

State Rehabilitation Council: DVRS Directors Report

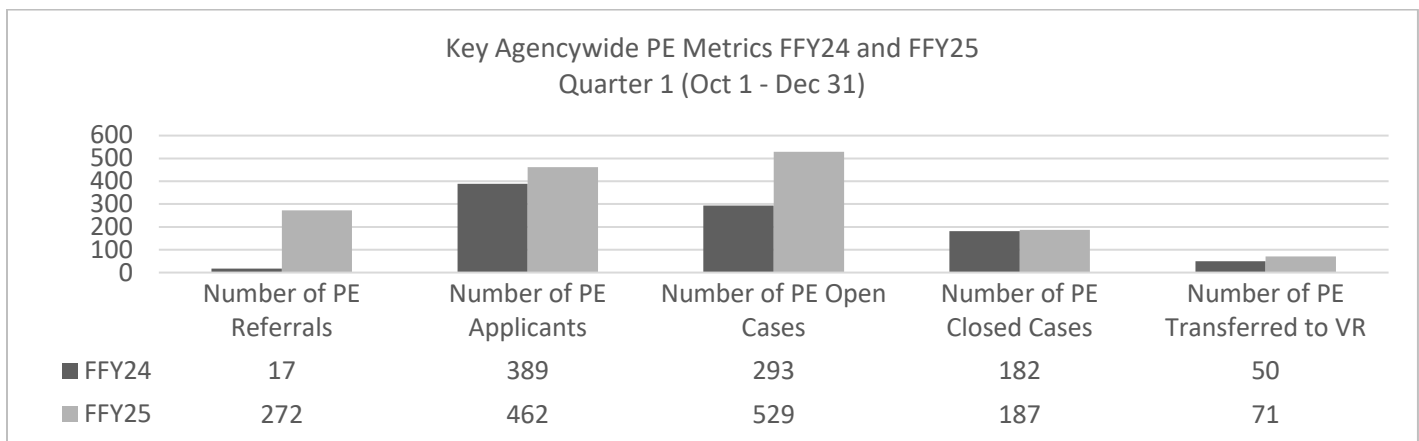
Qtr. 1 10/1/2024 – 12/31/2024

Transition services and collaboration efforts with DDD:

- DDD and DVRS met with the State Employment Leadership Network technical assistance team to identify strategies to promote interagency collaboration. After the initial focus on workflow mapping, DVRS and DDD leadership agreed to assess inefficiencies and work iteratively to propose improvements for each step of the workflow. Next steps will include standardizing the procedures for sharing update information for shared consumers and implementing a structured liaisons approach to improve communication at the local level.
- DVRS and DDD partnered with the NJDOL Division of Workforce Development to apply for a National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) grant offered by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP). The grant was awarded in December. The Project Manager has been meeting with the NEON liaisons and will participate in the grantee meeting later this month. A kick off meeting will be schedule for this current quarter. The focus categories include strategic planning, benefits counseling and youth services.
- Over the past three years DVRS staff participated in a transformational leadership training that resulted in earning the distinction of *Certified Rehabilitation Leader*. Two separate cohorts engaged in a 9-month training. Many activities have come to fruition as a part of that which include the all-agency staff meeting, the Bright ideas to enable all agency to voice their ideas and the field site visits. This quarter, the CRL team was invited to present in the Innovation-Inspiration Expo offered by the Vocational Rehabilitation Center for Quality Employment, a national technical assistance center. The group will showcase its efforts to work with the whole agency to bring about transformation and update the mission, vision, and values of the agency.
- Rapid engagement update
 - *Timely Case Movement and Service Provision:* New Jersey DVRS continues to excel in timely processing of participants' DVRS cases. During FFY25 Q1., 95% of cases statewide were processed from Application to Eligibility Status and 96% from Eligibility to Service Status within Federal Guidelines of 60 and 90 days, respectively.
 - *Rapid Engagement:* To improve and maximize engagement and retention of participants throughout the process, DVRS is focused on "Rapid Engagement." As measured by case processing from Application to Eligibility Status within 30 days and from Eligibility to Service Status within 45 days, the Agency has achieved statewide rapid engagement rates of 54% and 57%, respectively, during the same timeframe.

Pre-ETS Data

Statewide PE Data Quarter 1.



Local Office PE Data Quarter 1.

Number of PE Referrals Quarter 1.		
Name of Office	FFY24	FFY25
Bridgeton	0	23
Cherry Hill	2	8
Elizabeth	1	10
Hackensack	3	56
Jersey City	2	15
Neptune	0	14
New Brunswick	0	17
Newark	0	50
Paterson	2	8
Phillipsburg	0	3
Pleasantville	1	0
Randolph	0	13
Rio Grande	0	0
Sewell	0	3
Somerville	0	11
Toms River	3	8
Trenton	3	32
Westampton	0	1
Total	17	272

Number of PE Applicants Quarter 1.		
Name of Office	FFY24	FFY25
Bridgeton	33	15
Cherry Hill	43	38
Elizabeth	21	4
Hackensack	37	22
Jersey City	42	58
Neptune	11	1
New Brunswick	5	11
Newark	63	168
Paterson	1	8
Phillipsburg	15	36
Pleasantville	0	0
Randolph	11	15
Rio Grande	0	0
Sewell	17	11
Somerville	15	24
Toms River	35	24
Trenton	16	3
Westampton	24	24
Total	389	462

Number of PE Open Cases Quarter 1.		
Name of Office	FFY24	FFY25
Bridgeton	19	14
Cherry Hill	27	43
Elizabeth	10	6
Hackensack	28	26
Jersey City	22	82
Neptune	35	56
New Brunswick	3	10
Newark	36	125
Paterson	3	8
Phillipsburg	12	42
Pleasantville	5	0
Randolph	8	15
Rio Grande	0	0
Sewell	8	7
Somerville	8	28
Toms River	24	18
Trenton	29	25
Westampton	16	24
Total	293	529

Number of PE Closed Cases Quarter 1.		
Name of Office	FFY24	FFY25
Bridgeton	4	1
Cherry Hill	8	27
Elizabeth	1	0
Hackensack	10	20
Jersey City	12	7
Neptune	19	14
New Brunswick	37	16
Newark	30	14
Paterson	0	12
Phillipsburg	3	3
Pleasantville	2	2
Randolph	0	5
Rio Grande	0	0
Sewell	2	3
Somerville	16	6
Toms River	25	45
Trenton	2	7
Westampton	11	5
Total	182	187

Number of PE Transferred to VR Quarter 1.		
Name of Office	FFY24	FFY25
Bridgeton	2	1
Cherry Hill	2	8
Elizabeth	1	0
Hackensack	3	6
Jersey City	7	0
Neptune	4	4
New Brunswick	10	7
Newark	4	13
Paterson	0	0
Phillipsburg	3	3
Pleasantville	0	2
Randolph	0	4
Rio Grande	0	0
Sewell	1	3
Somerville	3	3
Toms River	6	11
Trenton	1	5
Westampton	3	1
Total	50	71

Customized Employment Training

- The customized employment training was approved during the SRC meeting on September 18, 2024. During this quarter, DVRS met with the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), formally submitted the request and received final approval. DVRS will work with the procurement and fiscal teams to determine next steps.

Monitoring, Assessment and Planning

- Monitoring – RSA conducted a monitoring site visit for DVRS in January 2024. During this reporting quarter we participated in check-in meetings with RSA. The RSA draft monitoring report was received December 20, 2024. We were given 15 working days to respond to the findings and to provide feedback for the draft. We reviewed and submit response and are awaiting a final report. Once the final report is received we will be able to submit a corrective action plan, which will be followed by corrective action quarterly reporting and the strategic plan process. DVRS has been working to address concerns that were raised in the monitoring visit throughout the last year. This work will be reflected in the quarterly reports that follow the corrective action plan.
- After completing the visits for each field office in the prior quarter, DVRS leadership implemented the administrative unit office visits in this quarter. The visits focused on the community rehabilitation programs unit, programs unit, contract administration and MIS. All visits will inform and support ongoing strategic planning.

Quality Assurance Unit Development, Next Steps and General Updates

The Quality Assurance (QA) Unit welcomed two new staff members recently. Max Korten in November 2024 (Analyst Trainee) and Rachel Pucci in January 2025 (Program Planning & Development Specialist). A back-fill position of Program Specialist I has been posted, and the unit has been working to determine further staffing needs for the QA Unit including Analysts and Program Planning and Development Specialists. The QA Unit continues to work on the following projects:

- Consumer Satisfaction Surveys (efficiencies, reporting, and increasing response rates)
- Providing more analysis and efficiencies with standardized field reports to make them more impactful and useful
- Developing an enhanced case review process for the agency
- Coordination of required agency trainings with VRTAC-QM (e.g. WIOA, Internal Controls, Data Validation)
- Revamping training and supports to improve reporting (e.g. measurable skills gains and credential attainment)

Staffing Update

Current Approved Positions, in process of hiring:

Field Staff:

- 12 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors 1 (VRC) (many are filled, awaiting processing)
- 6 VRC-1 bilingual variants, 2 VRC-1 DLS variant
- 5 VRC-2 Positions for Promotions from VRC-1 (most were filled or in process)
- 3 Supervising VRC, Cherry Hill, Randolph and Phillipsburg offices
- 2 Data Entry Operator 1 (pending freeze approval)
- 5 Clerks, 1 Sr. Clerk, 3 Principal Clerks, 5 Head Clerks
- 21 Rehabilitation Aides
- 10 DEO 3 promotions (pending freeze approval)

Administrative Office:

- Director
- 2 Program, Planning and Development Specialists
- 1 Senior Technician, Information Systems
- 1 Program Specialist 1 Position

New Employees Hired or Promoted: (**November 4, 2024 through January 1, 2025**)

- 4 Data Entry Operator 1 positions
- 2 VRC-1 positions
- 3 Clerks
- 2 Administrative Analyst Trainees
- 5 VRC-2 promotions
- 1 Manager 1 promotion
- 1 Rehabilitation Aide

Selected Outreach Efforts: DVRS offices participated in job fairs, training and outreach statewide. Please see the list below to see examples of outreach activities in Quarter 1.

- Overdose Awareness Day at the ARS Treatment Center in Mays Landing, NJ.
- DVRS proudly participated in the Justice Impacted Job Fair and Resource Fair at Rowan College of South Jersey. This event provided an opportunity to connect with the community and offer resources.
- National Deaf Center (NDC) Engage for Change NJ State Team coordinated the first in-person Pre ETS-self-advocacy day at the Marie Katzenbach School for the Deaf in West Trenton, NJ.
- DVRS attended the Mega Job Fair and Resource Event in Gloucester County, with numerous consumers and providers in attendance.
- The Richard West Assistive Technology Advocacy Center welcomed DVRS and the New Jersey Assistive Technology community to the 8th Annual Assistive Technology and Community Summit at Mercer Community College in West Windsor, NJ. Over 125 people attended.
- DVRS participated in the 3rd Annual Disability and Caregiver Resource Fall Festival in Salem County.
- DVRS participated in the First Lady Festival located in Vineland, NJ.
- DVRS hosted an information table at the Fresenius Kidney Care Dialysis Center in Englewood, NJ. We connected with many of the dialysis patients and shared DVRS information.
- DVRS hosted a Disability Employment Awareness Month event at Central Office. The event was well attended and APL Associates received a Certificate of Recognition from the DVRS CRP unit
- DVRS participated in the Disability Connections: Information & Resource Fair at Middlesex County College
- DVRS hosted a table at the Bergen County Job Fair at Bergen Community College where 122 employers were registered and well over 2,200 job seekers were in attendance.
- Sewell DVR office held their 15th Annual Bob Knab Inspiration Award event.
- DVRS staff attended the Garden State Education and Training Association (GSETA) Conference in Atlantic City.
- DVRS participated in the Mercer County Job Fair – 553 job seekers in attendance
- DVRS participated in the Hudson County's 2024 DEAM Job Fair at the North Bergen Library, in North Bergen, NJ
- DVRS participated in a DEAM hiring event with 330 attendees and 100 recruiters and vendor personnel
- DVRS shared information at the 3rd Annual Community Night – Community Charter School – Jersey City, NJ
- DVRS attended the NDEAM event at Goodwill. Goodwill presented employers and consumers with awards of excellence. Goodwill honored several employers and consumers who participated in various programs.

A Selected Thank You Note – Quarter 1.

Just wanted to send a short message to let you know how grateful I am for your assistance, encouragement, guidance, and empathy shown towards me over the past several years. I have finally landed in a great job. The job is amazing and I'm meeting their standards. I passed the first 8 weeks of probation with flying colors. The folks I'm working for and with are the nicest group of people and very helpful. I am still in touch with my job coach Jon and he is amazing. He stays in touch and has provided plenty of guidance and support. I will stop by as soon as I have a chance. I had to let you know how proud my family is of me, and they thank you for not giving up on me as well as I do. Forever grateful and thankful. -Client