

Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS)

# Executive Director FY'26- Quarter Two Report

A brief overview of DVRS operations, performance and progress.

## **From the Director**

Welcome to the SRC Executive Director's Second Quarter Report, where we delve into the dynamic landscape of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVRS) daily operations, performance, and progress over the past fiscal year. Our commitment to strengthening operational oversight has been unwavering, and we are proud to report significant strides in several key areas.

Firstly, our focus on improved reporting mechanisms has enhanced transparency and accountability, enabling more informed decision-making processes across all levels of our organization. This has been a cornerstone in driving stronger performance, allowing us to develop a Rehabilitation/Successful Outcomes Strategy with specific factors to improving our rehabilitation goals.

Additionally, through strategic foresight, we are working on developing innovative ways to improve service delivery that will contribute to our ability to meet the evolving needs of our consumers while focusing on growth and sustainability.

Our progress is a testament to the dedication of our team and our partners, who continue to push the boundaries of what we can achieve together. As we move forward, we remain committed to building on this momentum, fostering an environment of continuous improvement, and delivering tangible results that empower individuals with disabilities that are vital to strengthening our communities.

Thank you for your continued support and collaboration in our journey towards excellence.

*Felicia Hopson*  
Dr. Felicia Hopson  
Executive Director

## **Division of Vocational Rehabilitation- Executive Directors Report**

**FY'26-Qtr. 2- January 1, 2026 - March 31, 2026**

### **Quarterly Updates**

All DVRS teams/units continue to deliver consistent results managing multiple programs and projects while remaining committed to deliver quality service to our consumers. The teams continue to work on improving key performance indicators across various initiatives, demonstrating their ability to adapt and thrive in a dynamic environment. Their dedication to continuous improvement has also led to the implementation of innovative strategies that enhance consumer satisfaction. Moving forward, we remain focused on fostering collaboration and leveraging best practices to maintain our high standards of service delivery.

### **Community Rehabilitation Programs Unit (CRPU)**

- CRP Unit Spring 2026 Trainings completed.
  - February 26, 2026 - Supported Employment & Long-Term Follow-Along
  - March 4, 2026 - Extended Employment Hybrid Training
  - March 11, 2026 - Trial Work Experience
  - March 18, 2026 - Community Based Work Evaluation
  - March 25, 2026 - Career Pathway Evaluation (pilot) - specific to 3 field offices (Cherry Hill/Camden County, Elizabeth/Union County, New Brunswick/Middlesex County) and 3 providers (SJOG, JVS, Project Hire)
  - April 29, 2026 - Open Provider Forum
  - Additional Trainings, at providers requests, will be scheduled.
- Long-Term Follow-Along SFY 2027 Contract Preparation- 58 Applications Open in SAGE with 6 current and 1 new provider to LTFA moving into IGX
- CIE Evaluations Process is underway. Some evaluations are completed. Evaluations are reviewed on CIE Evaluation Pipeline Inventory.
- Supported Employment and Specialized Services Manual – is currently being revised.

### **Quality Assurance Unit**

- **Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)**-The process for CIE Evaluations has been revamped, and a new infrastructure has been developed. The new CIE Evaluation process is being managed by Chief Tina Brand.

- **Recent CIE Evaluations:**

- **Fedcap – Janitor;** Peter Rodino Federal Building, Newark- Final Determination- Approved as CIE
- **Hudson Community Enterprises (HCE) – Truck Mobile Shredding Assistant;** Jersey City -Final Determination- Approved as CIE
- **OTC Services – Recycling Center Associate;** Westampton -Final Determination- Approved as CIE
- **HCE – Janitorial** – Several positions/locations- Final Determination- In Process
- **Helene’s Thrifts & Gifts – Sales Associate, Clothing Attendant, Donation Attendant;** Madison- Final Determination- In Process
- **Inroads – Janitorial;** Livingston Senior/Community Center, Livingston-Final Determination- Not Approved as Not CIE

### **Contract Unit**

- The Contract Unit has begun preparing contracts for State Fiscal Year 2027.
- **SFY 2027 Long-Term Follow-Along (LTFA) Contracts-** Provider applications for the SFY 2027 LTFA program are currently being finalized and submitted. Applications were due April 30, 2026. A total of 58 contracts will be issued for this program—51 will be managed in SAGE and 7 in IGX. Historically, all LTFA contracts were managed in SAGE; however, we have initiated a transition to IGX, with seven providers participating in the pilot phase
- **SFY 2027 Extended Employment Contracts-** Contracts for the Extended Employment program are in the final stages of preparation. They will be sent to providers for review and signature within the next few weeks. This program will include 27 contracts
- **SFY 2027 Innovation and Expansion / Employment First Contracts-** Applications for this program will open to providers on May 1, 2026, with a submission deadline of May 15, 2026. Four contracts will be awarded for SFY 2027, all of which will be managed in IGX
- **The Programs Unit and the Contract Unit have also begun developing a Notice of Contract Opportunity (NCO) for the Pre-ETS Paid Internship program.** We are currently in the final contract year of the existing award and will be releasing a new competitive opportunity for the 2027 Fiscal Year. This contract will follow the Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) cycle, and we anticipate awarding 25 contracts
- Preparations for the remaining FFY 2027 contracts will begin in June.

## Programs Unit

### **Mental Health and Substance Use**

- DVRS has established a valuable partnership with **Oaks Integrated Care** to deliver psychiatric examinations and substance use disorder evaluations in Burlington and Mercer Counties. This created a reliable referral pathway for comprehensive behavioral health assessments, directly supporting improved vocational outcomes for the individuals we serve.
- DVRS has approved **ARS of Rio Grande LLC** to provide substance use disorder evaluations, psychotherapy, and psychotropic medication monitoring in Cape May County. Their Cape May location strategically strengthens our service network, ensuring clients in this region have improved access to the specialized behavioral health resources that support their recovery and employment goals.

### **Centers for Independent Living (CILs)**

- During Quarter 2, our five Part B Centers for Independent Living (CILs) demonstrated a consistent and growing presence across DVRS field offices statewide. This included active participation in provider drop-in events and a formal presentation at the statewide Workforce Development Leadership Meeting, which brought together local county Workforce Development Board (WDB) directors, Employment Services leadership, WIOA representatives, and state executive leadership. This milestone reflects a significant advancement in expanding the visibility, message, and strategic vision of the CIL network.
- Assistive Technology Advocacy Center (ATAC) continued to expand its outreach efforts by increasing the volume of presentations focused on assistive technology. ATAC delivered multiple information sessions statewide, including engagements at colleges, conferences, and community fairs, further strengthening awareness and access to assistive technology resources.

### **Project Search**

- Statewide tour of Project SEARCH sites continues with visits to Community Medical Center in Tom's River, Hudson County Community College North Campus in Union City, Novo Nordisk in Plainsboro, Holy Name Medical Center in Teaneck, and Virtua Mount Holly in Mount Holly. The purpose of the site visits is to develop a deeper relationship with each of the sites, a stronger understanding of the culture of each site, and to increase employment placements once the interns graduate the program. The site visits have garnered a lot of great information from each site on various topics from classroom instruction to externship placements and job development, and this information is being shared with each of the sites to continue to improve program delivery. To date 9 of the 17 programs

have had site visits with two additional sites scheduled for this school year. The final 8 sites will be scheduled for the 2026-2027 school year.

### **Field Updates**

#### **New Jersey DVRS Business Outreach Team (BOT) Accomplishments (January-April 2026)**

The Business Outreach Team maintains a presence throughout New Jersey. We develop relationships with employers and all offices to understand their needs and increase job opportunities for NJDVRS job seekers.

*The following activities, events, and employer engagements took place during the period described above.*

#### **Presentations:**

- Hosted information session with Carrier Clinic.
- Greater Raritan- Lunch and Learn with Disability Etiquette for Employers. participating in the recruitment event for 55 and over job seekers.
- Greater Raritan- Lunch and Learn with Disability Etiquette for Employers. participating in the recruitment event for job seekers with disabilities.
- Staff presentations for OJT and Paid Internships.

#### **Partner Meetings Attended:**

- Region 3 NET Quarterly Point of contact meeting.
- Monthly DEAM planning committee meetings.
- Monthly I&E grant meetings.
- Quarterly WDB meetings.
- Quarterly Disabilities committee meetings.
- Monthly Project Search Steering Committee meetings- Bergen, Hudson, Union.
- Manufacturing Alliance of Gloucester County

#### **Employment Events:**

- Greater Raritan- Inclusive job fair for individuals with disabilities.
- Greater Raritan job fair- focusing on job seekers 55 and over.

- Targeted Hiring Event for Individuals with Disabilities and Service-Connected Veterans – Camden County College, April 29<sup>th</sup> [SEE PHOTOS BELOW]

**Job Placements/On-The-Job Training (OJT):**

- United Sanitizing- 5 consumers placed: 2 administrative assistants, 3 Janitorial Porter Tech. 2 of the janitorial porter techs were OJT contracts.
- Fastest Labs- Outside Sales Representative- OJT contract.
- City of Rahway-Department of Public Works-OJT contract.
- InspiriTec - Multiple placements as Customer Service Reps under OJT contracts.

**Business Planning / Self-Employment Goals:**

- 2 business plans currently being reviewed.

**Adult Paid Internship / New Vendors:**

- Family Resource Network-BOT met to discuss onboarding of interns.
- GoodTemps - BOT met to discuss onboarding of interns.

**Apprenticeship Assistance:**

- Assist consumers with questions regarding Apprenticeships.

**Training Opportunities/Conferences:**

- **CSAVR National Conference, Washington, D.C.**

**Vocational Rehabilitation, Potentially Eligible, and Paid Internships Data**

DVRS quarter two (2) rehabilitation/successful outcomes were 651. The FY'26 rehabilitation/successful outcomes goal is 1925. We have implemented a Rehabilitation/Successful Outcomes Strategy that will be monitored weekly and will require regional check-in meetings to identify and discuss strengths, opportunities, weaknesses and threats. **We are currently at 63% of our FY'26 Rehabilitation Goal with 1,207 rehabs as of April 30<sup>th</sup>.** Each week, we conduct a detailed review of a different office to assess their specific challenges and successes. This approach allows us to track trends and resolutions across the organization, ensuring that best practices are shared and implemented. By analyzing these trends, we can make informed decisions to optimize our strategies and improve overall outcomes.

**Table 1**

**Note:** The VR data displayed below is FY'26 Q2.

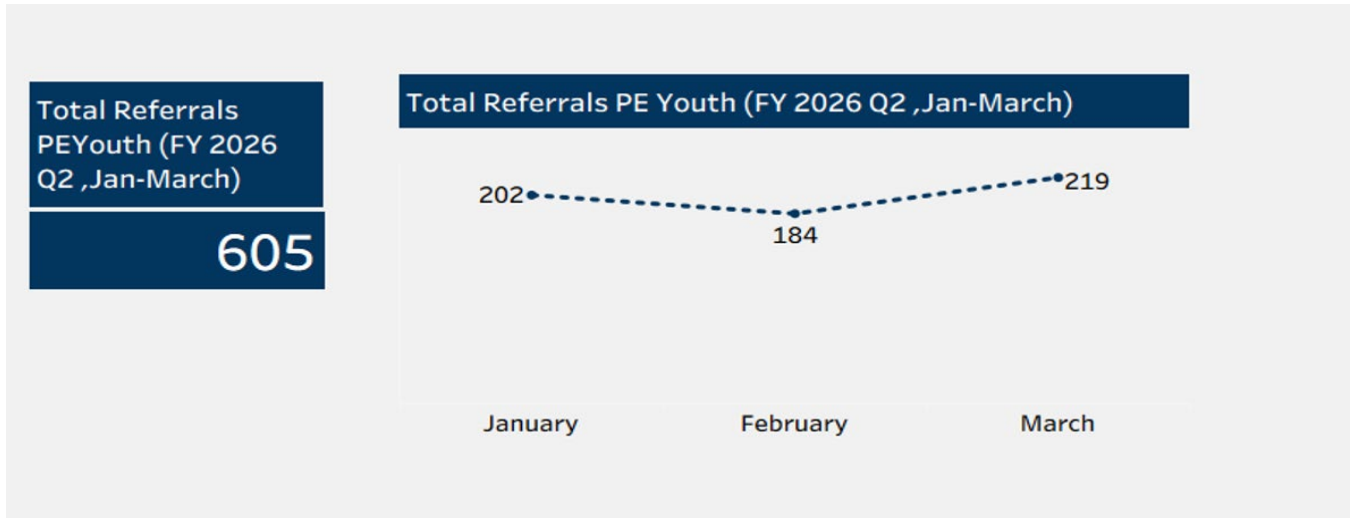
Status	Q2 FFY 2026
Referrals	4,418
Application	2,197
Eligibles	1,879
Service Plans	1,581
Employed	316
Closed (Exits)	2,010
Successful Rehab (Positive Employment Outcome)	651

The status journey demonstrates varying levels of effectiveness across four key stages: 50% of referrals progress to applications, 86% of applications result in eligibility determinations, 84% of eligible participants develop rehabilitation plans, and 41% of those with plans achieve successful outcomes. Through weekly performance tracking, the team can promptly detect operational inefficiencies and deploy timely corrective measures. This regular analysis has identified two urgent priority areas: first, half of all referrals fail to complete the application process, pointing to significant obstacles in early participant engagement; second, fewer than half of participants with established rehabilitation plans reach successful completion, signaling substantial difficulties in sustained participation and goal achievement.

**Chart 1**

**Note:** The PE data displayed below is FY'26 Q2

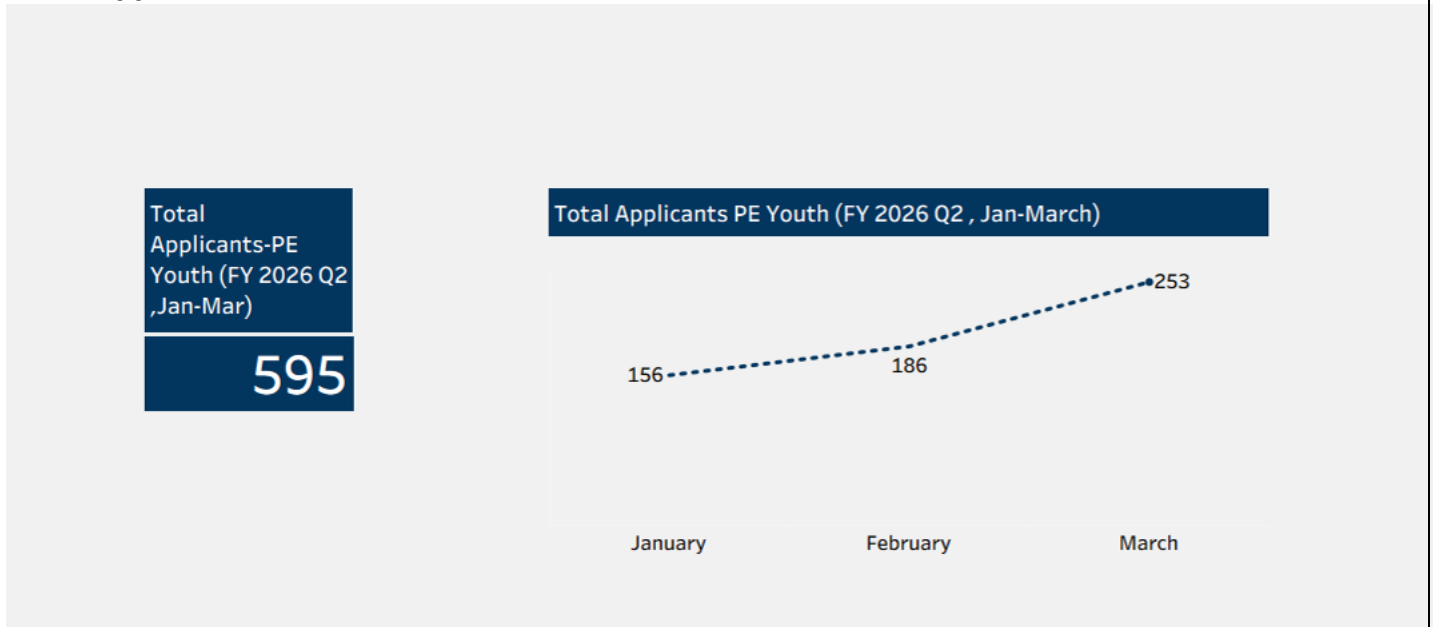
**Youth Referrals**



**Chart 2**

*Note: The PE data displayed below is FY'26 Q2*

**Youth Applications**



During the second quarter of fiscal year 2026 (January through March), the potentially eligible population achieved an exceptional referral to **application conversion rate of 98.35%**, with 595 applications generated from 605 referrals. This near-perfect conversion rate represents a significant improvement over previous periods and demonstrates highly effective initial engagement strategies with young participants. The minimal attrition of only 10 individuals between referral and application suggests that the team continues to successfully work to eliminate barriers in the intake process, with focus on accessibility assistance, strong relationships with referral sources who thoroughly prepare youth before making referrals. This outstanding performance indicates that the youth-focused outreach and enrollment protocols are

functioning optimally, ensuring that nearly all interested young people complete the critical first step toward rehabilitation services. The high volume of **605 referrals** combined with the exceptional conversion rate also reflects strong community awareness and trust in the program among youth-serving organizations. These results establish a best-practice benchmark that could be analyzed and potentially replicated in other demographic segments where conversion rates remain lower.

### **Monitoring, Assessment and Planning**

- FFY2024 Final Monitoring Report Update- Corrective Action Plan (CAP) Response has been submitted to RSA for 9 findings. We have received feedback from RSA. We submitted our most recent updates to RSA on April 27, 2026.
- VR-TAC-QM- Technical Assistance- Technical assistance is being scheduled.
- DVRS Policy and Procedure Development is underway. We have a dedicated team member that is working on the policy, and we have begun with the Case Services Manual. We have established an Internal Policy Review Committee to provide feedback on all new policy updates. Our goals and objectives remain focused on improving overall efficiency and effectiveness.

### **Staffing Update**

The staffing update represents the timeframe Feb 19, 2026 through May 1, 2026

Current Approved Positions, in process of hiring:

Field Staff:

- Assistant Director, Field Operations
- 1 Supervising VRC Field Position
- 10 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors 1 (VRC)
- 1 VRC-1 bilingual variant
- 2 VRC-1 DLS variants
- 6 DEO 3 Promotions
- 1 DEO 1 Position
- 7 Clerk Positions

Administrative Office:

- Assistant Director of Quality Control, Performance Management, and Strategic Improvement

- Admin Analyst 3, Info Systems
- Admin Analyst 2, Info Systems

**New Employees Hired or Promoted: (\*\*February 1, 2026 through March 31, 2026\*\*)**

- 2 VRC-1 Bilingual Variant Positions
- 3 Senior Clerk Promotions
- 1 Clerk Position
- 1 DEO-1 Position
- 1 Management Assistant Promotion

**Selected Thank you Notes (Kudos) to DVRS**

**Anya Markscheid, Rutgers Intern- Trenton Local DVRS Office**

Yigal,

I just wanted to let you know that I really enjoy and look forward to speaking with Anya. Anya is very smart, a

great listener, non-judgmental and insightful. I feel very fortunate to have met Anya.

Please pass on my thanks and appreciation to Anya.

Regards,

-Consumer

**Barbara Myerovich, VRC 2 and Kathryn Staudenmayer, Supervising Counselor- Cherry Hill DVRS Office**

Initially, I was job searching and came across Division Of Rehabilitation on my phone. I left a message asking about your agency. And this was the beginning of my meeting Kathryn Staudenmayer Supervising Vocational Counselor. At her orientation meeting, I found her to be very knowledgeable, professional, and helpful. After speaking with Mrs. Kathryn Staudenmayer, She knew exactly which counselor to place me with. The keyword here is “she Listened to me”, and this is one of the reasons Kathryn Staudenmayer Is excellent in her field, besides answering all the questions presented to her that day. She set up my initial meeting with Barbara Myerovich MA NCC LPC (PA), Who is also another extremely knowledgeable, professional, and upbeat employee who goes above and beyond. Barbara Myerovich has introduced me to a wealth of knowledge re-entering the workforce with my disabilities which are hearing and fatigue. Barbara has gone above and beyond in her work to coach me and revamp my résumé to stellar read. Both Kathryn Staudenmayer and Barbara Myerovich are exceptional women in their field. They care and they use their knowledge and go above and beyond in their care. Their workload is not for the faint of

heart. Kathryn Staudenmayer and Barbara Myerovich very much deserve the highest reward. -

**Consumer**

**Martha Christaldi, VRC 1- Union County DVRS Office**

Martha Christaldi, VRC1, provided a presentation this afternoon at Josephine's Place in Elizabeth. She reports the staff are deeply dedicated to assisting participants in their journey towards discovering their purpose and achieving meaningful employment. Referrals will be sent directly to Elizabeth office.

Thank you Martha for connecting with our community! -**Valerie Kerrigan, Manager**

**Nicole Latourette, Rehab Aide and Katie Czajkowski, Supervising Counselor – Bridgeton DVRS Office**

Hello Ms. Katie and Ms. Nicole it's Brandon Walker. I apologize for not staying in contact well enough. I think the last time I called DVR was in January via telephone. I just wanted to get in touch with you both and let you know I'm still active at the driving school. I have one more test to pass at the DMV. Then they can put me on the road to get my time and send me to take the state test in the truck. I completed 48 federal tests in the classroom on my laptop. I passed general knowledge and air brakes at the DMV. And I still need to pass the combination test at the DMV and I'll be good to go to take the state driving test. I appreciate you both for your help and cooperation. I'll do better keep you both informed on my journey to completion.

**Thank you both for your assistance and help. -Consumer**

**Jennifer Shaw-Knab Latourette, VRC 2 – Sewell DVRS Office**

I want to send a shoutout to Jenn Shaw-Knab for being recognized during the Gloucester County Special Education Specialist meeting! A staff member went out of their way to highlight Jenn's outstanding work and dedication, noting that she meets with every junior and senior at both the beginning and end of the school year. This level of commitment and consistency makes a real difference for students. Great job, Jenn—keep up the excellent work! –

**Renee Caratozzolo, PPDS**

**Sanjana Singh VRC 2- Jersey City DVRS Office**

Ms. Sanjana, You always know how to make me smile! Thank you for your kind words, your great energy ALWAYS, your kindness, friendship and offer to support. That what makes you such a wonderful person to know and work with in the community!! Thank you for being who you are with me, and all who come across your path! I appreciate your support and collaboration along with the whole DVRS Team. See you in Fall for our dining experience, but HOPEFULLY way before!

**-Provider**

**Jerome Lissmann, VRC 1/Bilingual and Elizabeth Sarmiento, VRC 1/Bilingual - Paterson DVRS Office**

It was a pleasure meeting you both, Jerome Lissmann and Elizabeth Sarmiento VRC1 Bilinguals in the Paterson DVRS office. I'm so glad to hear that you enjoyed the college (Passaic County Technical Institute) & career fair and had a positive experience with our students. We really value your partnership, as it helps our students explore different career paths and discover opportunities they may not have considered before. Your time with them truly makes a difference. Thank you again for your support.

**-Sincerely, Provider**

**Aaron Samuels, Contracts/Programs Manager- Central DVRS Office**

Good afternoon Aaron, Thank you for your encouraging update. It's great to see the progress and continued strengthening of the partnership between DVRS and the CILs. We appreciate the recognition and look forward to continuing and advancing this work together, particularly around expanding opportunities and visibility for our services. You are a pleasure to work with and I truly appreciate your guidance and support. Have a great weekend.

**Executive Director, CIL**