

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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2015-2016



Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Highlights

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services works to bring about full access to employment, independence and community integration for people with disabilities.



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
54 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE
04333-0054

Paul R. LePage
GOVERNOR

Jeanne S. Paquette
COMMISSIONER

February 23, 2016

The Maine Department of Labor is dedicated to serving Maine workers and businesses. We are proud to house the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS), an agency whose main focus is to assist people with disabilities to become self-sufficient, live independently and enjoy all the benefits that employment brings to every one of us, financially and interpersonally.

Through the bureau's leadership, BRS has enhanced services and nearly doubled the number of individuals becoming employed since 2010, but now is in the midst of some exceptional challenges. Demand for independent living and employment services are projected to surpass the base of federal and state funds available to the department, which has caused fiscal shortfalls that must be addressed. Additionally, the enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014 affords us the opportunity to work across education and workforce systems as we have never done before, but makes significant changes in how Vocational Rehabilitation funds can be spent to serve individuals in Maine with disabilities. This is particularly concerning, given Maine's aging demographics and geography. Please be assured that we are working to better align resources among state agencies and partners that address the demand-driven needs of employers and ensure the delivery of quality services to those who need our help to live prosperous and productive lives.

I invite you to learn more about the variety of services the bureau provides and its initiatives. Along with what you will read in the following pages, the bureau has videos that show how BRS facilitates opportunities that connect people with disabilities to employers in need of a skilled and dependable workforce. We encourage you to view these at www.maine.gov/rehab and share them with your colleagues. It is a testament to the hard work of the bureau's staff that they have accomplished the goals highlighted in this document. Yet, there is far more to be done, and we are up for this challenge.

If you have any questions, please reach out to the bureau's director, Karen Fraser, or me at any time. If you know of an employer that could benefit by hiring talented and loyal workers, do not hesitate to connect them to the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Jeanne S. Paquette'.

Jeanne Paquette
Commissioner

Table of Contents

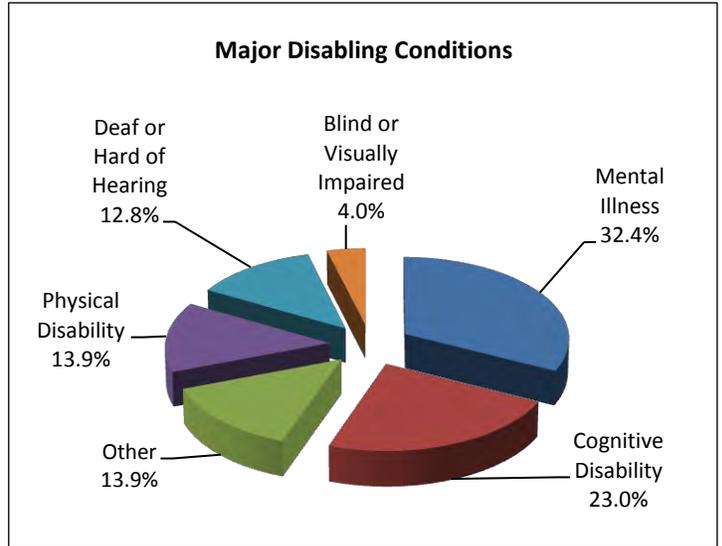
Message from the Commissioner	2
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Overview	4
How We Define Success	5
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR).....	6
DVR Initiatives and Innovations	7
Progressive Employment – A Business Relations Activity.....	8
Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI).....	9
DBVI Initiatives and Innovations	10
Office of the State Accessibility Coordinator	11
Partners in Advocacy, Advisory Boards and Councils	12
BRS Office Directory.....	12

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Overview

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) is comprised of three Divisions – the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR), the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI), and the Division of Systems Improvement and Quality Assurance (SIQA). A total of 155 BRS employees currently deliver public vocational rehabilitation and independent living services to Maine people with disabilities and are co-located at CareerCenters statewide. BRS also houses the Office of the State Accessibility Coordinator, who leads the State’s compliance under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 (*see page 11*).

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, establishes program eligibility and the scope of services provided through DVR and DBVI. Included are vocational counseling guidance, physical restoration services, education and skills training, and job placement services. DBVI, in conjunction with the Department of Education, also serves all blind children in Maine.

In 2015, **11,184** Mainers with disabilities received services from BRS; of those participants, **6,320** received services with a plan for employment. Counselors worked with clients who had an employment plan, on average, for 26.4 months. This year, **1,221** clients were successfully employed earning an average wage of \$394.43 per week.



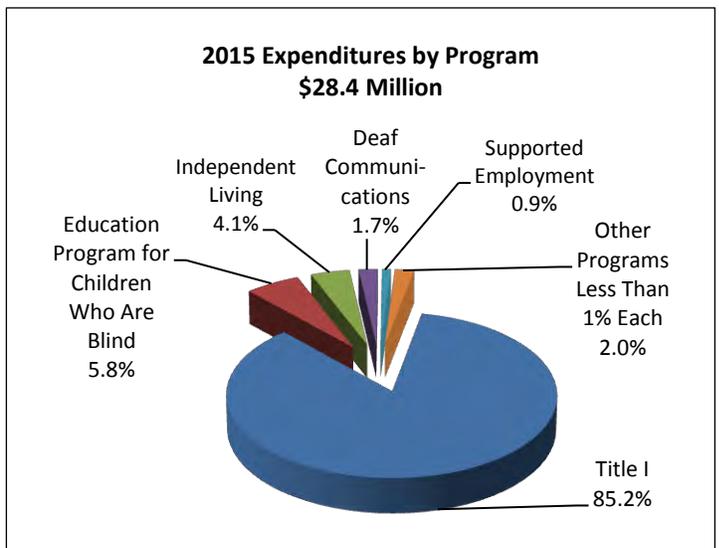
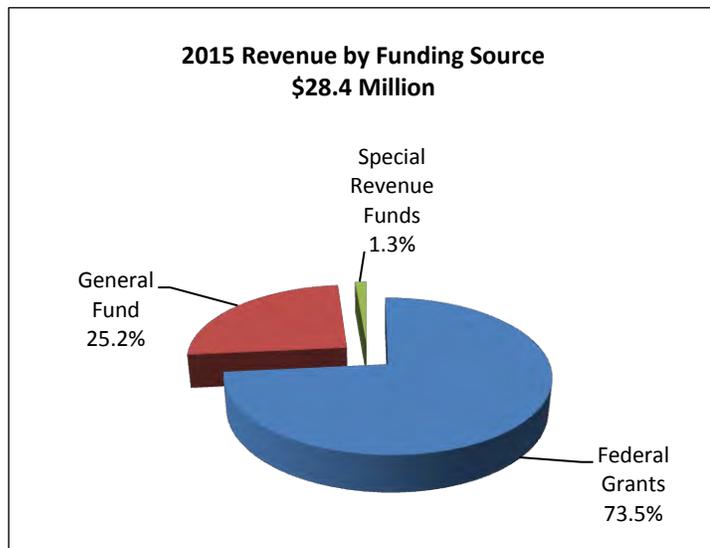
BRS receives the majority of its funding from the federal Department of Education’s Title I grant program. These grants (*one administered by DVR and one administered by DBVI*) provide funding for rehabilitative services to eligible clients. The Title I grant has a 4:1 (21%) state matching requirement, which is met using the General Fund appropriation.

Federal Grants

- Independent Living
- Supported Employment
- Client Assistance
- Staff Training

Required General Fund Match

- 9:1 state match
- None
- None
- 4% DBVI and 10% DVR



Special Revenue income is received from the Business Enterprise Program (*see page 9*) managed by DBVI, from the Worker’s Compensation Board as a result of a memorandum of understanding with DVR (*see page 7*), and from the Public Utilities Commission for telecommunications managed by the Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (*see page 7*). The use of the Special Revenue funds is restricted for these specific purposes.

How We Define Success...



"Bob" maintained his employment with a large school system thanks to his new hearing aids. Bob reported that "the new hearing aids are working great!" He is currently working on an exciting initiative to promote use of locally grown healthy foods in schools.

As a New Mainer, "Mohammed" wasn't sure where his career path would lead when he began receiving VR services. He stated that he appreciated the "compassion you showed me, made me to be comfortable and for taking my case seriously and give the necessary attention." He said that now "I am not only Mohammed, but I am also Mohammed, a Pharmacy Technician."



With Vocational Rehabilitation support for IT training, "John" landed a new position as a Digital Security Administrator – a job with great growth potential!

A DVR client, "Rebecca", continues her successful (and unusual!) employment as a researcher as highlighted in these two videos:
<http://sanfrancisco.cbslocal.com/video/10494900-wheelchair-bound-biologists-study-treetops-thanks-to-climbing> and
<http://www.calacademy.org/sciencetoday/waterbeers-from-treetops-to-your-backyard/5516385>



Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

Maine's DVR assists eligible individuals with disabilities who wish to achieve or retain employment in the community. Any individual who is committed to work and has a disability that creates a barrier to employment is encouraged to apply. Once determined eligible, individuals develop a plan for employment, which outlines the services needed to successfully achieve their employment goal.

Contributing to the Maine Economy

While continuing to maintain no wait list for services, DVR assisted **1,132** people to find employment success in Federal Fiscal Year 2015. This resulted in these individuals earning a total of **\$24,444,264.00** in annual wages. Across the state and across industry sectors, DVR clients are joining or rejoining the workforce in such jobs as:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Accountant and Auditor | Farmer and Rancher | Nurse Practitioner |
| Automotive Service Technician | File Clerk | Office Clerk |
| Business Operations Specialist | Financial Manager | Paralegal |
| Cabinetmaker | First-Line Supervisor | Personal Care Aide |
| Carpenter | Food Service Worker | Photographer |
| Cashier | Grounds Maintenance Worker | Police/Sheriff's Patrol Officer |
| Child Care Worker | Healthcare Support Worker | Receptionist |
| Community Health Worker | Home Health Aide | Recreational Therapist |
| Computer Support Specialist | Janitor and Cleaner | Registered Nurse |
| Customer Service Representative | Laborer | Sales Worker |
| Dishwasher | Librarian | Security Guard |
| Elementary School Teacher | Licensed Practical Nurse | Social Worker |
| Electrician | Machinist | Truck Driver |
| Emergency Medical Technician | Manager | Veterinary Assistant |

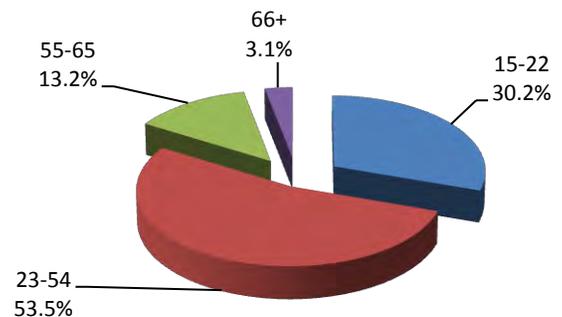
Individuals Served in 2015

- 4,115** New Applicants
- 5,440** Received Services through Employment Plans
- 1,132** Individuals Placed in Employment

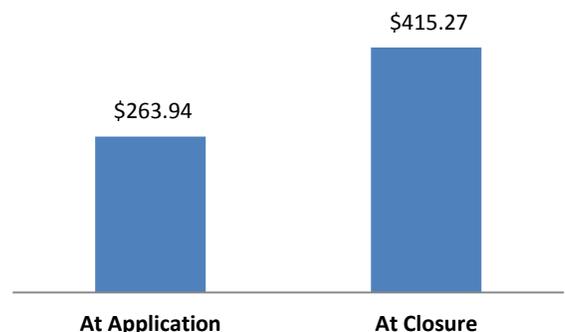
Education Outcomes

- 585** Individuals Increased their Education Level

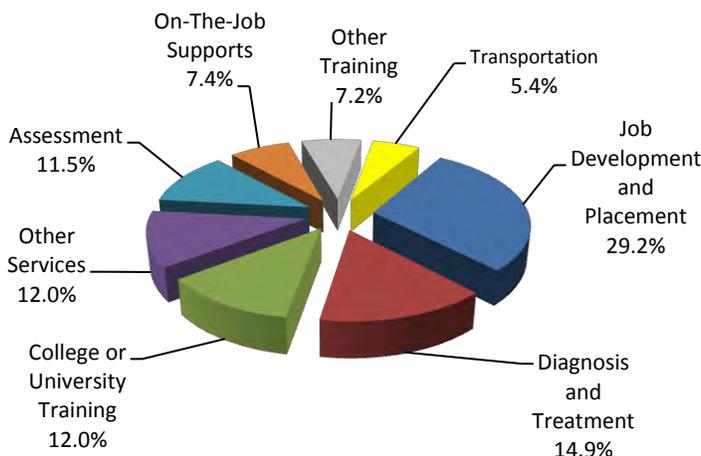
Age At Application



Change in Weekly Wages for 1,132 Individuals with Successful Employment Outcomes



VR Case Service Expenditures in FFY 2015 for DVR
\$7,805,818.14



DVR Initiatives and Innovations

Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (DDHHL) houses a director, assistant to the director, and three Rehabilitation Counselors for the Deaf (RCDs). The RCDs help individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing access and maintain employment. DDHHL provides referrals, information and training to employers and other state agencies, as well as deaf, hard of hearing and deaf-blind consumers regarding equal access issues. DDHHL administers a contract with the Maine Center on Deafness to provide Telecommunications Equipment, Civil Rights and Advocacy services

“Jill”, a York County teacher, was at high risk of losing her job due to hearing loss before she learned about VR and applied for services. Since receiving her FM receiver and transmitter, she writes that “I love it and it has made such a difference in my work day. I can easily hear individual students or small groups of students in noisy environments.”

Process Mapping, an initiative to better understand and identify many tasks that are required to provide vocational rehabilitation services with the goal of establishing a more efficient process and flow, is currently underway. Building on a comprehensive report developed by outside evaluators, the charge of the Process Mapping work groups is to review the report’s recommendations and to determine if there are some resource and fiscal efficiencies that could be adopted – leading to increased agency consistency, productivity and improved client outcomes.

A former carpenter who was no longer able to meet the physical demands of his job, “Dave” was depressed before participating in the Career Exploration Workshop and learning how he could use his skills in a new employment field. In his new position in customer service for the hardware store, he has already been a stand-out breaking the store record by selling three pellet stoves in one day! Dave is feeling better these days too and is appreciative of the assistance that his VR Counselor and job developer provided.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), signed into law on July 22, 2014, and reauthorizing the federal Rehabilitation Act, is intended to help streamline services with Maine’s workforce development system and provide access to employment, education, and training to help all job seekers find good paying jobs and to assist employers to find skilled workers. Immediate changes took effect for the public Rehabilitation programs, including the need to move individuals with disabilities into employment plans within 90 days.

Career Exploration Workshop (CEW) Series, developed by DVR and partners, is designed to introduce participants to the world of work through activities that uncover skills and identify career interests. CEW is available in three versions: Adult, Transition, and Bridge – Pathways to Employment. The CEW series utilizes flexible modules making it ideal for delivery in schools and provider agencies as well as CareerCenters around the state.

Workers’ Compensation Board’s Memorandum of Understanding with DVR has meant a number of injured Maine workers have been able to return to employment. Through participation in VR services, these individuals received the supports and resources they needed to return to the Maine workforce.

“Cindy”, a client served through DVR’s partnership with the Workers’ Compensation Board, was successfully closed as a residential care specialist at an agency that provides services to people with significant disabilities. On the basis of VR sponsored training, she now holds a certificate as a Behavioral Health Professional with CPR/First Aid and Bloodborne Pathogens certifications. In addition to her living wage salary, Cindy is now covered by her employer’s health insurance policy.

DVR Continues Strong Partnership with the Maine Department of Education (MDOE) and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) through joint planning, service delivery and regional and statewide staff training opportunities. With these partners, DVR is actively involved in Maine’s Employment First initiatives, MDOE’s State Personnel Development Grant and Discovering Personal Genius™, a DHHS supported career planning program for individuals with significant disabilities. These shared efforts and many others promote stronger transition planning for youth and employment outcomes for all of those with disabilities served by each of the agencies.

Progressive Employment – A Business Relations Activity

As the state with the oldest population, Maine employers are concerned about from where they will hire their next generation of workers. DVR is helping answer that question through an exciting pilot called “Progressive Employment.” Based on a successful model from Vermont, where employers face similar workforce demographic challenges, Progressive Employment takes a dual customer approach – meeting both the needs of the employer and the job seeker – through no-risk opportunities.

Under the pilot, transition-age students and young adults in southern Maine are matched by career interest with local businesses for activities, such as company tours, job shadows, mock interviews, paid work experience and more. Sometimes Progressive Employment activities lead to a job offer, but there is no requirement that they do.

Early results are positive with nearly 70 youth participating. Employers have also responded enthusiastically – particularly those in the skilled trades. To date, more than 60 new businesses have been developed for participation in Progressive Employment!

Maine’s Progressive Employment program meets the needs of employers and Maine youth with disabilities by matching them to such activities as:

Job Tours

Let youth see what your business is all about!

Interviews

Offer a young jobseeker an opportunity to practice interview skills or, better yet, let them interview you to discover about you and your business.

Job Shadows

Invite a youth to see jobs at your business in action.

Work Experience

Provide a work experience to help a youth gain skills, with wages and workers’ compensation paid through DVR.

On-the-Job Training

Hire a young person and have some initial training costs offset.



Employer Services

For more information or assistance, please contact:

Kevin Owen

Maine Department of Labor
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
150 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0150

Phone: (207) 623-7942

TTY: Please use Maine Relay 711

Fax: (207) 287-5292

E-mail: Kevin.J.Owen@maine.gov

Website: <http://www.maine.gov/rehab>

“Mike” is a senior at a Portland-area high school. He enjoys woodworking and is interested in learning more about related careers. Through participation in Progressive Employment, Mike had an opportunity to tour a growing local boat-building business specializing in motor and sailing yachts. One of the company’s managers took Mike through the construction facility where he had the chance to see the high-tech carpentry equipment in operation. Mike spoke with employees in the electrical and fiberglass departments and gained a great understanding of the skill-sets needed. Before leaving, Mike also sat down with a human resource department manager who discussed salary and benefits, as well as the application process. The employer was very pleased to meet someone who shares his passion for woodworking and plans are now underway for Mike to return for a job shadow experience!

Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DBVI)

Maine's DBVI provides a continuum of rehabilitation services to individuals who are blind or have low vision. Services may include individual counseling and guidance related to employment and adjustment to blindness issues, use of adaptive technology, low vision therapy, alternative skill training in communication (such as braille), instruction to develop independent travel skills (orientation and mobility), and instruction of daily living skills geared to being more self-sufficient. These services are provided through various programs, including:

Vocational Rehabilitation Program is primarily for working-age adults who seek employment. Services may include individual vocational counseling and guidance, vocational assessment, orientation and mobility instruction, low vision services, independent living services (vision rehabilitation therapy), and more.

Business Enterprise Program (BEP) provides training and support to manage and operate snack bars, cafeterias, and vending-machine facilities on state, federal and municipal properties.

Independent Living Services (IL) provides training in adaptive skills and alternative techniques for accomplishing daily tasks that enable individuals who are older to be more self-sufficient.

Education Services for Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired provides adaptive instruction services to students in home or local schools related to academics and independence.

VR Program

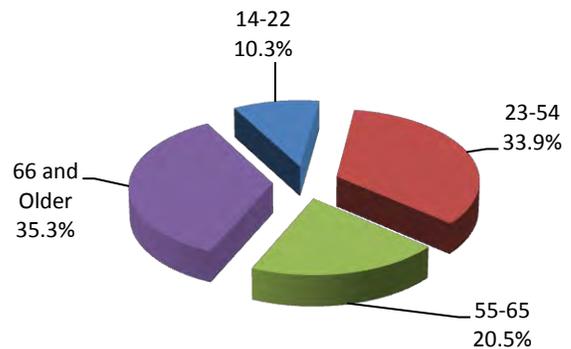
Individuals Served in 2015

- 144 New Applicants
- 435 Received Services through Employment Plans
- 89 Individuals Placed in Employment

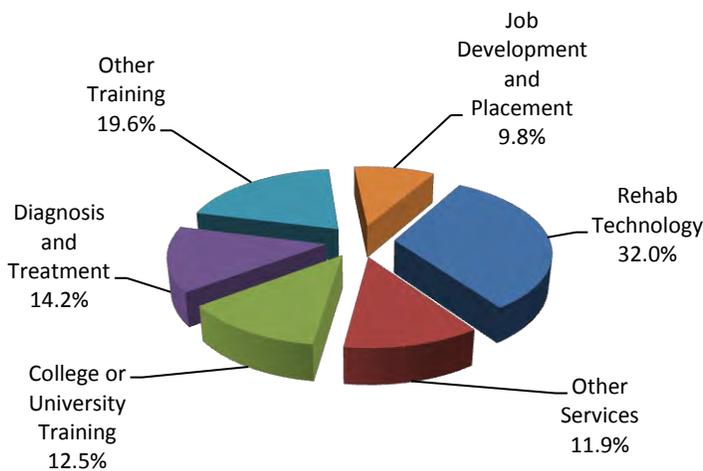
Education Outcomes

- 15 Individuals Increased their Education Level

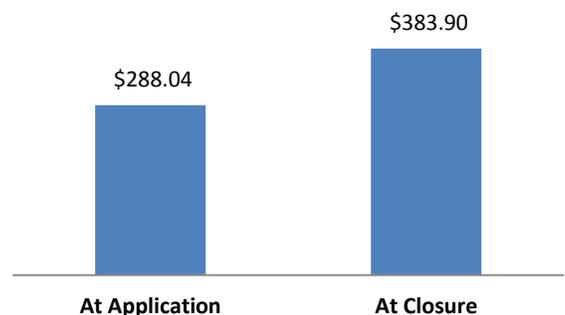
Age At Application



VR Case Service Expenditures in FFY 2015 for DBVI
\$491,942.29



Change in Weekly Wages for 30 DBVI Participants with Competitive Employment Outcomes



DBVI Initiatives and Innovations

Maine’s Business Enterprise Program (BEP) leads the nation in the use of a self-serve food service operation – the Avanti Market – an innovative convenience store concept. This system uses an unmanned, self-checkout kiosk designed specifically for use in secure work places and allows for a much larger product selection than customary vending machines. This micro-market allows BEP managers to increase yearly earnings and expand to 24-hour service at Avanti sites. There are currently six sites located in Bangor, Calais, Portland and Augusta.



Blindness Rehabilitation and Vocational Training Center

Opens at The Iris Network – Through the public/private partnership of the Maine Department of Labor, the U.S. Department of Education’s Rehabilitation Services Administration and the Iris Network, this immersion center began serving clients of the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired in September 2015. The culmination of efforts that began in 2009 at the recommendation of a group of stakeholders, Maine now has the ability to provide immediate, intensive and comprehensive rehabilitation to individuals who are blind and visually impaired and want to be competitively employed in their local communities.



College Vision Quest is a five-week college preparation program housed on campus at the University of Maine in Orono. The students take an entry-level college course that meets five days a week and also participate in daily learning labs related to succeeding in college as a student who is blind or severely visually impaired. In addition to the college course and learning labs, the participants learn how to integrate their current assistive technology to meet the pace of reading, notetaking and studying requirements at the college level, and receive training in a variety of blindness-specific skills geared toward enhancing success while at college. The students are also required to complete a number of community service projects during the program.

“Sam” is a 46-year-old husband and father who has a progressive eye disorder known as Retinitis Pigmentosa (RP). RP affects the peripheral vision and results in significant eye fatigue as it progresses. He was a manager in the Division for the Blind and Visually Impaired Business Enterprise Program (BEP) for many years and then stepped down due to the toll this progressive eye disorder had on both of running a manned snack bar and having a young family. After looking at other business opportunities, he decided to come back to the BEP and took over a self-serve Avanti Market in a new state office building. Sam, who is a naturalist, was able to promote organic products at his new facility and work flexible hours, which allowed him to manage the eye fatigue and to spend more time with his family. With the assistance of specific training, a computer and video magnifier, Sam has been successful to the point that he has grown this facility into one of the most profitable in the state. In addition, he has been able to purchase a home and is now able to assist his wife with the homeschooling of their four children.

Office of the State Accessibility Coordinator

The Accessibility Coordinator leads the State's compliance under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504. The office works with State Executive branch departments and the public to ensure that programs and services are not discriminatory and are accessible for individuals who have disabilities. State accessibility policies cover all State services (including contracted services), facilities, web design, communication and employment.

2015–2016 Highlights

Technical Assistance and Training Programs

- Worked with DHHS to make Video Remote Interpreting (VRI) available in their State offices.
- Developed a Request for Proposal (RFP) with Office of Information Technology (OIT) and Equal Employment Opportunity Coordinators for a statewide contract for Assistive Technology services.
- Delivered training in CareerCenters regarding service animals and ADA Title II compliance.
- Consulted with Aroostook County Jail, Ferry Beach State Park, Administrative Office of the Courts, community non-profit organizations and others about program accessibility and barrier removal.

Resources and Information

The Accessibility Coordinator answers questions about disability rights, promotes community integration and develops affordable resources for families and businesses:

- As a Chair of the mPower Loan Board, initiated a transition team to improve availability of flexible loans for accessibility and barrier removal.
- Led a Legislative Task Force to ensure integrity in the use of service animals.
- As part of **The ADA at 25** anniversary events, participated in the exhibit, *Show Me The Incredible*, at the University of Maine Augusta in the Holocaust and Human Rights Center and an interview with Oral History and Folklife Research, Inc.

Complaints

Each department is required to have an ADA coordinator and grievance procedure. The State Accessibility Coordinator works with departments to resolve any complaints.

The mother of a son who has a learning disability, seeing the sculpture titled, "You Don't Look Disabled," cried, "That's it! That's what people keep saying. It's so frustrating."



Eric Dibner, ADA Accessibility Coordinator
150 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333
(207) 623-7950 voice, TTY users call Maine Relay 711
Email: Eric.Dibner@maine.gov

Partners in Advocacy, Advisory Boards and Councils

Client Assistance Program, operated by C.A.R.E.S., Inc. provides information, advice, advocacy, and (if determined necessary) legal representation to persons who have concerns about the rehabilitation services they receive from DVR and DBVI. Website: <http://caresinc.org>

Commission for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened is an advisory council that provides a review of the status of services to deaf and hard-of-hearing persons, recommends priorities for development, evaluates the progress made as a result of recommendations, and sets goals for activities of the division to carry out its obligations and responsibilities to the deaf and hard-of-hearing communities. Website:

http://www.maine.gov/rehab/advisory_councils/dod



Commission on Disability and Employment (CDE) is a subcommittee of the State Workforce Board. The commission fosters workforce development in Maine that includes meaningful employment and equal opportunity for people with disabilities and promotes collaboration to increase public awareness and influence public policy. Website:

<http://www.maine.gov/swib/committees/disabilities/index.shtml>

DBVI State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a diverse group of people concerned with the quality of vocational rehabilitation services provided to blind Maine citizens. The SRC's core functions are to review, analyze and advise on the

policies and other related entities involved with the employment of people who are blind or have vision impairments.

Website: <http://maine-src-dbvi.org>

DVR State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) serves its mission to partner with DVR in developing state goals, priorities, policy and practice, as well as to review and analyze DVR's results and performance in support of securing and maintaining employment through a process of informed choice for individuals with disabilities. Website: <http://www.mainesrc.org>

State Independent Living Council (SILC) promotes a philosophy of independent living, which encompasses consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination and equal access, as well as individual and system advocacy to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence and productivity of individuals with significant disabilities.

Website: <http://www.mainesilc.org>

BRS Office Directory

From any location, TTY users call Maine Relay 711

Central Administrative Office

Bureau of Rehabilitation Services
150 State House Station, Augusta, ME 04333
Tel: 207-623-6799

Augusta CareerCenter

21 Enterprise Drive, Suite 2, Augusta, ME 04433
Tel: 207-624-5120 or 1-800-760-1573

Bangor CareerCenter

45 Oak Street, Suite 1, Bangor, ME 04401
Tel: 207-561-4000 or 1-888-545-8811

Houlton DVR Office

DHHS 11 High Street, Houlton, ME 04730
Tel: 207-532-5019 or 1-800-432-7338

Lewiston CareerCenter

5 Mollison Way, Lewiston, ME 04240
Tel: 207-753-9000 or 1-800-741-2991

Machias CareerCenter

53 Prescott Drive, Suite 2, Machias, ME 04654
Tel: 207-255-1926 or 1-800-770-7774

Greater Portland CareerCenter

151 Jetport Boulevard, Portland, ME 04102
Tel: 207-822-3300 or 1-877-594-5627

Presque Isle CareerCenter

66 Spruce Street, Suite 3, Presque Isle, ME 04769
Tel: 207-760-6300 or 1-800-635-0357

Rockland CareerCenter

91 Camden Street, Suite 202, Rockland, ME 04841
Tel: 207-594-2641 or 1-877-421-7916

Skowhegan CareerCenter

98 North Avenue, Suite 20, Skowhegan, ME 04976
Tel: 207-474-4958 or 1-800-760-1572