



GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA DEPARTMENT ON DISABILITY SERVICES

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

February 24, 2021

Executive Summary Presentation



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Introduction

- Promesa Consulting Group, Inc., a small minority-owned business certified in the District of Columbia was awarded a contract on March 3rd to conduct the 2020 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).
- In collaboration with DCRSA's leadership team and DDS contracting officials, the needs assessment project kick-off was held on March 10, 2020 and the project began.

Acknowledgements

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Purpose

- To identify and describe the rehabilitation needs of people with disabilities residing in the District of Columbia, particularly the vocational rehabilitation services need of:
 - People with the most significant disabilities
 - People who are from racial or cultural minority groups
 - People who are unserved or underserved by vocational rehabilitation programs
 - People with disabilities served through other components of the statewide workforce development system, and
 - Youth and students with disabilities including their need for and coordination of pre-employment transition services.
- Provide an assessment of the need to facilitate the establishment, development or improvement in vocational rehabilitation programs with the District.

Framework and Limitations

- The 2020 CSNA followed the standard needs assessment process.
 - Gathered, expressed and observed needs of stakeholders through collection and analysis of primary and secondary data.
 - Identified gaps between existing services and needed services.
- Most significant limitations were the multiple Mayor's Orders issued due to the novel Coronavirus (*COVID-19*):
 - 1). "Declaration of Public Emergency," issued March 11, 2020, and went into effect on March 16, 2020.
 - 2) " Closure of Non-Essential Businesses and Prohibition on Large Gatherings," and went into effect on March 25, 2020.

Methodology

- Based on best practices, review of methods from past CSNAs, and the project team's professional expertise.
- Guided by the following core research questions:
 - What does the target population for vocational rehabilitation services look like?
 - What are the primary barriers to employment and/or what are their service needs?
 - What was vocational rehabilitation clients' experience with DCRSA?
 - How can VR services best support client efforts to achieve positive employment outcomes?

Data Collection Process

The data collection strategy utilized the following four (4) methods to questions presented to the following stakeholders: vocational rehabilitation clients, other persons with disabilities, DCRSA staff, community rehabilitation partners (vocational rehabilitation service providers), disability advocacy groups and business partners

1. Review of existing data (*U.S. Census, SSI/DI, Disability Reports, DCRSA service Utilization, and the DCRSA 2014 and 2017 CSNAs*)
2. Interviews
3. Surveys (*Individual Survey in English and Spanish Language versions*)
4. Focus Group discussions (eight focus groups)

Needs Assessment Participants

- **The categories of stakeholders interviewed and surveyed included:**
 - **DCRSA Staff** – executive staff, Program Managers, VR Counselor, Community Liaison Specialists, Employment Coordinators, Intake Specialists, supervisory staff, staff from various divisions and units including transition unit, sensory unit, and the Randolph Sheppard Program.
 - **Persons with Disabilities and Their Families** - who receive services from DCRSA and its community partner network who were identified through providers, community partners and advocates, and referred by other persons with disabilities.
 - **Community Partners** – providers, advocacy groups, other governmental service agency representatives, DCPS representatives, workforce development partners, Statewide Independent Living Council representatives, and the State Rehabilitation Council.
 - **Business Partners/Employers** – Business partner representatives in the DC metropolitan area including, Maryland, and Virginia that seek to hire people with disabilities including those representing the following industries: retail, hospitality, government, employee recruitment, and custodial services.

Total Survey Participants by Method and Type

Research Method	Research Group and Count				
	Persons with Disabilities	Community Partners	DCRSA Staff	Business Partners	Total
Individual Interviews	14	34	23	7	78
Electronic Surveys	86	26	43	16	171
Focus Groups	40	10	16	5	71
Totals	140	70	82	28	320

Report Navigation

- The 2020 CSNA includes an Executive Summary and Overview and the following sections:
 - *DCRSA Context (Section 3)* – A perspective of the VR services in the District of Columbia, including, disability prevalence, VR program enhancements since 2017.
 - *Data Collection Highlights (Section 4)* – A sample of data collected, including participant profiles and key feedback.
 - *Barriers to Employment for Persons with Disabilities (Section 5)* – Feedback and findings from stakeholders that address specific barriers to employment for VR clients.
 - *Service Provisions for Persons with Disabilities (Section 6)* – Feedback and findings from stakeholders related to DCRSA’s VR service provisions.
 - *Service System Infrastructure (Section 7)* – Feedback and findings from stakeholders that involve the VR system infrastructure.
 - Recommendations for strategic changes to VR service provisions (*Section 8*).

Prevalence of Disability in the District

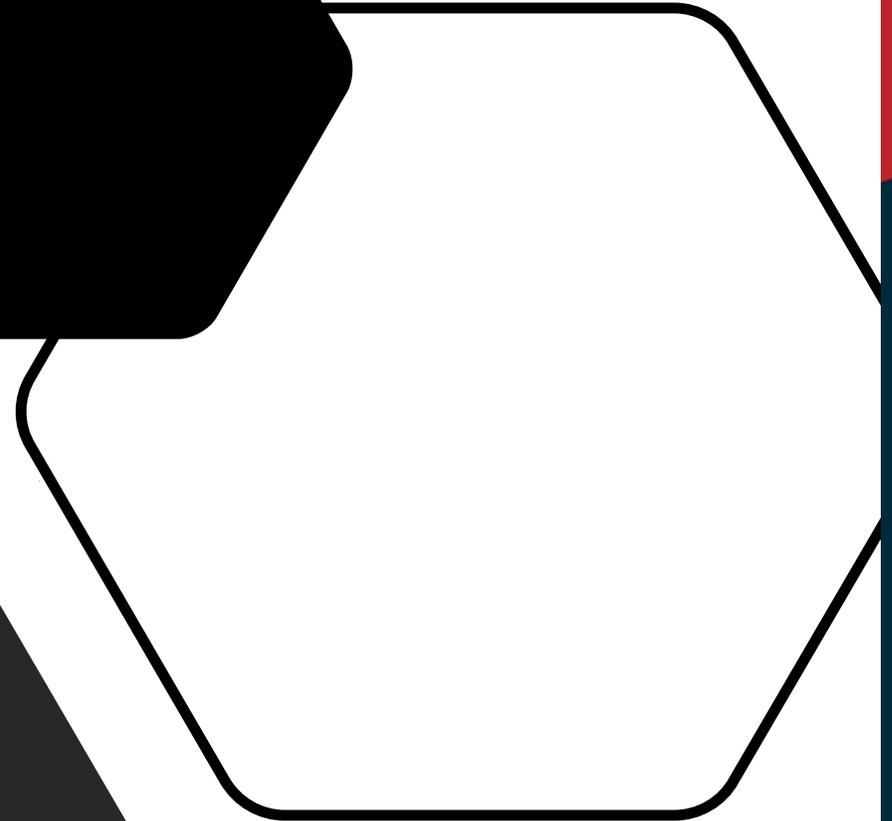
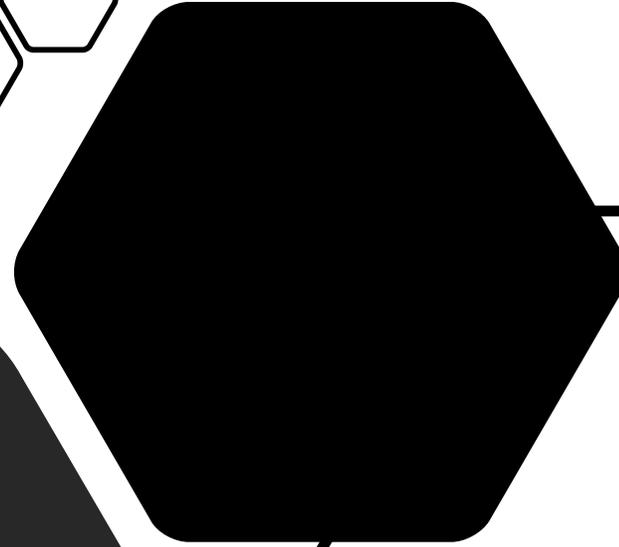
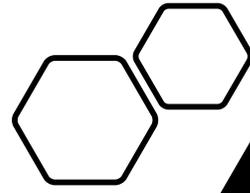
Prevalence of Disability in the District of Columbia		
	Population #	% of Total Population
Total DC Population with a Disability	80,368	11.60%
Male	35,439	10.90%
Female	44,929	12.30%
White - Alone	16,999	5.80%
Black - Not Latino	55,187	17.60%
Asian	1,884	6.90%
Two or more races	2,994	11.90%
Latino - Any race	7,134	9.00%
Some other race alone	3,304	10.70%
Age 5-17	3,673	4.50%
Age 18-34	11,987	5.10%
Age 35-64	33,933	13.70%
Age 65-74	12,240	25.50%
Age 75 plus	17,825	50.40%
Work Force Ages 18-74	45,920	0.1%
Age 14-17	2,700	15.0%

DCRSA Service Utilization Data by Primary Disability (July 2018-June 2019)

Primary Disability Type	Number of Persons with a Disabilities	Percentage of Persons with a Disability
Hearing Difficulty	82	5%
Vision Difficulty	63	4%
Cognitive Difficulty	1423	78%
Ambulatory Difficulty	79	4%
Self-Care Difficulty and Independent Living	170	9%

DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA WARDS	COUNT OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES
1	102
2	107
3	36
4	281
5	388
6	86
7	332
8	451
(no ward information available)	34
Grand Total	1817

*Needs
Assessment
Findings*



Key Findings - Barriers to Employment for Persons with Disabilities

- Lack of Information about available Vocational Rehabilitation Programs and Services;
- Navigation of the VR System;
- Job placement and Placement Services;
- Education or Job Training and Employment Preparation Services was a barrier;
- Employer Perceptions;
- Insufficient Employers; and
- Confounding Barriers.

Feedback - Cited by Persons with Disabilities

- 18% needed more information and help navigating DCRSA VR system
- 59% needed more help finding a job;
- 36% needed more job training;
- 33% needed more job coaching; and
- More help navigating the vocational rehabilitation system;
- Reliable or predictable transportation, stable housing, childcare and help with mental health issues.

Feedback - Cited by DCRSA Staff

- Employer base too small and employers unwilling to interact with persons with disabilities without a job coach;
- **Persons with the Most Significant Disabilities** – 70% of DCRSA staff felt there were barriers to achieving employment goals for persons with the most significant disabilities; 61% cited DCRSA lack sufficient programs, services and supports; 54% cited clients lack of sufficient education or training resources to accommodate the needs; 32% cited availability of jobs that correlate with a skillset; and 32% cited employer perceptions as a barrier.
- **For Youth in Transition** – 63% of youth in transition experience barriers to employment different from the overall population; 83% cited lack of work experience; 50% cited lack of job skills; 46% cited lack of education and training; 25% cited poor social skills; 21% cited lack of job search skills. Other barriers were the lack of parental involvement, or natural supports. Homelessness among youth was also seen as a barrier.
- **For Racial and Ethnic Minorities** – 55% cited language barriers; 30% cited education and training; and 35% convictions for criminal offenses. Other barriers were lack of family support, help navigating the vocational rehabilitation system.

Feedback - Cited by DCRSA Community Partners/Vocational Rehabilitation Providers

- **For persons with the most significant disabilities** – 95% cited they have barriers that are different from the overall population, 57% cited insufficient employers willing to accept persons with a significant disability, 38% cited insufficient employers that can accommodate persons with the most significant disabilities; and 62% cited employer perceptions as a barrier
- **For Youth in Transition** - 82% cited insufficient education and/or training; 82% cited insufficient job skills training (both hard and soft skills); 55% cited poor social skills; 27% cited lack of job search skills; and 27% cited mental health issues.
- **For LGBTQIA** – 43% cited employer perceptions; 29% cited insufficient employers; and 29% cited insufficient job skills training (both hard and soft skills). Other barriers cited were “discrimination, employer bias and not enough employer options.
- **For Limited-English Proficient** – 93% cited limited-English proficient person with disabilities encounter barriers; 85% cited language barriers; 46% cited insufficient education and/or training; 46% cited insufficient job skills training (both hard and soft skills).

Recommendations - to Address Employment Barriers

- **To address the lack of information about available VR Programs and Services,** consider launching a community-wide initiative aimed at creating a broad awareness of DCRSA programs and processes.
- **To address the need for more “job development and placement services,”** consider maintaining a dashboard of persons with disabilities who are ready to work (*Status 20*) and facilitate access to the dashboard by business and community partners that commit to working with DCRSA to provide placement opportunities.
- **To address “employer perceptions” about persons with disabilities,** consider as part of a comprehensive employer engagement and job development program, formal trainings on the benefits of hiring and supporting persons with disabilities; training on understanding reasonable accommodations and how to provide them. An additional recommendation is to consider hosting regular initiatives to promote the skills and abilities of persons with disabilities that successfully complete vocational rehabilitation programs.
- **To address “confounding barriers,”** consider using the discovery process to document confounding barriers and make the barriers known to others seeking to assist in the VR process. Also, consider closer coordination and partnerships with advocacy groups to help link VR clients to resources to address confounding barrier. As an alternative, consider compiling reference materials to refer VR clients to other community resources to address documented confounding barriers.

Key Findings - Service Provision for Persons with Disabilities

- Office Accessibility;
- Employment-related supports;
- Service Navigation;
- Assistive Technology;
- Benefits Planning;
- Underserved and Unserved Persons with Disabilities;
- Customized Employment.

Feedback – on Service Provisions by Persons with Disabilities

- 77% cited they found VR services and supports readily available;
- 77% felt DCRSA's office was physically accessible;
- 71% felt they had a thorough assessment to determine their skills and abilities for employment; and
- 81% cited they found the DCRSA Service Providers' offices physically accessible.
- Other findings reflected a high degree of confidence in the initial interaction with the VR Counselor. 43% cited interaction with the VR Counselor "often."

Feedback – on Service Provisions by Persons with Disabilities

	%
What service(s) did you need to successfully achieve your employment goal? (Please select all that apply)	
Job Training	36%
Help to find a job	59%
Education	26%
Reasonable accommodations	28%
Reliable transportation	30%
Mental health services	16%
Affordable housing	18%
Assistive technology services	8%
Benefits counseling	16%
Job Coaching	33%
Interpreter or translation services	2%
Childcare	5%
Substance use services	3%
Other (please specify)	33%

Feedback – on Service Provisions by DCRSA Staff and Vocational Rehabilitation Providers

- Ongoing vocational skills training to ensure skills maintenance and job advancement.
- Need for more program options for persons with disabilities who are between supported employment and competitive employment, e.g., persons on the Autism spectrum.
- Need for more work experience opportunities (*e.g., DOES apprenticeship programs*).
- Better access to assistive technologies, and training on technology products, (*e.g., computers, tablets, smartphones and work-related applications*).

Feedback – Cited by Persons with Disabilities

What provider services did you find readily available to support persons with disabilities (Please select all that apply)	%
Employment services	51%
Supported employment services	41%
Pre-employment transition services	12%
On-the-job training	17%
Community college or four-year college or other university resources	12%
Occupational training	7%
Assistive technology	5%
Interpreter and translator services	2%
Benefits counseling	10%
Disability-related skills training	22%
Customized employment services	7%
Transportation support	17%
Reading and literacy services	7%
Personal assistance services	17%
Maintenance or other income assistance	7%
Registered apprenticeship training	2%
Job coaching	24%
Job readiness skills training	20%

Feedback – on Service Provisions by DCRSA Staff and Vocational Rehabilitation Providers

- Perception from DCRSA staff, Ward 7 and Ward 8 are underserved, but findings do not support that perception.

Wards Most Community Partners' VR Services are Offered	%
Ward 1	39%
Ward 2	39%
Ward 3	42%
Ward 4	46%
Ward 5	58%
Ward 6	46%
Ward 7	65%
Ward 8	69%
Not Applicable	27%

Wards Most Persons With Disability Served by Community Partners Live?	%
Ward 1	23%
Ward 2	19%
Ward 3	31%
Ward 4	31%
Ward 5	42%
Ward 6	31%
Ward 7	58%
Ward 8	58%
Not Applicable	31%

Feedback – on Service Provisions by DCRSA Staff and Vocational Rehabilitation Providers

- Need for greater use of customized employment. 48% of providers offered customized employment.

If your organization provides Customized Employment, how many job seekers have you placed in customized positions in the past one year?	%
1-5	44.44%
6-10	11.11%
11-20	11.11%
21 or more	33.33%

- Need to Implement Customized Employment Training

Would your organization benefit from training on providing customized employment?	%
Yes	66.67%
No	33.33%

Recommendations - to Enhance Service Provisions

- ***To address the need to make “assistive technology” more readily available***, consider contracting with more community partners who can provide such technological aids and devices, and training or include these services
- ***To ensure that the needs of persons with disabilities who are thought to be underserved and unserved especially individuals on the Autism spectrum are addressed***, consider implementing additional vocational rehabilitation programs. Also consider partnering with advocacy organizations that offer unique capabilities to accommodate individuals on the Autism spectrum.
- ***To address the need for a broader emphasis and additional training to implement effective customized employment***, consider requiring providers to send staff who are responsible for job development or placement to a regular training and information exchange session with DCRSA-designated staff. The sessions could address strategies and best practices; tracking provider staff progress in developing employer relationships; and developing effective tools provider staff can use to assist employers to discover opportunities for customization and realization of efficiencies.

Key Findings - Service System Infrastructure

■ **VR Administrative Systems**

- Case Management/Administrative System needs updating;
- Financial System/ Process for Payment needs to incorporate procedures to determine real-time status of funds;
- Policy and Procedure development should be accompanied by rigorous and ongoing training.

■ **Partner Relationships – Maximizing Collaborations**

- MOUs/MOAs need to be strengthened or enhanced.
- Strengthen Collaboration and Coordination between DCRSA & DCDDA and Other members of the WIC

Key Findings - Service System Infrastructure, continue

■ **Rehabilitation Service Provider Management**

- Provider Data Availability needs to be updated and better maintained;
- Provider Diversification and Augmentation is needed.

■ **Business or Employer Relations**

- Employer Relations approach needs to be restructured;
- Employer Engagement needs a major overhaul;
- Availability of Employment Opportunities needs improvement.

■ **Student Focus Services**

- The Partnerships between DCRSA and DCPS need to be enhanced to clarify services for Youth in Transition.

Feedback - Service System Infrastructure cited by Persons with Disabilities

- People with disabilities and their families cited a need for expanding the pool of service providers including, providers of services for people with autism spectrum disorders, bilingual service providers, benefits counseling providers, and assistive technology service providers.
- Parents of transition aged youth cited a need for closer coordination between DCRSA and DCPS and clearer communication to families on the intersection of Pre-ETS services and vocational rehabilitation services.

Feedback - Service System Infrastructure cited by DCRSA Staff and Vocational Rehabilitation Providers

- 35% DCRSA staff indicated a need for more streamlined processes
- 26% DCRSA staff felt that better data management tools would improve service delivery
- 58% of rehabilitation service providers advocated for expanding the network of providers
- Both DCRSA staff and rehabilitation service providers requested additional training on customized employment.

Feedback - Service System Infrastructure cited by Business Partners

- 60% said they needed help recruiting job applicants with disabilities
- 33% cited a need for help with appropriate accommodations for persons with disabilities
- 64% wanted information on training programs for persons with disabilities
- 47% indicated a need to learn how to discuss and identify reasonable job accommodations for persons with disabilities.
- 66% expressed an interest in working with DCRSA to create customized employment

Recommendations – Service System Infrastructure

- ***To address the needed changes to the Case Management/Administrative system,*** consider replacing or revising the existing case management information systems to capture and manage data for the overall performance of VR administration.
- ***To address ongoing changes related to the “human care agreement” process,*** consider how the associated procurement or purchase order procedures can be improved to more efficiently facilitate the availability of real-time funding information.
- ***To strengthen MOUs/MOAs to better evaluate performance outcomes,*** consider revising agreements that exchange funding for services and collaboration with other government agencies and community partners to ensure that the data provided to DCRSA demonstrates the desired outcomes, including the number of persons with disabilities served, types of services provided, the timeframes required to deliver services and the outcomes achieved.

Recommendations – *Service System Infrastructure*

- ***To enhance collaboration between DCRSA and DCDDA***, strengthen the current DCDDA/DCRSA Collaboration Policy to improve coordination of services. This would ensure continuity of care by eliminating gaps for clients served by both administrations. The policy changes should facilitate more efficient linkage to services and supports between administrations.
- ***To improve DCRSA rehabilitation service providers' data availability***, consider updating how rehabilitation service providers' information is collected, maintained and utilized to help persons with disabilities make more informed choices. Updating the current DCRSA online service provider directory to include updated contact information and performance history, including specialty services provided and job placement history.

Recommendations – Service System Infrastructure

- **To obtain greater provider diversification and augmentation of the provider pool,** consider changing the provider recruitment process to diversify and increase the number of providers offering various services to minimize delays in service provisions due to lack of providers to improve informed consent. Specifically, obtain more bilingual service providers that are fluent in a range of languages, obtain more providers of American Sign Language (ASL) services, providers offering benefits counseling, assistive technology services and providers that offer training in a range of technology products, e.g., computers, tablets, smartphones and other technology applications.
- **To improve employer/business relations,** consider establishing a comprehensive employer engagement and job development program. Since employers are critical to successful VR outcomes, the program should be a strategic vehicle to support achievement of annual job placement goals. The program should include DCRSA staff, rehabilitation services providers and employers. Program components should incorporate an employer engagement approach, involve VR promotion, employer education and training, and coordination of job placement and job opportunity activities. It should include performance measures that directly correlate to DCRSA annual job placement goals.

Recommendations – **Service System Infrastructure**

- ***To address the concern expressed about limited employment opportunities***, consider creating a job information/success board to post and promote skills reflective of persons with disabilities who have successfully completed VR preparedness and are seeking job placements. Allow rehabilitation service providers to submit job opening for posting with contact information; post success stories to promote and facilitate interactions with prospective employers to help VR clients achieve their employment goals.
- ***To improve the delivery of services available to youth in transition***, consider strengthening the terms of the DCRSA/DCPS agreement to enhance current data sharing to more effectively demonstrate performance outcomes. In addition, expand outreach and education about transition services to ensure that parents and students gain a better understanding of Pre-ETS and VR services.