2. Identify the need to establish, develop, or improve community rehabilitation programs within the State; and**

**Current Narrative:**

DBVI partners help us achieve the results our consumers expect. One finding of the statewide survey and focus groups identifies adaptive skills training as one of the top two services that help them achieve their goals. People who lose vision need to learn new adaptive skills to remain independent at home and work. DBVI contracts with the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired to provide Certified Orientation and Mobility Instructors, Rehabilitation and Low Vision Therapists. These instructors teach the skills and DBVI consumer report being more independent because of their new skills. This need for adaptive skills training is ranked very high in all sections of the CSNA and survey results show a high level of satisfaction with their skill gain results.

The other major DBVI community partner is the Vermont Industry for Business, Industry and Rehabilitation. DBVI contracts with VABIR to provide job development and employment consultant services. VABIR creates relationships with Vermont business and helps match DBVI consumers with business needs. In many instances this begins with a work experience and leads to employment. The CSNA does identify more job training as a need. VABIR provides those opportunities through progressive employment and satisfaction for these services ranks high.

Surveys with TVI’s and State partners indicate that improved relationships with technical education centers and the development of apprenticeship models may further DBVI’s ability to achieve the results our consumers expect.

j. 3. Include an assessment of the needs of individuals with disabilities for transition career services and pre-employment transition services, **and the extent to which such services are coordinated with transition services provided under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act**

**Current Narrative:**

DBVI coordinates with several partners to meet the pre-employment and transition service needs of students. The DBVI Director and Counselors meet monthly with the Management Team of the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired. VABVI has a statewide contract from the Vermont Agency of Education to provide a statewide network of the Teachers of the Visually Impaired. The TVI’s provide academic support and direct instruction to all blind and visually impaired students in Vermont. The intent of these monthly meeting is to coordinate the efforts of both agencies to support student transition needs. DBVI Counselors and TVIs in their region also meet regularly to discuss students’ transition and pre-employment needs. This helps the counselor to connect students with the 5-core Pre-ETS activities by making arrangements for local work experiences, school-based employment activities, Summer LEAP, or school year LEAP job readiness retreats. There is also a monthly meeting of DBVI partner organizations called the Connections Team. The intent of this group is to discuss student needs and develop strategies that provide work experiences or job readiness opportunities in local communities or at the state level.

The DBVI Director also meets quarterly at the Agency of Education with the AOE Special Education State Director, the AOE High School Special Education Consultant, the AOE Adult Basic Education Consultant, the Director of General VR, the Director of Developmental Services, and the Director of the Assistive Technology Program. The intent of this group is to stay connected with overlap needs of WIOA and IDEA. The most current topic is discussions about the new personal learning plans and how transition serviced can be incorporated.

Other important initiatives include DBVI cosponsoring with General VR a statewide conference of all local Core Transition Teams. All regions of the state have monthly meetings of school personnel and local human service providers to discuss local transition resources for students. Several workshops and guest speakers provided information about best practice for student transition. There was also time for local teams to meet and discuss strategies for their region.

The ultimate need is to work together with AOE and local schools to help students to use their IEP and Personal Learning Plans to create a great transition to employment training or work. DBVI has created transition action plan forms that are used for each student for entering the workforce directly, attending vocational training, or attending college. The needs for each of these future goals are specified on each form. The forms help guide the Local Education Agency IEP and 504 teams as they plan for the unique transition service needs of students who are blind or visually impaired.

In 2021, Vermont DBVI was selected as a partner with the Institute for Community Inclusion UMASS Boston, Rural Youth Apprenticeship Development Grant. DBVI’s overall goal is to address the challenge of access to apprenticeships for Vermont youth who are blind and visually impaired through key partnerships with the Agency of Education, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, Department of Labor and other partners.

* DBVI goals: Expand opportunities for students to have work-based learning in their home communities as part of an expanded menu of LEAP options.
* Expand Virtual opportunities for students to learn and connect.
* Expand school year retreats to build skills for work readiness training.
* Expand the Learn, Earn and Prosper (LEAP) pre-apprenticeship model as an opportunity for youth to gain skills in employment, independent living and pre-apprenticeship.