

# MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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2016–2017

# 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 10, 2017

Welcome to the latest edition of the *Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Highlights!* As part of the Maine Department of Labor (MDOL), the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) assists people with disabilities to become self-sufficient, live independently and have equal access to employment. This fits well with the MDOL mission, which is committed to serving Maine workers and businesses, and strives to ensure that Maine is a wonderful place for **all** residents to prosper and live productive lives.

In the past year, BRS continued to be challenged by a demand for independent living and employment services that surpassed the base of federal and state funds available to the department. This was further compounded by regulation changes prompted by the enactment of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, which reauthorized the Rehabilitation Act. Significant changes were made in how Vocational Rehabilitation funds can be spent to serve individuals with disabilities. To address this, the bureau, in addition to focusing on delivering core independent living and vocational rehabilitation services, continues to improve the alignment of resources among state agencies and other partners regarding the demand-driven needs of employers and workforce development. We have pursued initiatives to better serve youth with disabilities and older blind individuals, including making two funding requests in the Governor's Biennial Budget.

As Maine's labor market tightens, educating employers about this program is critical. Tapping these members of our labor force provides employers with an expanded pool of talent. Connecting with employers will help place workers in jobs with employers who may not have even been aware of this program or who may have thought that employing a person with a disability was not cost-effective or would expose them to potential liabilities. We are dispelling these myths daily. We ask you, when you hear from employers having a hard time finding skilled employees, to encourage them to have a conversation with our skilled team in the bureau.

This publication showcases a few examples of our successes, but we celebrate many more each and every day—a testament to the hard work, skills and dedication of the bureau's staff. Learn more about the variety of services the bureau provides and visit its website at [www.maine.gov/rehab](http://www.maine.gov/rehab). Of particular interest, our short videos illustrate how BRS facilitates client connections with employers in need of a skilled and dependable workforce; you can easily share them on your social media pages to help your constituents learn about this vital program.

BRS has accomplished a great deal this year; yet there is far more to be done. We are taking every step possible to meet the demands for the bureau's independent living and employment services. If you have any questions, please reach out to the bureau's director, Karen Fraser, or me at any time.

Sincerely,

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

Jeanne Paquette  
Commissioner



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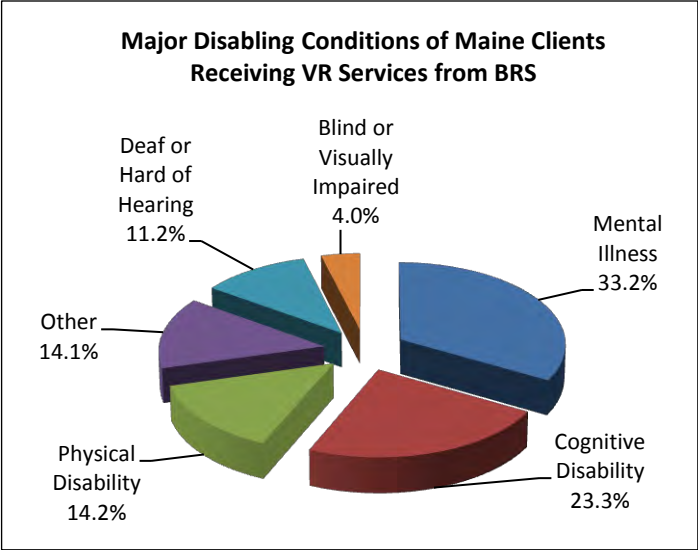
# Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Overview – 2016

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 156 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 by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014, establishes program eligibility and the scope of services provided through DVR and DBVI. Included are vocational counseling and 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 2016, **10,746** Mainers with disabilities received services from BRS; of those participants, **6,434** received services with a plan for employment. Counselors worked with clients who had an employment plan, on average, for 22.3 months. This year, **1,278** clients were successfully employed earning an average wage of \$398.56 per week.

BRS receives the majority of its funding from federal grants, some of which require matching state funds. The largest (*one administered by DVR and one administered by DBVI*) are from the Department of Education’s Title I grant program for vocational rehabilitation services.

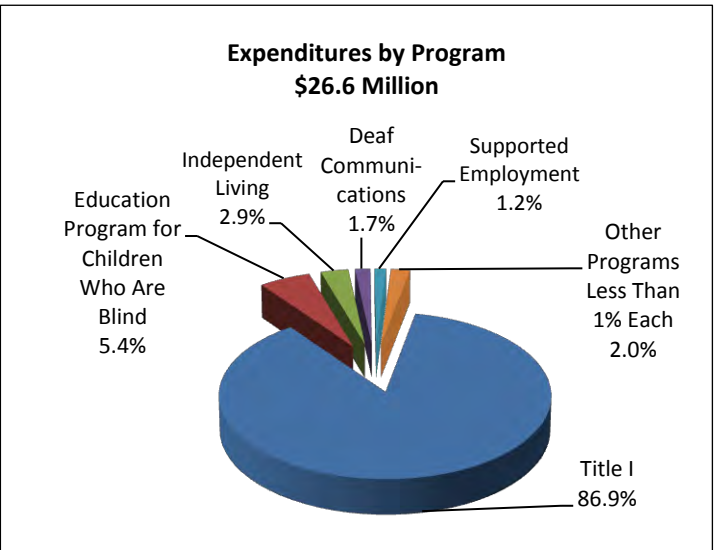
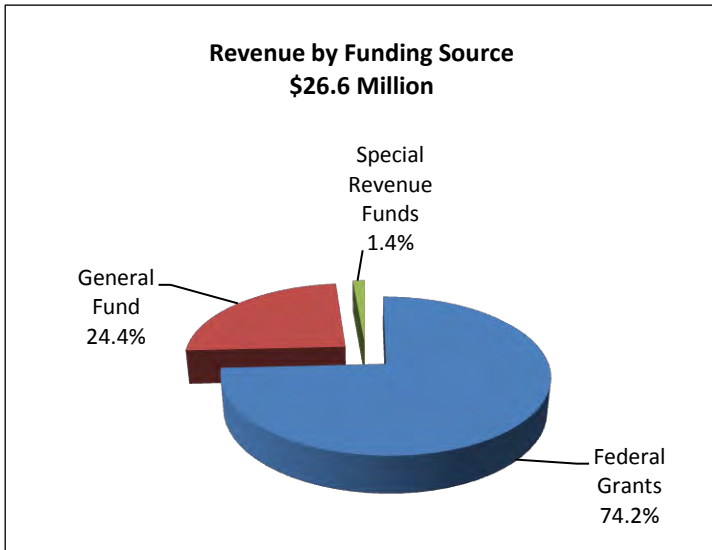


### Federal Grants

- Vocational Rehabilitation
- Independent Living
- Supported Employment
- Client Assistance

### Required General Fund Match

- 4:1 (21%)
- 9:1 (11%)
- None
- None



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...



*VR support, while in high school, helped pave the way for one young man with learning disabilities from southern Maine to find success as a flight instructor. He recently wrote his VR Counselor: "Thank you very much! I am so grateful and could not have gotten where I am today without the help from VR. I never thought I would have made it this far!" He was proud to share that he is making \$27 per hour and loves his work.*

*In Lewiston, a young woman served by VR wanted to be a CNA, but was not able to meet the entry requirements. VR supported her instead to take the PSS course, which she passed; she is now employed at a local residential care facility. With the new skills she has gained, she will be able to take the CNA course through her employer. She loves her job, makes \$10 per hour, and is excited about a career in health care.*



*The DBVI VR program assisted "Debbie" to enter self-employment as a licensed counselor. She was excited to begin this new chapter of her career—and even more pleased when her first year profit/loss statement was completed because she realized that she had netted \$30,000!*

*VR met "Bob" while he was still incarcerated and assisted him to complete an application for services. Following DVR's protocol, Bob was connected with his assigned VR Counselor before release. He had a number of barriers to employment, including homelessness, lack of a driver's license, acute dental issues, and anxiety. Bob was also limited in his employment options due to his criminal history. He participated in the Career Exploration Workshop, which confirmed his interest in the culinary field. The VR Counselor referred Bob to a Community Rehabilitation Provider who identified an opportunity for him with a local food production company. Bob was also eligible for services from Wabanaki Vocational Rehabilitation; his VR Counselor worked closely with Wabanaki to coordinate a plan of services with DVR funding job development and job maintenance while Wabanaki assisted Bob with transportation and linkage to community resources. He was initially hired full time at \$9 per hour. When his case was recently closed, Bob's pay was raised to \$9.75 per hour, and he was being recognized by his employer as having supervisory potential.*



# 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 maintaining a wait list for services, DVR assisted **1,166** people to find employment success in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2016. These individuals are now, as a result, earning a total of **\$25,811,864** 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          | Farmworker                 | Nursing aide                        |
| Automotive service technician   | Financial manager          | Office support worker               |
| Bookkeeper                      | First-Line Supervisor      | Operating engineer                  |
| Building cleaning worker        | Fitness trainer            | Personal and home care aide         |
| Bus driver                      | Food service worker        | Pharmacy technician                 |
| Cashier                         | Grounds maintenance worker | Police and sheriff’s patrol officer |
| Child care worker               | Healthcare support worker  | Receptionist                        |
| Chief executive                 | Helpers—production worker  | Registered nurse                    |
| Community health worker         | Janitor and cleaner        | Retail salesperson                  |
| Customer service representative | Laborer                    | Secondary school teacher            |
| Dishwasher                      | Maintenance worker         | Security Guard                      |
| Education administrator         | Manager                    | Special education teacher           |
| Elementary school teacher       | Medical records technician | Truck driver                        |
| Executive secretary             | Mental health counselor    | Welder                              |

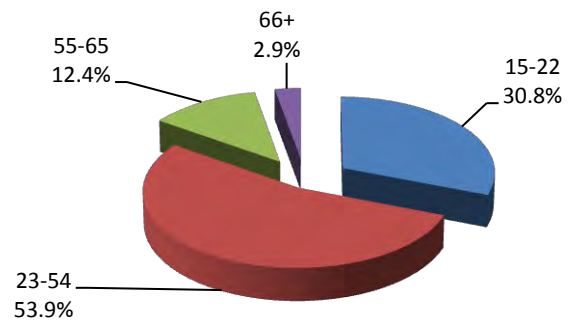
## Individuals Served in 2016

- 3,683** New applicants
- 6,025** Received services through employment plans
- 1,166** Individuals Placed in Employment

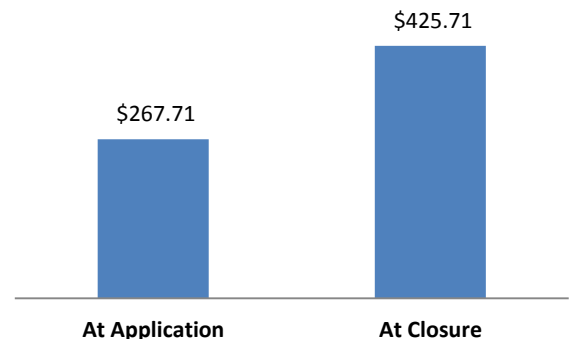
## Education Outcomes

- 1,008** Individuals increased their education level

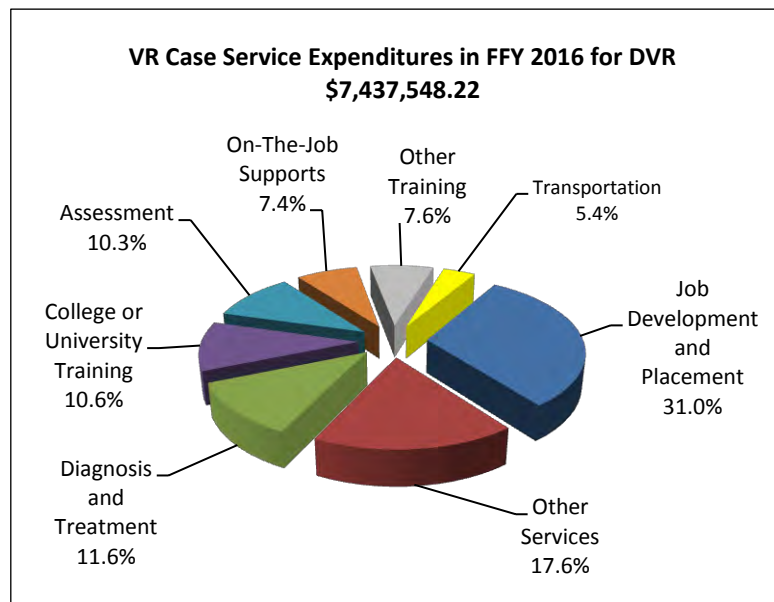
Age at Application



Average Change in Weekly Wages



VR Case Service Expenditures in FFY 2016 for DVR  
\$7,437,548.22



# DVR Initiatives and Innovations

**Division for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Late Deafened (DDHHL)** houses a director, assistant to the director, and four 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 Disability Rights Maine, Deaf Services to provide Telecommunications Equipment, Civil Rights and Advocacy services.

**Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)**, signed into law on July 22, 2014, reauthorized the federal Rehabilitation Act. WIOA is intended to integrate services with Maine's workforce development system and provide access to employment, education, and training—helping all job seekers find good-paying jobs and employers find skilled workers. Immediate changes took effect for the public rehabilitation programs, including the need to develop plans for employment within 90 days and increase employment services to in-school youth with disabilities. The goal of these Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) is to work with the schools and providers to ensure students have opportunities for work experiences and career planning while still in school, which, in turn, will better prepare them for work, training, or post-secondary education after high school.

**Career Exploration Workshop (CEW) Series**, developed by DVR and partners, introduces 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 our workforce.

**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.

*A long-time client who is Deaf has recently been successfully closed in employment. The client accessed Discovering Personal Genius™ career planning services through a MaineCare waiver and discovered a passion for working in the funeral industry. An assessment in a funeral home led to an offer of part-time employment that met the client's needs. Equally exciting, the client has quickly become an important member of the funeral home team and has impressed his employer with his passion and commitment!*



# Progressive Employment – A Business Relations Activity

“Progressive Employment” is a new DVR initiative to introduce employers in southern Maine to the next generation of workers and is proving to be beneficial. Launched one year ago, more than 125 VR youth clients are now actively engaged in Progressive Employment activities where they are matched to area employers through such activities as:

## Job Tours

Let youth see what your business is all about!

## Interviews

Offer a young job seeker an opportunity to practice interview skills; better yet, let them interview you to discover more about you and your business!

## Job Shadows

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

## 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.

## Participating Businesses

Market Basket, Sabre Yachts, Old Orchard Beach Ball Park, Two Farmers Farm, Extreme Clean, Goodwill, Petco, WMPG Radio, Maine Indoor Karting, Maine Barrel and Display, Camp Bow Wow, Shaw’s, MPBN, TJ Maxx, Gorham Bike and Ski, Maine Medical Surgical Center, Ace Hardware, Little Caesar’s, Oxford Salvage, Lowe’s, Walmart, Sugar and Spice Daycare, Clover Manor... and many more!

## Want to Learn More about Progressive Employment?

Listen to an archived interview with the Derek Volk Show on WLOB

<http://derekvolkshow.com/2016/07/23/progressive-employment>



## Youth Employment Services

### Darcy Brockman

Business Account Manager/Youth Employment Consultant  
Maine Department of Labor  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
151 Jetport Boulevard  
South Portland, ME 04102

**Tel:** (207) 822-3343

**Cell:** (207) 248-2248

**Fax:** (207) 822-0218

**E-mail:** [Darcy.Brockman@maine.gov](mailto:Darcy.Brockman@maine.gov)

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

*A high school student in York County, “Jeff” was interested in learning about work opportunities in his community. After referral to Progressive Employment, Jeff went on a couple of job tours before touring Market Basket grocery store. At Market Basket, Jeff received a tour from the manager and learned about the operations of each department in the store. After meeting Jeff, the manager was open to Jeff doing a paid work experience in the store. Jeff’s great demeanor with shoppers and his strong work ethic highlighted his strengths. As a result, Jeff was offered a part-time job while he completes high school! Market Basket considers him a great addition to the team!*

# 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 8 licensed managers who operate snack bars, cafeterias, and vending machines at 21 sites on state, federal, and municipal properties across Maine.

**Independent Living Services (IL)** provides training in adaptive skills and alternative techniques for accomplishing daily tasks that enable approximately 400 individuals who are older and blind to be more self-sufficient each year.

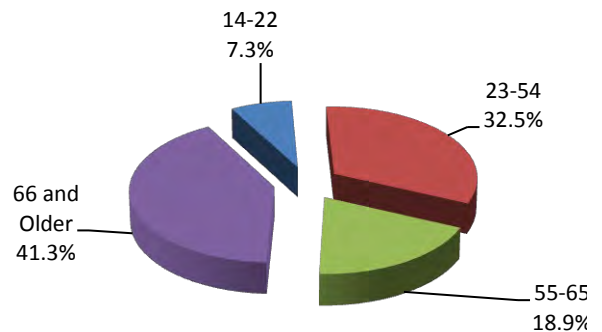
**Education Services for Children Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired** provides adaptive instruction services or consultation related to academics and independence to approximately 300 students annually in homes or local schools.

## VR Program

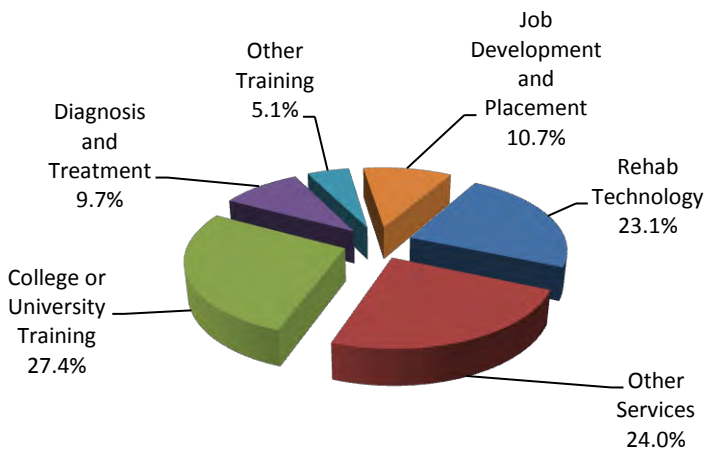
### Individuals Served in 2016

- 109** New applicants
- 396** Received Services through employment plans
- 112** Individuals placed in employment

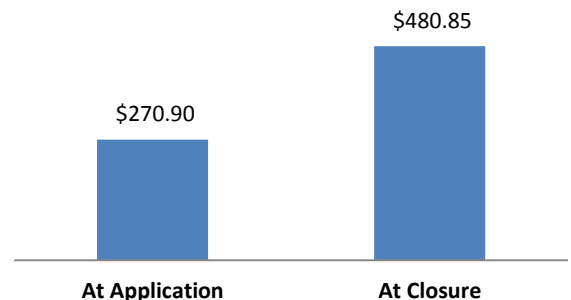
Age at VR Application



VR Case Service Expenditures in FFY 2016 for DBVI  
\$302,928.77



Average Change in Weekly Wages





# DBVI Initiatives and Innovations

**Maine's Business Enterprise Program (BEP)** operations have changed substantially since the program's beginning. BEP now operates four types of facilities: vending machines, snack bars, full-service cafés and Micro Markets. In addition, operations have grown due to legislative amendments, program initiatives, competition, and customer demand for the highest level of quality, service and cleanliness. Food service operations exist in federal, state, county, and municipal locations serving the Department of Defense, U.S. Postal Service, colleges, state parks, and federal and state government employees from Kittery to Limestone. The BEP, through its self-employed managers, currently provides employment for more than 40 individuals, many of them people with disabilities.



**LIFE 101 – (L: Learning, I: Independence, F: Fun, E: Employment)** is a two-week residential program immersing young adults in using their strengths, building relationships, and fostering independence. The program's focus offers "real life" situations that teenagers and adults face daily. Through instruction and social experiences, the students navigate various scenarios to increase confidence. Students have the opportunity to practice such daily living skills as planning, budgeting and preparing meals, and using various travel modes with the instruction of an Orientation and Mobility Instructor; they also begin the process of vocational development with Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. This program allows for socialization, increased self-awareness, and self-advocacy.

**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 they receive training in a variety of blindness-specific skills geared toward enhancing success while at college. The students are required to complete a number of community service projects during the program.



*"Beth" was new to both her vision loss and the job she loved when she came to DBVI this past fall. Only a couple months after being hired at a bank, she had suddenly lost her vision. Desperate to return to work and regain some "normalcy" in her life, Beth worked closely with her DBVI rehabilitation team and her employer's human resource department. Beth was able to regain independence both at home and at work. During the process, she learned how much her employer and co-workers valued her work. She has returned to full-time employment—making nearly \$15 an hour. Beth wrote DBVI: "I appreciate all of the help from you and your department. I can't thank you enough for providing me with the support I needed to get back to work. . .I'm lucky to have had assistance to get me back on my feet. Thank you!"*

# Office of the State Accessibility and Independent Living Coordinator

## State Accessibility Highlights

The Accessibility Coordinator leads the State's compliance under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504. Executive branch departments must follow policies that apply to state services (including contracted services), facilities, web design, communication, and employment. The State Accessibility Coordinator works with departments to resolve any disability-based discrimination complaints.

- Through the Information Technology Accessibility Committee (ITAC), advisory to the Office of Information Technology (OIT), initiated technology services with Mainely Access, Inc., to provide evaluations and equipment recommendations for accommodation of state employees.
- As part of the Maine Trails Advisory Committee, which advises the Department of Agriculture, Conservation, and Forestry, reviewed local proposals for Recreational Trails Program funds.
- Continued to respond to questions about service animals and the rights of their handlers in public accommodations and housing. Pursuant to several Legislative actions, produced the *"Report of the Task Force to Ensure Integrity in the Use of Service Animals,"* which clarified the definitions in Maine law, created a packet of informational materials, and recommended increased public education.



## Independent Living Highlights

The State Independent Living (IL) Coordinator monitors the contracts with Alpha One, Maine's Center for Independent Living, for the delivery of IL services to individuals who have disabilities and with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), which plans and advocates for improved community opportunities for IL. The Coordinator also chairs the mPower Loan Board, also known as the Adaptive Equipment Loan Program.

- As a Chair of the mPower Loan Board, worked with the Finance Authority of Maine and State Treasurer to transition the flexible loan program to a new financial service provider.
- Worked with the Travel Voucher Work Group to recommend to the Legislature a pilot project for Maine to create "purchase of service" transportation programs in rural areas.
- Provided Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) oversight of Pre-Employment Transition Services in several schools in southern Maine delivered through the Alpha One IL Services Program contract. Peer mentors worked with high school students who are potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services to develop job readiness skills.



*A Pre-Employment Transition Services student provided feedback: "You showing us how to do the inventory was very helpful; thanks for not just writing, but showing us."*

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](mailto: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](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>



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## 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