

NORTH  
**Dakota**

Be Legendary.

Vocational Rehabilitation

HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

# Annual Report 2022



Photographer: Kyle Martin North Dakota Sunflowers



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# Message from the SRC Chair

Honorable Doug Burgum  
Governor of North Dakota  
600 E Boulevard Ave  
Bismarck, ND 58505

Dear Governor Burgum:

The ND State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is pleased to present the 2022 Annual State Report for the Vocational Rehabilitation Section. The report highlights the activities of the SRC and the ND Section of Vocational Rehabilitation in the delivery of quality vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities throughout North Dakota. The report fulfills the requirements of 34 CFR Part 361.17(h)(5).

We look forward to working with the North Dakota Department of Health and Human Services, Section of Vocational Rehabilitation in the coming year to advocate for and assist North Dakotans with disabilities to obtain competitive integrated employment.

Respectfully,

*Renee Speidel-Wetzsteon*

Renee Speidel-Wetzsteon

Chair, ND SRC



# **Our Purpose**

We assist individuals with disabilities to improve their employment opportunities and help businesses in solving disability related issues.

# **Our Vision**

North Dakota Section of Vocational Rehabilitation is the leader in disability-related solutions.



Wind Canyon in the South Unit of Theodore Roosevelt National Park. Credit NPS/Dave Bruner



# Guiding Principles

Effective partnerships are critical in achieving results for consumers.

All people have value regardless of age, race, creed, color, gender, or disability.

Change is inevitable and provides opportunities for innovation and creativity.

Serving our consumers is the primary focus of everything we do.

Collaborative partnerships with employees are essential to our success.

Good communication is essential when delivering quality rehabilitation services.

Quality outcomes are a result of the commitment of consumers and qualified staff working together towards mutually agreed upon goals.

Informed choice is central to sound decision-making and allows decisions to be based on all relevant information, options, and consequences.

When all things are equal, legal, and based on good rehabilitation counseling, decisions will be made in favor of the consumer.



# Scope of Services

## Professional Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling & Guidance

Evaluations of strengths and how an individual's disability may affect their ability to work, a comprehensive assessment of their rehabilitation needs, planning and implementing strategies to overcome barriers and helping the individual adjust to and live with a disability.

## Employment

Assistance with entering into, maintaining, or advancing in employment.

## Accommodations

Adaptive aids, assistive technology, accessibility and work site evaluations to assist in achieving individual employment goals.

## Training

Tailored to meet individual rehabilitation needs and attain individual employment goals. This may include on-the-job training, internships, job mentoring, job coaching and/or academic training.

## Job Placement

Develop resume writing skills and interview strategies, job referral, placement, and follow-up services.



# Scope of Services Continued

Through a "Dual Client" approach, the Section also assists business owners and employers through a variety of business and disability-related services including:

- Staff Retention
- Accessibility and ADA Consultation
- Recruitment Source
- Financial Incentives
- Disability Consultation
- On-the-Job Training/Job Coach Services
- On-Site Consultation and Recommendations

These services are available to a legally operated and registered North Dakota business, non-profit organization, or government agency. There are no costs associated with services except for those accommodations or modifications chosen as a result of VR recommendations.



# Pre-Employment Transition Services

Services provided to students with disabilities ages 14-21 include self-advocacy training, workplace readiness training, work experience, counseling in post-secondary opportunities, and job exploration.

## Accomplishments include:

Established 20 purchase of service agreements covering a total of 71 schools throughout the state to provide pre-employment transition services to transition age youth with disabilities. Served 2,133 students with disabilities through contracts and VR counselor services.







Commerce and Tourism  
Bismarck, Burleigh County

# STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL OVERVIEW FFY 2022

The purpose of the North Dakota State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is to advise Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) on issues concerning policy and program, delivery of services, and methods for reaching potential consumers.

## The Council

- Informs and advises VR on the effects its programs may be having on North Dakota communities and consumers.
- Facilitates public input into the Vocational Rehabilitation State Plan.
- Advocates for consumer rights and services.
- Communicates to public and community leaders the purpose and need for vocational rehabilitation.



## Governor Doug Burgum



The council members are selected to serve on the SRC by the Governor of North Dakota.

## SRC Committees

- Planning/Evaluation
- Resource
- Membership/Public Relations
- Employment

They are selected to serve based on their interest, knowledge, and understanding of the needs of individuals with disabilities. Members are equal opportunity advocates for persons with disabilities in their communities throughout North Dakota.

### **The Council must have at least 17 members representing:**

- 4 - Business, Industry & Labor Sectors
- 1 - Statewide Independent Living Council
- 1 - Parent Training & Information Center
- 1 - Client Assistance Program
- 1 - Disability Advocacy Group Advocate
- 1 - Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider
- 1 - State Workforce Investment Board
- 1 - Current or Former VR Applicant or Recipient
- 1 - American Indian VR Program
- 1 - Department of Public Instruction
- 1 - Developmental Disabilities Division Director
- 1 - ND Association of Community Providers (NDACP) Executive Director
- 1 - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- 1 - Vocational Rehabilitation Agency Director

# SRC Recommendations

- Approved the Customized Employment and Client Purchases Operational Policies
- Selected the Statewide 2022 VR Employer of the Year
- Reviewed the Client Satisfaction Surveys and quarterly Strategic Plan data.
- Analyzed the Employee Gallup survey results
- Competitive Integrated Employment grant applications were evaluated, approved, and returned to VR's Operations Administrator for next steps in the procurement process

## SRC Council Membership

### **Tina Bay**

Developmental Disabilities

### **Shannon Cook**

Business/Industry/Labor Representative

### **Landis Larson**

State Workforce Investment Board

### **Matthew McCleary**

Additional Representative

### **Terry Peterson**

Community Rehabilitation Service Provider

### **Renee Speidel-Wetzsteon**

Disability Advocate Representative

### **Kevin Phelps**

Business/Industry/Labor Representative

### **Amy Arenz**

Business/Industry/Labor Representative

### **Russell Cusack**

State Wide Independent Living Council

### **Trampes Brown**

Business/Industry/Labor Representative

### **Jacey Enget**

Current or Former Applicant for or Recipient of VR Services

### **Lea Kugel**

State Education Agency

### **Trevor Vannett**

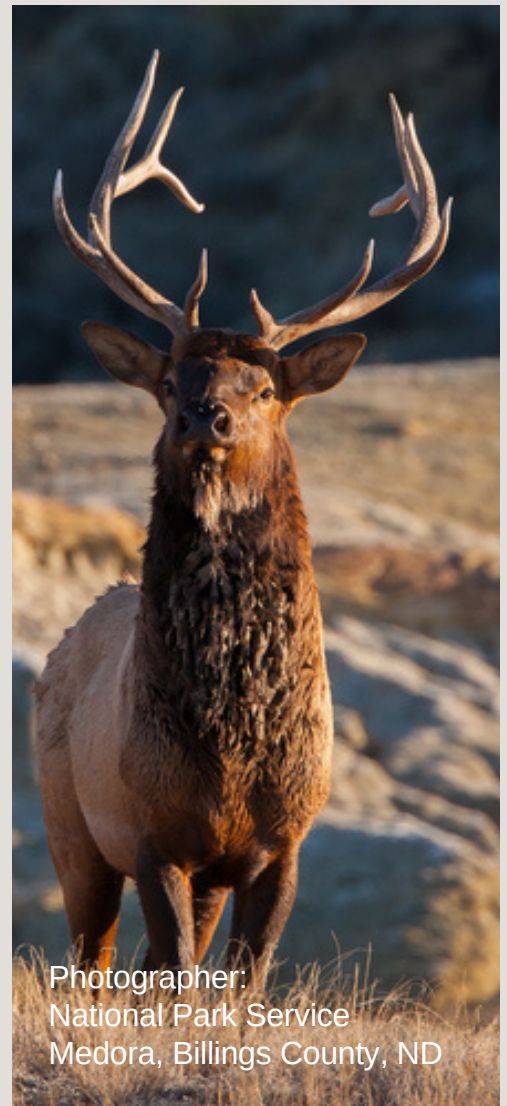
Additional Representative

### **Damian Schlinger**

Vocational Rehabilitation Director

### **Jodi Webb**

Parent Training and Information Center



Photographer:  
National Park Service  
Medora, Billings County, ND

**NEWS RELEASE | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** | November 17, 2022

## **Two North Dakota organizations receive statewide awards for supporting the employment of people with disabilities**

BISMARCK, N.D. – North Dakota Health and Human Services Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has recognized two organizations for supporting an inclusive workforce by hiring, training and inspiring people with disabilities to excel in the workforce.

The agency and State Rehabilitation Council selected True North Equipment of Grand Forks as the 2022 North Dakota State VR Employer of the Year award recipient. The Standing Rock Community School in Fort Yates was recognized with the You Make a Difference Award.

True North Equipment was selected from among 12 nominees and was recognized for efforts to support and inspire individuals with disabilities to achieve employment goals and reach their full potential in their community.

The Grand Forks VR office team member who nominated True North Equipment for this honor said it was because of their willingness to customize a position working with large machinery to meet an individual's needs, interests and desire to build on-the-job skills and confidence.

"We are humbled and honored to receive this award and grateful to have found one of our employees through the VR program. He has been a great asset to our team," said John Oncken, True North Equipment co-founder and chief executive officer. "Our mission is to improve our communities. Finding capable and enthusiastic employees fulfills that mission to a higher level."

VR client Scott Hayden is grateful for the opportunity for employment at True North Equipment. "Every challenge is a step on my road to recovery," he said.

Crosby Kids Daycare, **Crosby**; Razor Consulting Solutions, **Fargo**; Don's House of Flowers, **Jamestown**; Hugo's, **Jamestown**; Newman Signs, Jamestown; Hilltop Home of Comfort, **Killdeer**; ProTech, **Minot**; Comdel Innovation CDI Services, **Wahpeton**; El Rancho, **Williston**; and Expanse Electrical, **Williston**.

The statewide You Make a Difference Award honors one business annually for consistently recognizing individuals' unique abilities, providing work experience opportunities for students with disabilities, and actively supporting, developing and inspiring students to achieve goals in a competitive and integrated employment setting.

The Standing Rock Community School was recognized for providing Native American students with disabilities with work experiences in the school as well as at local businesses, tribal organizations and other community nonprofits.

One notable work opportunity involves several students who work at KLND, a community radio station for the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River Nations. They produce a biweekly radio show called the Warrior Radio Show and record segments that are used by the station throughout the week.



## Continued

Colette Fleck, transition coordinator at the Standing Rock Community School is grateful for the community's support.

"The program has helped students succeed in adulthood and transition to productive lives. Many students are now either working or enrolled in college or a technical school," she said.

The awards were presented to True North Equipment and Standing Rock Community School during an awards ceremony at VR's annual training conference last month in Minot.

"It's a pleasure to honor these North Dakota businesses for their continued work with our program to help people of all abilities reach their full potential in the workforce," said Damian Schlinger, VR director.

The agency's VR team helps people with disabilities find and retain meaningful work or advance their careers. They also work with employers to help connect them with qualified applicants, retain trained workers whose abilities may have changed and find solutions to disability-related issues.

Rehabilitation counseling and consultation are available at no cost to qualifying individuals, businesses, nonprofits and government agencies.

To receive VR services, North Dakotans must have a disability that is an obstacle to employment, and they must want to work and be available to work.

Information about VR services is available online at [hhs.nd.gov/vr](https://hhs.nd.gov/vr) or by calling 701-328-8950, toll-free 800-755-2745, 711 (TTY) or emailing [dhsvr@nd.gov](mailto:dhsvr@nd.gov).





Congratulations!



You Make a Difference Award

STANDING ROCK COMMUNITY SCHOOL



VR Employer of the Year

TRUE NORTH EQUIPMENT

# FFY 2022

## AT A GLANCE

### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Program Expenditures	\$12.9 Million
Individuals Employed	562
Average weekly earnings before rehabilitation	\$218.80
Average weekly earnings after rehabilitation	\$518.13
Individuals receiving training and other services	3817
Percent of individuals served who have a significant disability	93%

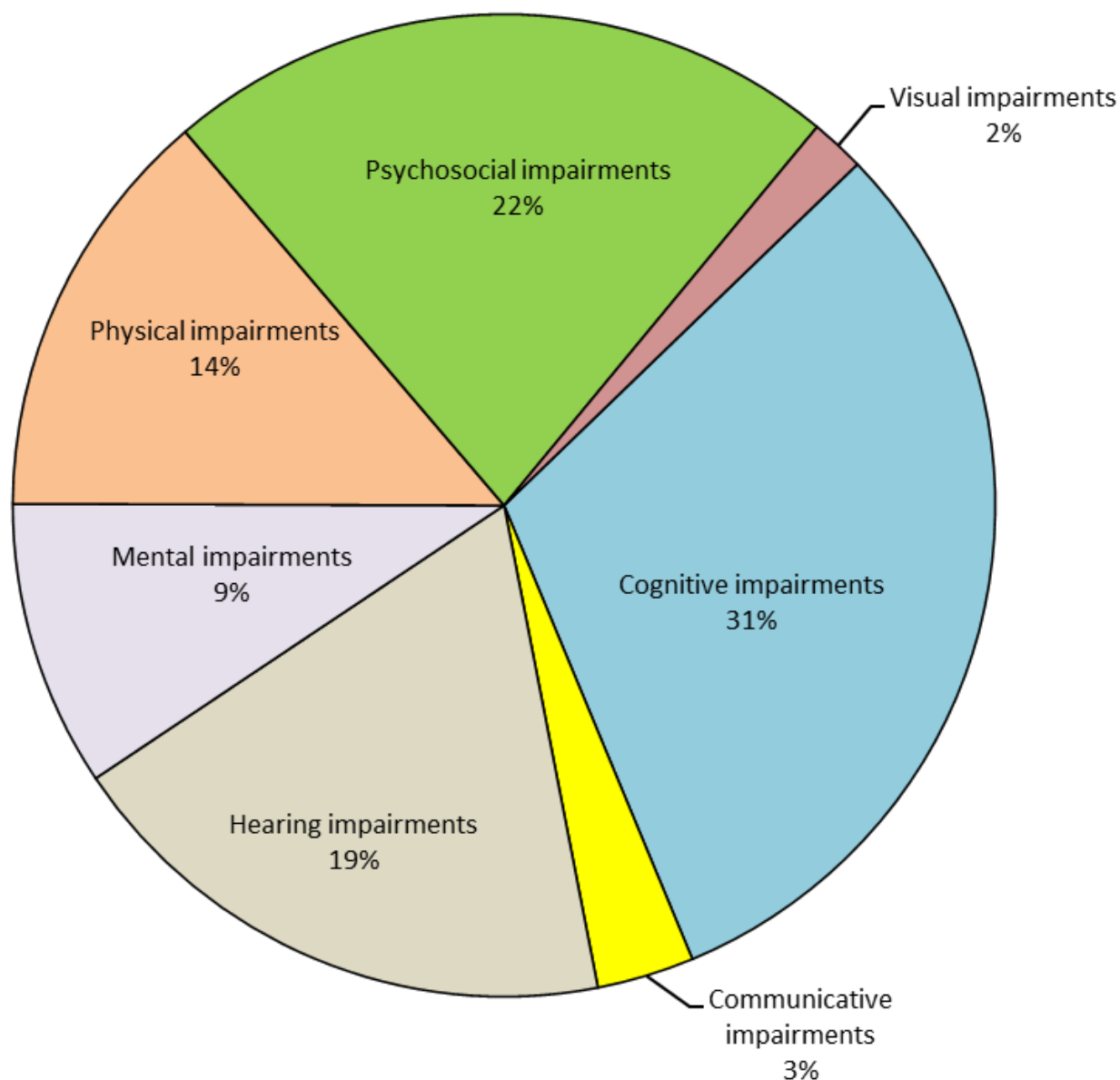
### Return on investment (ROI)

DVR uses ROI to show how clients benefit economically from VR services as well as how their increased income positively impacts the economy.

- For every dollar spent by DVR, clients earn \$10.43.
- For every dollar spent by DVR, the clients pay back \$2.09 in taxes.



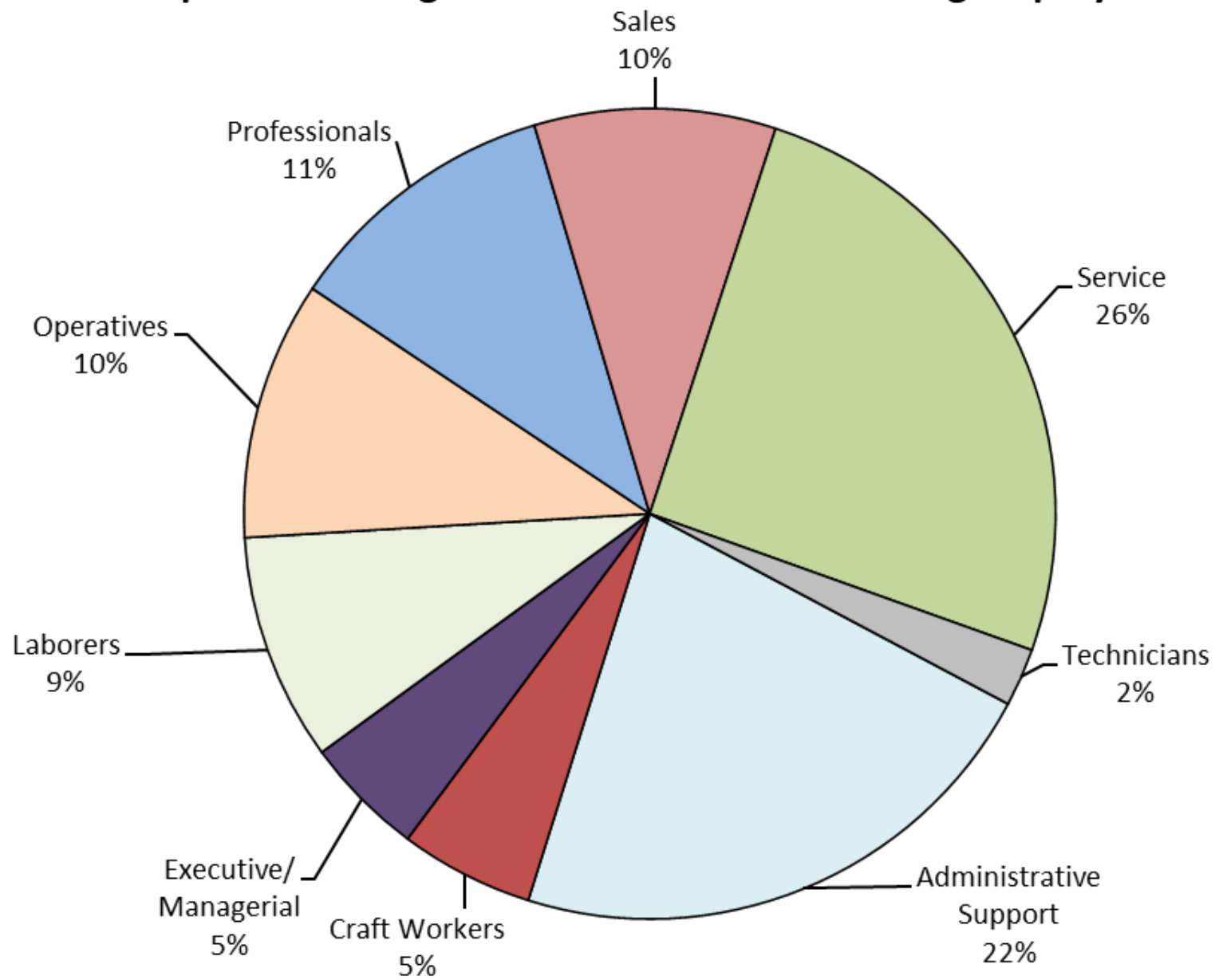
# Primary Impairments of Individual Achieving Employment



## Pie Chart Indicates

Cognitive impairments - 31%  
Psychosocial impairments - 22%  
Hearing impairments - 19%  
Physical impairments - 14%  
Mental impairments - 9%  
Communicative impairments - 3%  
Visual impairments - 2%

# Occupational Categories of Individuals Achieving Employment



## Pie Chart Indicates

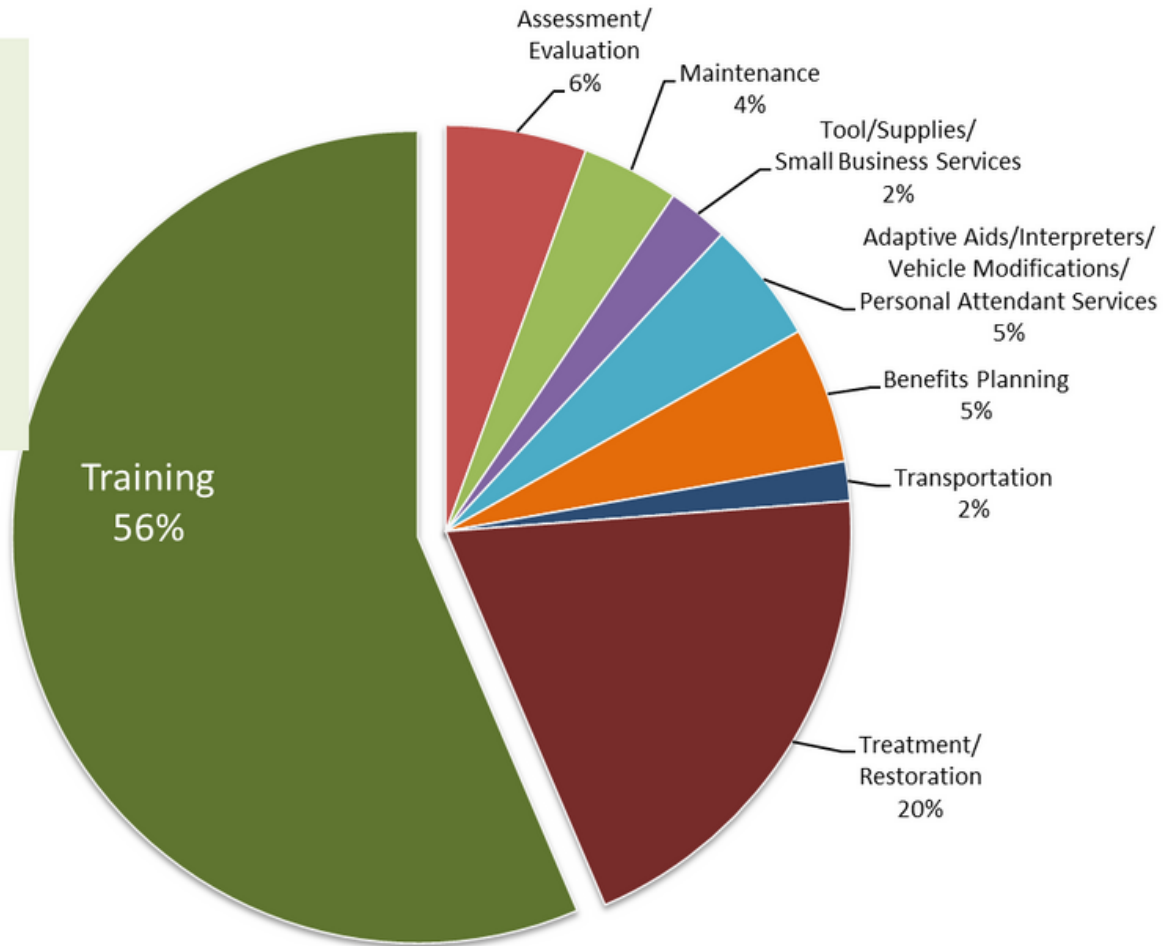
Service - 26%  
Administrative Support - 22%  
Professionals - 11%  
Sales - 10%  
Operatives - 10%  
Laborers - 9%  
Craft Workers - 5%  
Executive/Managerial - 5%  
Technicians - 2%

# Case Service Expenditures

56% of NDVR's Case Service Expenditures was for training individuals with disabilities.

Training Services include:

- Postsecondary Tuition
- On the Job Training
- Work Experience
- Job Development
- Supported Employment
- Customized Employment



## Pie Chart Indicates

Training - 56%

Treatment/Restoration - 20%

Assessment/Evaluation - 6%

Adaptive Aids/Interpreters/Vehicle

Modifications/Personal Attendant Services - 5%

Benefits Planning - 5%

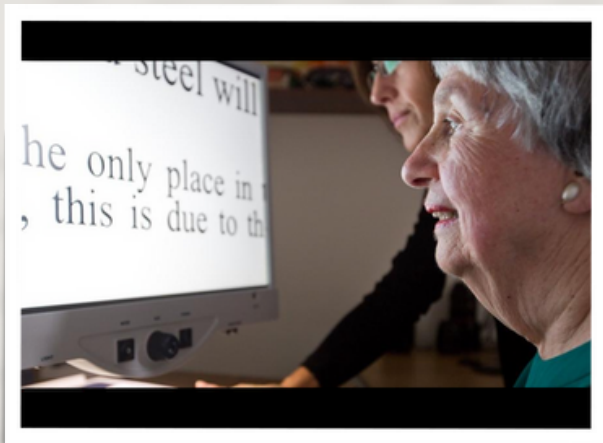
Maintenance - 4%

Tools/Supplies/Small Business Services - 2%

Transportation - 2%

# Assistance for Individuals with Vision Impairments

**North Dakota has resources to assist individuals with vision impairments. North Dakota Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) can assist individuals seeking employment or individuals who are wanting to maintain their independence.**



## Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB)

The goal of the OIB program is to assist individuals 55 and older that have a vision deficit improve their independence in their homes and communities by enhancing their quality of life.

### **OIB Services include, but not limited to:**

- Advocacy Training & Support
- Assistive Technology Devices
  - Magnifiers
  - Lighting
  - Glare control
- Assistive Technology Training
- Communication Skills
- Independent Living Skills
- Information and Referral



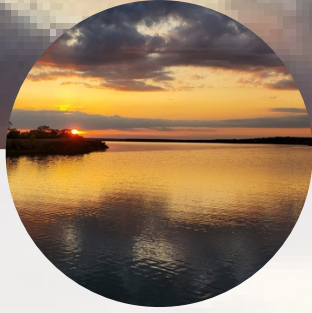
## Vocational Rehabilitation

We provide high quality services to assist eligible individuals who are blind or visually impaired to obtain or maintain competitive employment. A team of specially trained vision rehabilitation specialists will work to accomplish employment needs in the home, community, workplace, or school.

### **Employment Services include, but not limited to:**

- Vocational Guidance & Counseling
- Vocational Exploration
- On-the-job Training
- Job Placement
- Resume Writing
- Interviewing Skills
- Assistive Technology
- Information and Referral
- Academic Training





## Did you know?

A team of specially trained vision rehabilitation specialists work with both our VR employment program and our Older Individuals Who are Blind program to increase independence in the home and community.



73% of the clients seen last year had a diagnosis of Age Related Macular Degeneration (ARMD)



In FFY 2022, 588 North Dakotans benefited from our program to remain independent in their homes



82% of consumers are over the age of 75



98% of consumers received assistive technology devices (E.G. magnifier, lighting, talking watch, etc.) through our grant that allowed them more independence



313 applications were processed in FFY 2022



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*“Every challenge is a step on my road to recovery,” he said.*

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## CLIENT SUCCESS STORY

### SCOTT HAYDEN

Scott had a life-altering stroke in 2018 that caused him to undergo many medical interventions, including brain surgery. After his stroke, Scott was unable to return to his previous job and instead had to focus on his recovery. He came to Vocational Rehabilitation in October 2021 after being referred by one of his providers.

He was apprehensive about the program and unsure what his work options would be given his new barriers. Scott was worried that if he attempted work, he would be unsuccessful and would let others down. However, apprehension was not the only thing Scott brought with him to his first meeting, he also came equipped with a burning motivation to continue learning and growing and a hopefulness that was contagious. His wife Kaye was also with him providing encouragement and support every step of the way. Although moving forward with employment activities was scary, Scott was willing to take the chance to try.

Scott started working with his vocational rehabilitation counselor in completing job exploration and investigating what potential jobs may be a good fit. He was also able to meet with a benefits planner and had an assistive technology assessment to help identify tools that would help him be successful at work.

Scott benefitted from several phone apps and hearing aids. He was then able to move on to work with a business specialist. After completing various job shadows, Scott did not feel he was ready to start applying for jobs, feeling concerned that his work tolerance would not allow him to be successful. Instead, he opted to complete an adult work experience where he started working for True North Equipment in Grand Forks.

From the first day, everyone agreed that it was a great fit. Scott felt thankful for the work opportunity and the employer showed a great willingness to help Scott reach his full potential.

Scott continues to take on new opportunities with his employer's support and often discusses his excitement in being able to do new tasks and learn things he did not think would be possible since having his stroke. Both Scott and True North Equipment are thrilled to see all that has been accomplished.

People that meet Scott are greeted with a smile, a positive attitude, and inspiration that we can all work to do more for ourselves and each other.

Scott was gracious enough to let us share his story, as he wants others to see what is possible.

“Every challenge is a step on my road to recovery,” he said.



Vocational Rehabilitation  
HEALTH & HUMAN SERVICES

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To learn more about the North Dakota State Rehabilitation Council and the North Dakota Section of Vocational Rehabilitation visit [www.hhs.nd.gov/vr](http://www.hhs.nd.gov/vr)

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