

Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

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# Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

2016 - 2018



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (ADVR), as part of the Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD), is responsible for the administration and operation of Alaska's state vocational rehabilitation program. While ADVR continually assesses its performance and the needs of Alaskans with disabilities, The Rehabilitation Act, as amended, Public Law 99-506 Section 101(a), requires each state vocational rehabilitation agency to triennially conduct a comprehensive statewide needs assessment (CSNA) jointly with the Statewide Vocational Rehabilitation Committee (SVRC). The results of the CSNA are used to develop goals, priorities, strategies, and actions for both ADVR's Strategic and Unified or Combined State Plans.

In order to meet the requirements of 34 CFR §361.29, the CSNA must address the following:

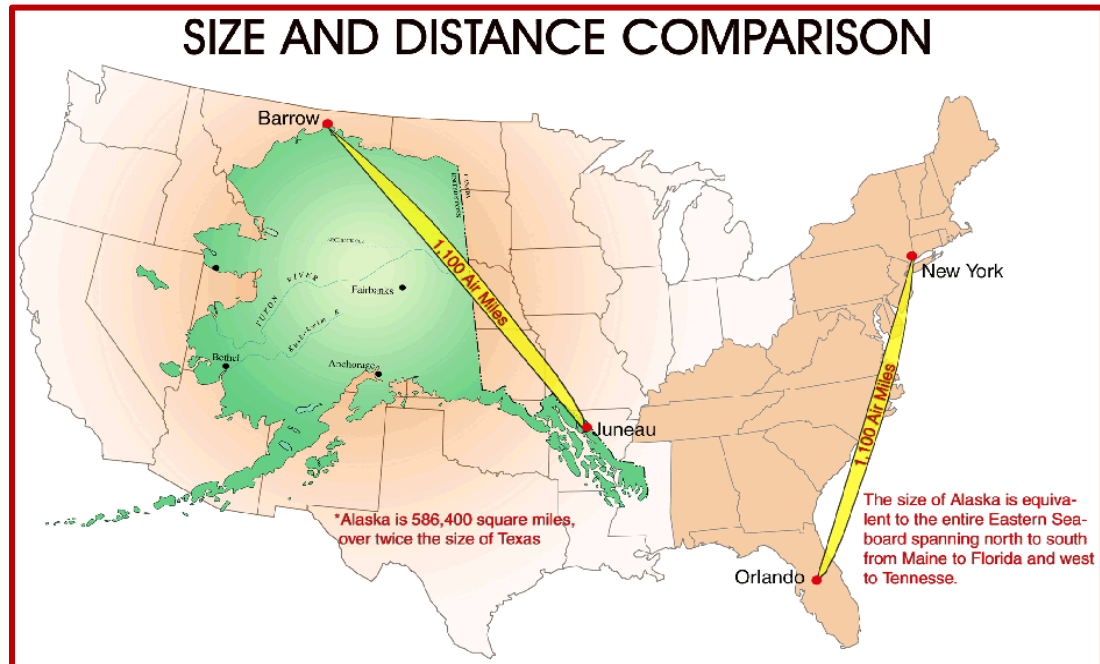
- What are the vocational rehabilitation (VR) needs of individuals with disabilities:
  - Who are individuals with the most significant disabilities?
  - Who are minorities or who are in unserved or underserved populations?
  - Who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system?
- What is the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) within the state?

Multiple data sources were used to obtain the information to answer these questions, including surveys, a review of local and statewide studies focusing on services and barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities, U.S. Census Bureau data, and the ADVR management information system.

What are the VR needs of individuals with disabilities:

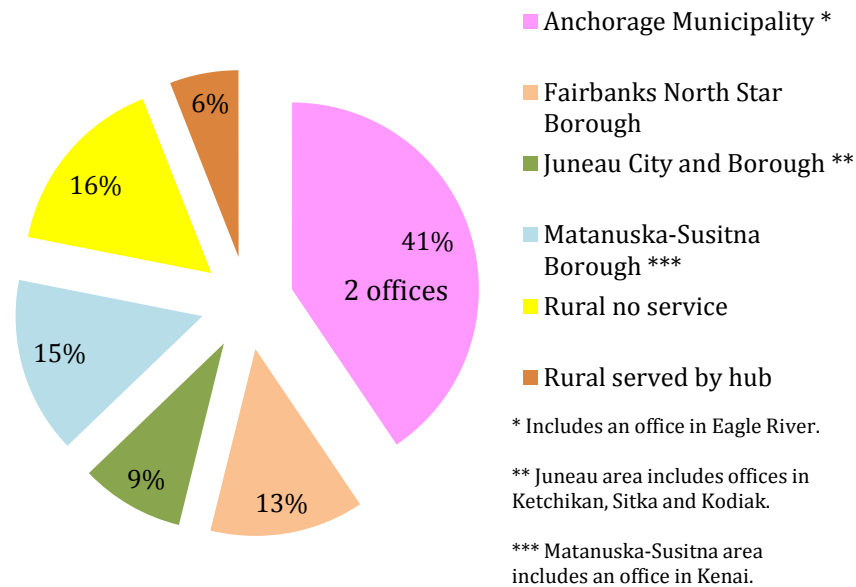
- Who are individuals with the most significant disabilities?
  - In Alaska, individuals who meet the category of individuals with the most significant disabilities (MSD) must have a severe physical, mental or sensory impairment that seriously limits three or more functional capacities, such as mobility, work skills, self-care, interpersonal skills, communication, self-direction, or work tolerance, in terms of an employment outcome. Individuals eligible under the category of significant disability (SD) must be either receiving Social Security Supplemental Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Income (SSDI) and have a severe physical, mental or sensory impairment that seriously limits one or more functional capacities listed above.
    - During state fiscal years (SYF) 2010 through SFY2014, 94% of eligible individuals were categorized as MSD or SD.
    - Of the 94% who met the MSD or SD categories, 8868, or 45%, were individuals with an MSD.
    - During SYF2010 through SYF2014, 944, or 11%, individuals with an MSD were eligible for and provided Supported Employment (SE) services.
- Who are minorities or who are in unserved or underserved populations?
  - According to Alaska's Population by Race, compiled by the State of Alaska DLWD's Division of Research and Analysis in July 2014, the largest minority in the state of Alaska was Alaska Natives, amounting to approximately 15% of Alaska's overall population. From SFY2010 through SYF2014, Alaska Natives accounted for of 21% of ADVR participants.
  - In Alaska, the greatest unserved and underserved populations are those individuals residing in rural and remote communities. Alaska is more than one fifth the size of the United States, over two times the size of Texas. The majority of rural and remote

communities are only accessible by airplane, boat, or snow machine. Geographically, meeting the vocational rehabilitation needs of Alaskan residing in rural and remote communities continues to be challenging due to the extreme distances and accessibility complexities.



There are five regional field offices based in the most populated areas of Alaska: two offices in Anchorage, Wasilla (Matanuska-Susitna Borough), Fairbanks, and Juneau. Additionally, there are satellite offices located in Eagle River, Sitka, Ketchikan, Kodiak, and Kenai. As shown in the chart below, the areas served by ADVR's offices are located in the most populated areas of the state. ADVR has designated Bethel, Dillingham, Nome, Kotzebue, and Barrow as rural hubs that are served itinerantly by ADVR Counselors. These rural hubs account for 6% of Alaska's population. ADVR partners with the Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation programs located in rural hubs to maximize vocational rehabilitation service delivery efforts. Sixteen percent of Alaska's population resides in the remaining areas of rural and remote Alaska. Geographically, rural and remote Alaska continues to be challenging to serve due to the distance and accessibility of these communities.

## 2014 Population Estimates ADVR Office Locations



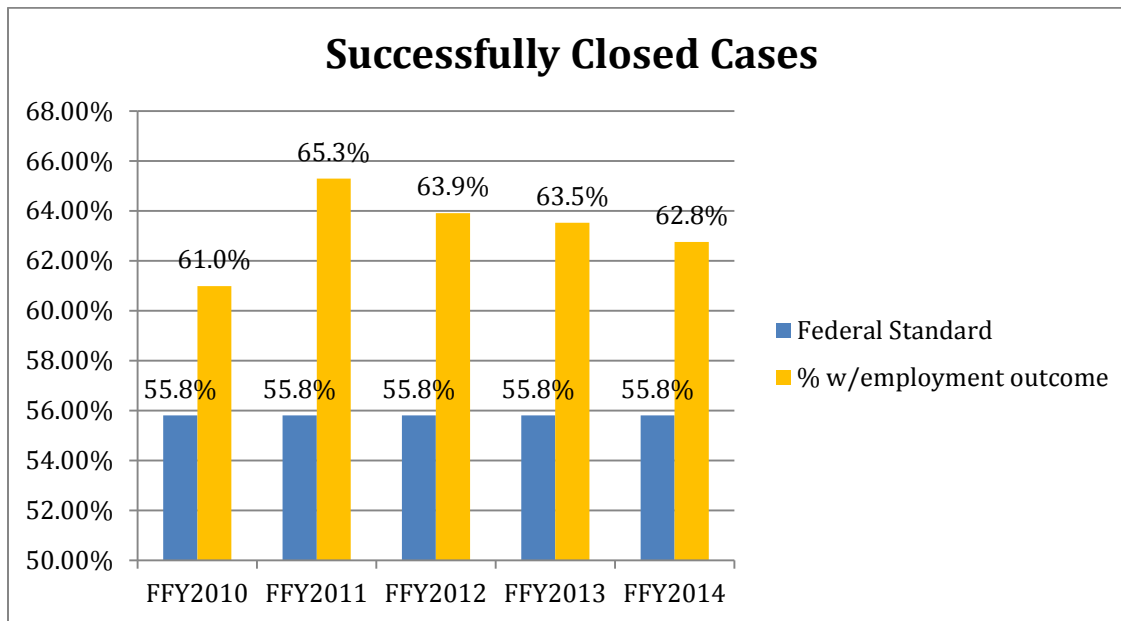
- Who are served through other components of the statewide workforce investment system?
  - Alaska’s One-Stop partners are very involved with ADVR. VR Counselors and Division of Employment and Training Services (DETS) specialists regularly refer individuals with disabilities to each other’s programs. Additionally, ADVR Counselors refer and utilize the services available through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) Core Programs such as Adult Basic Education, Youth Services, Adult Services, Dislocated Worker, etc.
  - WIOA further strengthens this partnership by requiring all Core Programs to track these commonly served individuals in order to provide more specific information on referrals, interactions, and comparable benefits across WIOA Core Programs.
- What is the need to establish, develop or improve community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) within the state?
  - ADVR recently surveyed VR staff about interactions with participants, partners and CRPs. It was clear from comments on their completed surveys that there continues to be a substantial need, especially in rural areas, for qualified CRPs. Client data indicates the disabling conditions of individuals served are becoming more complex. Consequently, there is an increased demand for more specialized and skilled CRPs.

## II. WHO WE SERVE

From 7/1/2010 through 6/30/2014, the Alaska Division of Vocation Rehabilitation has served the following individuals:

|                         | SFY2010 | SFY2011 | SFY2012 | SFY2013 | SFY2014 |
|-------------------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| Successful rehab        | 548     | 569     | 637     | 598     | 607     |
| Participated in program | 4034    | 4194    | 4103    | 3738    | 3747    |
| In plan                 | 2182    | 2288    | 2240    | 2192    | 2214    |
| Youth (<=23)            | 645     | 839     | 862     | 752     | 899     |
| Significantly Disabled  | 3590    | 3984    | 3857    | 2082    | 2103    |
| AK Native               | 902     | 882     | 780     | 876     | 844     |

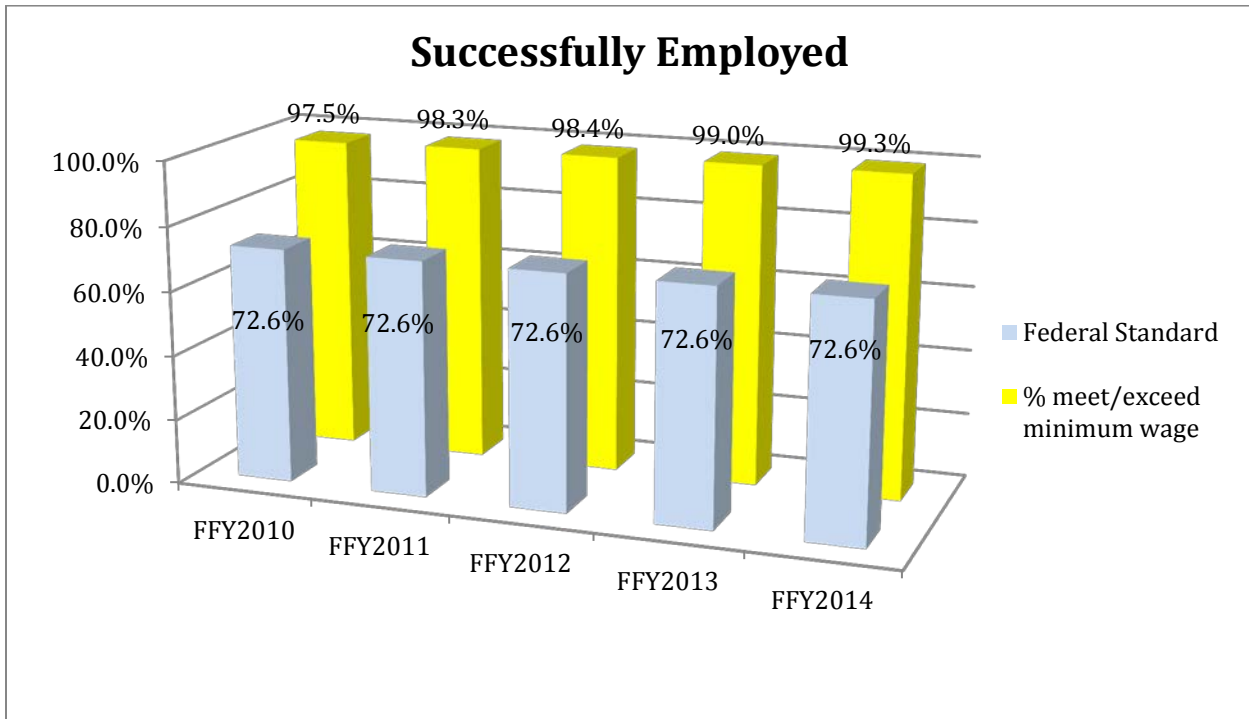
While the number of individuals served by ADVR from SFY2010 to SFY2014 has declined slightly (8%), the number of successful rehabilitations has increased by 10%. The number of youth served has increased. The percentage of individuals meeting MSD and SD categories has remained fairly constant at 95%, but as the overall number of participants has decreased, so has the actual number of those considered MSD and SD.



The above graph shows that ADVR has consistently exceeded Rehabilitation Services Administration's (RSA) Federal Standards and Indicators for successful closures (those who have exited the VR program with an employment outcome).

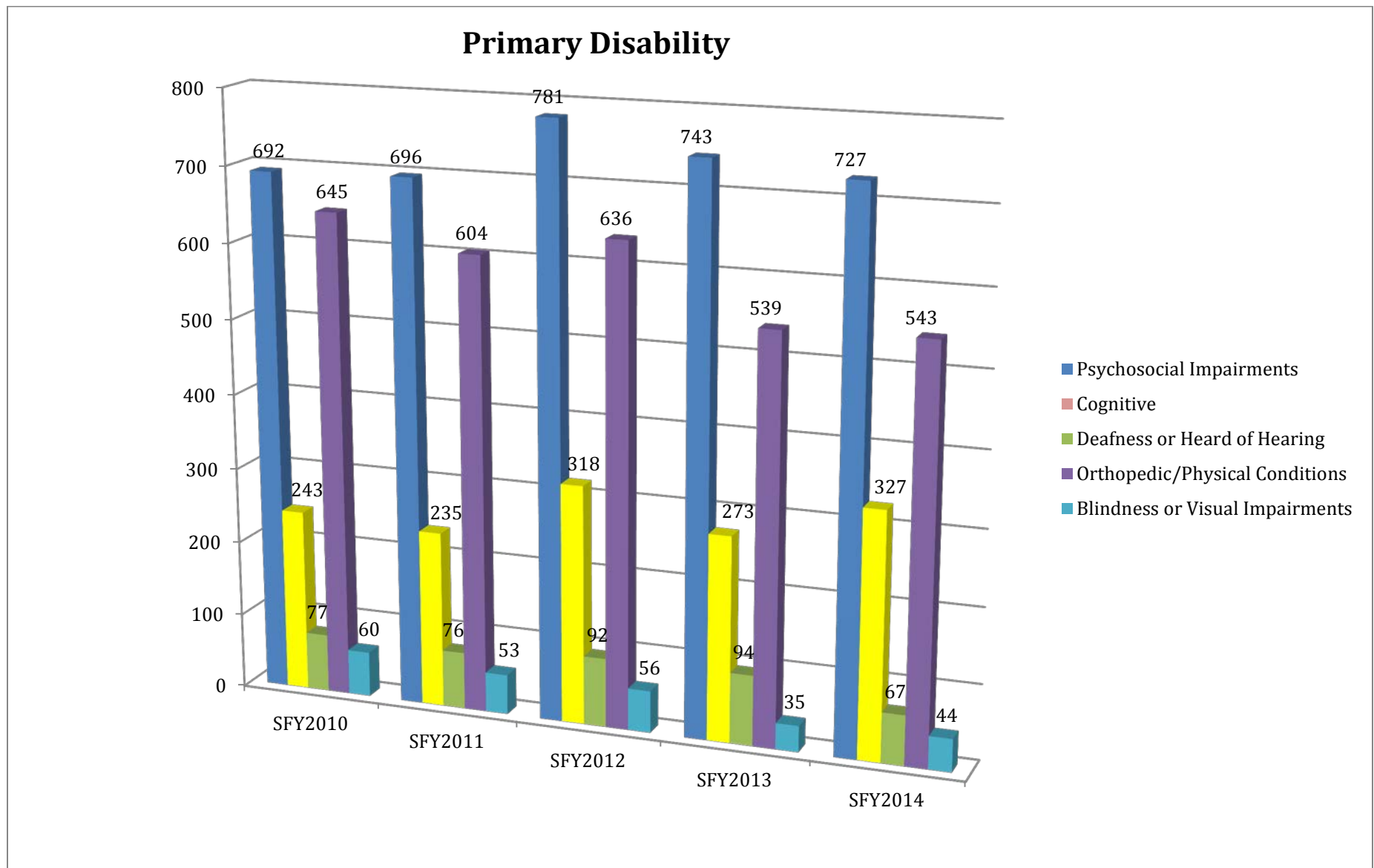
\*The Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) runs from October 1 through September 30 while the State Fiscal Year (SFY) runs July 1 through June 30.

As shown below, ADVR has consistently exceeded RSA's standard for percentage of successfully employed individuals whose wage meets, or exceeds, the State's minimum wage. This percentage has increased annually by almost 2%.



The average wage earned by participants employed in 2014 was \$14.33. It is anticipated that the average wage will continue to exceed the federal standard as Alaska has increased the minimum wage, from \$7.75 to \$9.75 in January 2016.

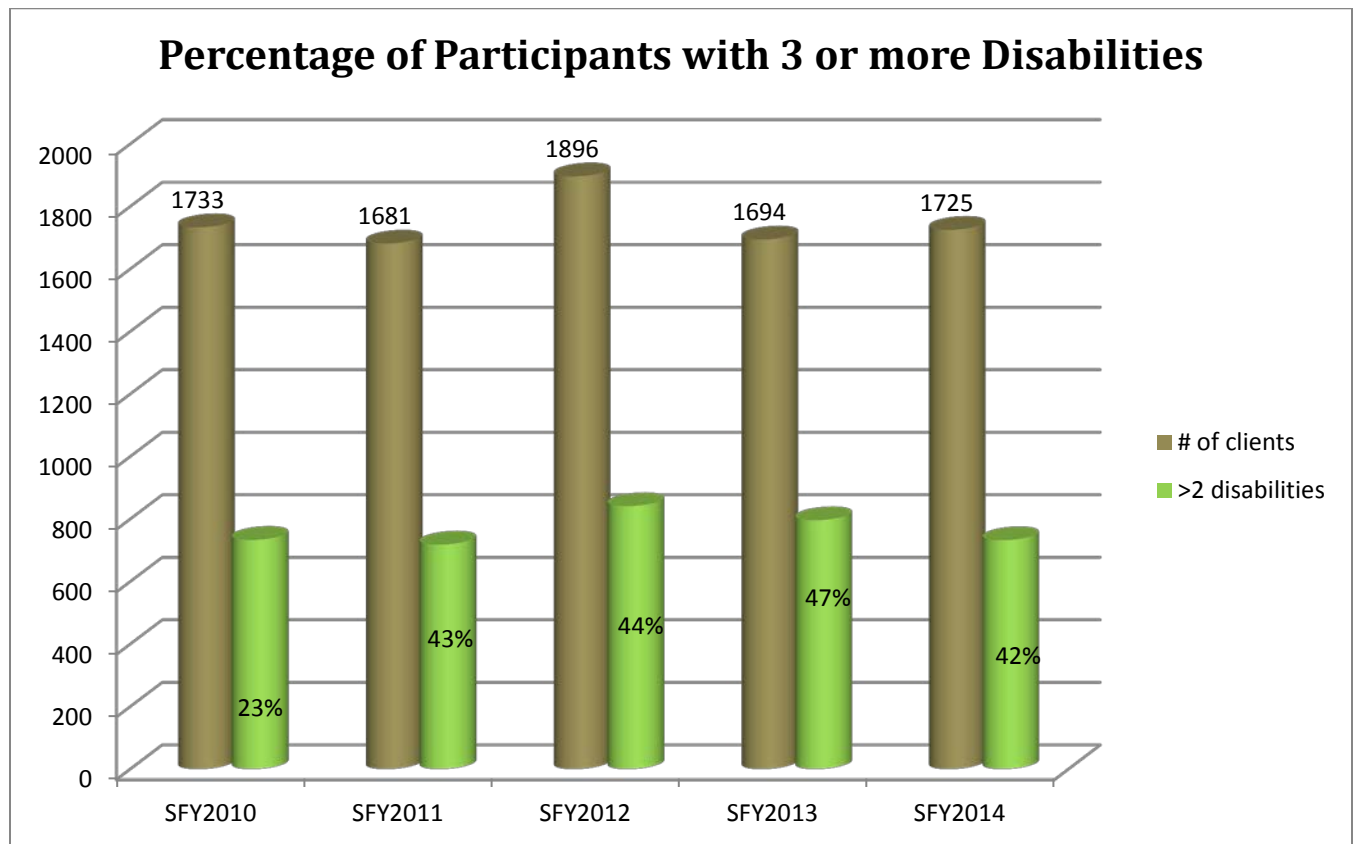
ADVR is not currently on an Order of Selection. The following chart shows the breakdown of the primary disability for the period SFY2010-2014. It is important to note that primary disability is defined as the disability that creates the most significant functional limitations for an individual. Secondary and tertiary disabilities are not reflected in the chart below.





In general, ADVR has seen an increase in the number of participants who experience either a cognitive impairment (impairments involving learning, thinking, processing information and concentrating) or a psychosocial impairment (interpersonal and behavioral impairments). There has also been a decline in the number of participants presenting with a physical impairment as a primary disabling condition.

As the chart below indicates, individuals served by ADVR have multiple disabling conditions that create impediments to employment. In SFY2010, 23% of total eligible participants experienced two or more disabling conditions. In SYF2011, there was a significant increase in individuals served who experienced two or more disabling conditions, and that trend has continued.



### **III. WHO WE TALKED TO**

The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (ADVR) sent out a total of 958 surveys. Those surveyed included ADVR participants, Employers, ADVR staff, and Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs). Surveys were emailed using the online survey tool, *SurveyMonkey*. ADVR also utilized survey data from the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education (GCDSE). GCDSE conducted an employer survey that focused on employer perceived barriers to hiring individuals with disabilities. Copies of the surveys used are included in Section IV of this document.

#### **Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Participants**

Every month, participants who exited the VR program (from Plan status) the previous month receive a satisfaction survey via email. In May 2015, the monthly satisfaction survey was revised. The reading level was revised and adjusted to maximize participant feedback without confusion. The number of questions was reduced from 23 to 10 in order to streamline responses, avoid duplicative questions, and to lessen the burden on participants' time. After analyzing response rates and the number of mailed surveys that were returned as undeliverable, the online survey tool, *SurveyMonkey* became the sole delivery method to participants due to its' built-in analytical tools and the fact that 75% of ADVR participants have a valid email address.

The 10 question survey focuses on four major areas: Program Satisfaction, Program Information, Consumer Involvement, and Consumer and Staff Interaction. From May 2015 to May 2016, 816 surveys were sent out with a response rate of 11.5%.

#### **Employer Survey: Hiring Individuals with Disabilities – Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education**

During the September 2015 Alaska Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) conference in Anchorage, the Governor's Council on Disabilities & Special Education (GCDSE) distributed surveys to 240 conference attendees from approximately 158 Alaskan businesses. Of the 240 surveys distributed, there were 103 respondents, yielding a response rate of 42.9%. The completed surveys were then analyzed using *SurveyMonkey*. The survey had eight questions that were derived through collaborative efforts with the Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority (AMHTA) to better understand barriers employers perceived when considering hiring individuals with disabilities. Additionally, the survey sought to better understand how efforts might best be targeted to employers in the future. All survey questions were developed to assist in framing future employer engagements efforts to better target the biggest concerns employers express when considering hiring individuals with disabilities.

#### **Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Staff**

Seventy-four surveys were sent to ADVR staff with a response rate of 54.1%. The survey consisted of 12 questions and focused on the following topics: participant feedback, availability of services, barriers to employment, availability and effectiveness of CRPs, and overall experience when working with agency partners outlined in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).

#### **Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP)**

A total of 68 surveys were sent to CRPs with a response rate of 32.4%. The survey consisted of 10 questions and comment section to encourage further discussion. The survey focused on several topics: availability of services, barriers to employment, geographical location, referral processes, and overall interaction with ADVR and its' staff.

## IV. WHAT WE ASKED

### Monthly Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire

The Consumer Satisfaction Questionnaire was revised in May 2015, with input from the Statewide Vocational Rehabilitation Committee's (SVRC) Evaluation Committee. After careful consideration, it was determined the previous version asked questions that were duplicate in nature and did not provide enough data to adequately improve customer service. By providing comment boxes for every question, participants can now provide more substantial input which can be used to improve customer service. All comments in which participants express dissatisfaction are sent to Rehabilitation Managers for follow-up and resolution, if needed.

Current response rate is 11.5%. This has remained fairly constant over the past year.



### SVRC Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluation Questionnaire

**Please mark the box which best describes your opinion on each question based upon your overall experience with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) versus that based on a single incident:**

1. DVR Staff were polite and helpful on an on-going basis throughout the time I had an open case.

- Agree  
 Disagree

Comments:

2. I knew from the start that the goal of DVR was to help me find employment or stay employed.

- Agree  
 Disagree

Comments:

3. DVR staff replied promptly to my questions, requests, and informed me of changes.

- Agree  
 Disagree

Comments:

4. Alaska DVR helped me understand my abilities so that I could choose a job consistent with my strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, capabilities, interests, and informed choice.

- Agree
- Disagree

Comments:

5. I was pleased with my involvement in the decision making process that led to my plan for employment.

- Agree
- Disagree

Comments:

6. I was aware of my right to disagree and was informed about the process to appeal DVR decisions and about the Client Assistance Program (CAP).

- Agree
- Disagree

Comments:

7. Alaska DVR staff helped me understand the services available to me by DVR and other agencies.

- Agree
- Disagree

Comments:

8. Overall, I am satisfied with the services I received.

- Agree
- Disagree

Comments:

9. I would recommend Alaska DVR to others.

- Agree
- Disagree

Comments:

10. Do you have any suggestions for ways to improve the program? Please be specific.

In addition, the full SVRC meets via video conference three times a year and once face-to-face. At meetings they discuss on-going projects, hear reports from various DVR staff, Community Rehabilitation Providers and disability and economic development agency partners and offer the opportunity for public testimony. Prior to each meeting, notices are sent to previous participants from that region; i.e., for the meeting last year in Juneau, notices were sent to participants who had contact with offices in the southern region in the past six months. Notice of the meeting and the opportunity for public comment is also sent to partner agencies and posted on the SVRC website and the state's online public notice webpage. The notice indicates the opportunity to give public testimony, either in person, via phone, email or letter. This testimony is recorded and transcribed for later review by the SVRC and the regional manager. The manager of the region may also attend public testimony to hear any comments that pertain to their office and staff. This testimony becomes a part of the formal minutes for that meeting. The committee also ensures that the client has been informed about the appeal process to ensure any individual problem has been addressed.

This is another method that the committee uses to ensure that participant's concerns are addressed and is used to improve customer service and bring any issues to light. It is also an opportunity for a participant to thank the agency and/or the counselor for good service and successful outcomes.

## Employer Survey

The Employer Survey was created by the Governor’s Council on Disabilities & Special Education’s Research Analyst. It was designed to elicit information about employer’s knowledge of individuals with disabilities to better understand perceived barriers when considering hiring individuals with disabilities.



THE STATE  
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### Employer Survey: Employing Individuals with Disabilities

1. Which of the following constitutes a disability? *(please circle all that apply)*

- a. Utilizing a wheelchair
- b. Intellectual/developmental challenges
- c. Mental illness
- d. Alzheimer’s & related dementia
- e. Advanced age
- f. low vision
- g. hard of hearing
- h. Poverty
- i. Traumatic brain injury
- j. Alcohol and chronic substance abuse

|  | Very uncomfortable    | Un-comfortable        | Neutral               | Comfortable           | Very comfortable      |
|--|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 2a. How comfortable do you think employers are regarding hiring someone with a disability? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

2b. Please describe:

3a. Have you hired someone with a disability before? *(please circle one)*

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure *(If no or unsure, please skip to #5)*

3b. If so, please describe:



|                                 | Very Poorly           | Poorly                | Neutral               | Well                  | Very Well             |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| 4a. If so, how did it work out? | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

4b. Please describe:

5. What are the barriers for hiring an individual with a disability? (please circle all that apply)

- a. Concern regarding increased costs
- b. Concern regarding additional supervision
- c. Concern regarding loss of productivity
- d. Concern that the individual does not possess the necessary skills/training for the job
- e. Concern regarding how to handle the situation if the employee does not work out
- f. Concern about the attitudes of other employees and co-workers towards people with disabilities
- g. Unfamiliarity with reasonable accommodations
- h. Concern over individual safety
- i. Unsure where to post jobs to best recruit individuals with disabilities
- j. Other \_\_\_\_\_
- k. No barriers encountered

6. Are you a federal contractor? (please circle one)

Yes or No (If yes, please complete #7, if no, please skip to #8)

7. Have you met the 7% utilization goal put forward by the Section 503 new regulation in the Rehabilitation Act? (please circle one)

- a. Yes
- b. No
- c. Unsure

8. How do employers feel about the employability of individuals with disabilities? (please circle one)

- d. All individuals can be employed regardless of disability
- e. Most individuals can be employed regardless of disability
- f. Some individuals can be employed regardless of disability
- g. Very few individuals with disabilities can be employed
- h. No individuals with disabilities should be employed

## Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (ADVR) Staff Questionnaire

The ADVR Staff Questionnaire was developed by ADVR Program Evaluation staff in order to provide a mechanism for feedback and give staff the opportunity to share their unique perspective of working directly with participants and assisting them to obtain competitive integrated employment. Open-ended questions and comment boxes were used to provide an opportunity for staff respondents to offer additional information pertaining to the closed-ended question.



ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF LABOR  
& WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

### 2016 Needs Assessment of Alaskans with Disabilities: For DVR Staff

Welcome

**Thank you for participating in our survey. Every three years, Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) must assess the needs of Alaskans with disabilities. The results from this survey will help DVR evaluate and conduct the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment report. Your anonymous feedback is valued and important. Thank you!**

#### General Information

\* 1. What is your primary role in the agency?

- Administrator
- Assistant
- Counselor
- Evaluator
- Manager

\* 2. List specific services you wish you had more funding for.



## Service Needs

3. Select the availability of the following services and supports, and then indicate if your participants consider it to be one of their top 5 barriers to employment.

|   | Availability<br>(Answer Choices: Available,<br>Limited Availability, Unavailable) | Barriers to Employment<br>(Answer Choices: One of the Top 5 Barriers to Employment, Not<br>One of the Top 5 Barriers to Employment) |
|---|---|---|
| Independent living skills training                      | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Qualified Community Rehabilitation Providers            | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Job search assistance                                   | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Career counseling                                       | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Occupational Skills Training                            | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| On-the-job supports                                     | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Job retention services                                  | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Youth transition to career and employment opportunities | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Transportation  | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Assistive Technology                                    | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Behavioral health services                              | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Adequate housing  | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Adequate housing  | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Adequate job opportunities                              | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Child Care  | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Culturally relevant services                            | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |
| Long-term funding as required for supported employment  | <input type="text"/>  | <input type="text"/>  |

Other (please specify)

\* 4. What is the most common feedback you receive from DVR participants regarding service needs?

**CRP's**

5. From whom do you routinely obtain the following services:

|                               | DVR Staff                | CRP                      | Both                     |
|-------------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Discovery                     | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On-the-Job Evaluation         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| On-the-Job Supports           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Preliminary Assessment        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Situational Assessment        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Vocational Evaluation         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Assistive Technology Services | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Benefits Counseling           | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Business Development Services | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Job Search Assistance         | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Job Placement                 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Job Readiness Training        | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Other (please specify)

6. When DVR staff can deliver the same or similar service, what factors, other than immediacy of need, influence your decision to use a CRP instead?

- Transportation difficulties
- Service must be delivered outside of regular work hours
- Employer networks
- Preference for a particular assessment tool
- CRP marketing strategies
- Participant's choice
- Other (please specify)

7. Indicate how you agree with the following statements:

Agreement

(Answer Choices: Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, Strongly Disagree)

There are enough CRP's to meet the service needs of my participants.

The range of services provided by CRP's meet the needs of my participants.

The quality of services provided by CRP's meet the needs of my participants.

CRPs have the level of education, professional training, and experience, to meet the needs of my participants

The CRPs working with participants on my caseload have received sufficient internal training from DVR.

There is an effective feedback loop established for when I encounter a problem with a CRP.

Reports received from CRP's are thorough and timely.

CRP services are cost effective and reasonable.

Other (please specify)

8. Once you've identified the need to use a CRP, how long does it take to receive results once you've asked for them?

- 1 to 2 Days
- 3 to 5 Days
- 1 to 2 weeks
- 3 to 4 weeks
- Greater than 1 month
- Greater than 2 months
- Other (please specify)

\* 9. Other than availability, what factors impact your decision to keep using the same CRP?

\* 10. Other than availability, what factors impact your decision to not use a particular CRP?

### WIOA Agency Partners

11. Rate your overall experience working with Job Centers in your region.

- Excellent
- Good
- Neutral/Neither excellent nor poor
- Fair
- Poor
- Other (please explain)

\* 12. What suggestions do you have on improving partnerships with WIOA agency partners?

## Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) Questionnaire

The CRP Questionnaire was developed in conjunction with ADVR's CRP Specialist. The intent was to discover if there were areas for improvement in customer service, gaps in coverage that might be addressed, and insight from the CRP perspective of barriers to employment.



### 2016 Needs Assessment of Alaskans with Disabilities: Community Rehabilitation Providers

Thank you for participating in our survey. Every three years, Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) must assess the needs of Alaskans with disabilities. The results from this survey will help DVR evaluate and conduct the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment report. Your feedback is valued and important. Thank you!

1. Approximately how many referrals does your organization receive from DVR annually?

- 1-5 referrals
- 6-10 referrals
- 11-25 referrals
- 26-50 referrals
- More than 50 referrals

2. Can your organization serve clients who live beyond a 50 miles radius of any DVR office (i.e. clients living in distant or remote areas)?

- Yes
- No
- Other (please specify)

3. At the time of referral, are you provided adequate information for your organization to effectively initiate the contracted services?

- Yes
- No. Please indicate the type(s) of information not given.

4. How quickly is your organization able to initiate services with DVR consumers after receiving a referral from DVR?

- At referral
- Within a week
- Between 1 and 2 weeks
- Between 2 and 4 weeks
- More than 4 weeks
- Other (please specify)

5. Would your organization benefit from DVR providing a form template for documenting referral requests and final outcome reports?

- Yes
- No. Please indicate how your organization communicates the final report with DVR.

6. How quickly do you receive the Authorization for Purchase (AFP) from DVR staff?

- Within a week of being contacted by DVR
- Between 1 and 2 weeks after being contacted by DVR
- More than 2 weeks after being contacted by DVR
- Other (please specify)

7. Please rate the overall quality of the communication from DVR staff.

|                          | Poor                  | Fair                  | Neutral               | Good                  | Excellent             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Quality of communication | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

Other (suggestions for improvement)

8. From the services listed below, indicate which ones your organization considers to be the top 5 barriers to employment.

Barriers to Employment  
 (Answer Choices: One of the Top 5 Barriers to Employment, Not one of the Top 5 Barriers to Employment)

|   |                      |
|---|----------------------|
| Independent living skills training                      | <input type="text"/> |
| Job search assistance                                   | <input type="text"/> |
| Career counseling                                       | <input type="text"/> |
| Occupational Skills Training                            | <input type="text"/> |
| On-the-job supports                                     | <input type="text"/> |
| Job retention services                                  | <input type="text"/> |
| Youth transition to career and employment opportunities | <input type="text"/> |
| Transportation  | <input type="text"/> |
| Assistive Technology                                    | <input type="text"/> |
| Behavioral health services                              | <input type="text"/> |
| Adequate housing  | <input type="text"/> |
| Basic literacy education                                | <input type="text"/> |
| Adequate job opportunities                              | <input type="text"/> |
| Child Care  | <input type="text"/> |
| Culturally relevant services                            | <input type="text"/> |
| Long-term funding as required for supported employment  | <input type="text"/> |

Other (please specify)

9. Which of the following issues significantly impacts your organization's ability to provide services to individuals with disabilities? (Check all that apply)

- Lack of available qualified and/or trained staff
- Lack of available training
- Rising cost of fixed overhead (fixed) expenses (gas, utilities, rent, etc.)
- Employee turnover
- Slowing economy
- Lack of available financial resources (grants, contracts, in-kind payments, etc.)
- Lack of available resources for Supported Employment long term supports
- Lack of referrals
- Increase in consumers with multiple disabilities
- Incomplete information sharing from VR Counselors regarding referrals
- Delayed receipt of DVR authorizations for services
- Lack of timely payment for services
- Other (please specify)

10. Please provide DVR with suggestions on how to improve the referral process and/or any other areas where we can improve.

11. If you would like to discuss your suggestions for improvement please provide your contact information below.

|                      |                      |
|----------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Name</b>          | <input type="text"/> |
| <b>Company</b>       | <input type="text"/> |
| <b>Email Address</b> | <input type="text"/> |
| <b>Phone Number</b>  | <input type="text"/> |

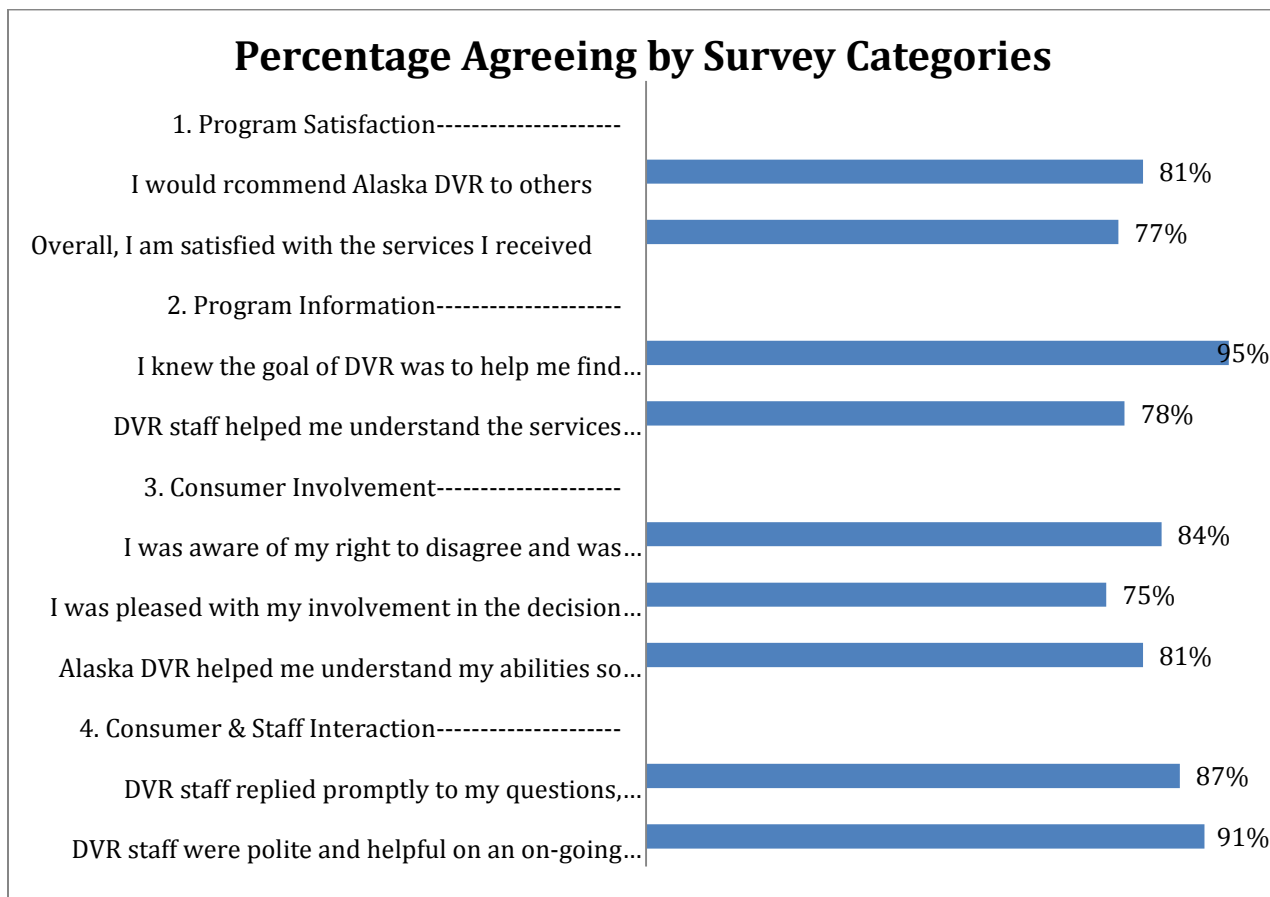


## V. WHAT WE DISCOVERED

### Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Participants

Jointly, the SVRC and ADVR continuously work to improve the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services to Alaskans who are in need of, and who are receiving, vocational rehabilitation services. The SVRC oversees an ongoing consumer satisfaction survey of 100% of ADVR participants closed from an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). This monthly survey offers individuals an opportunity to convey their impression of their VR experience and services received.

From May 2015 to April 2016, ADVR assisted 1046 participants that exited the program from an IPE. The satisfaction survey focuses on program satisfaction, program information, participant involvement, and participant/staff interaction. The current response rate for the consumer satisfaction survey is 12%.



#### Consumer quotes:

- *They were all polite, helpful, and seem to care about me.*
- *Disagreements were settled in a professional manner.*
- *The ADVR staff was very patient in my search for employment even after I reached my educational goal.*
- *I was promptly informed of all aspects of the process.*
- *ADVR provided extensive training opportunities.*
- *The ADVR counselor took into consideration my educational and professional backgrounds, as well as my interests and abilities when formulating an employment goal.*
- *I would recommend ADVR with enthusiasm.*

## Alaskan Employer’s Perspectives on Hiring Individuals with Disabilities

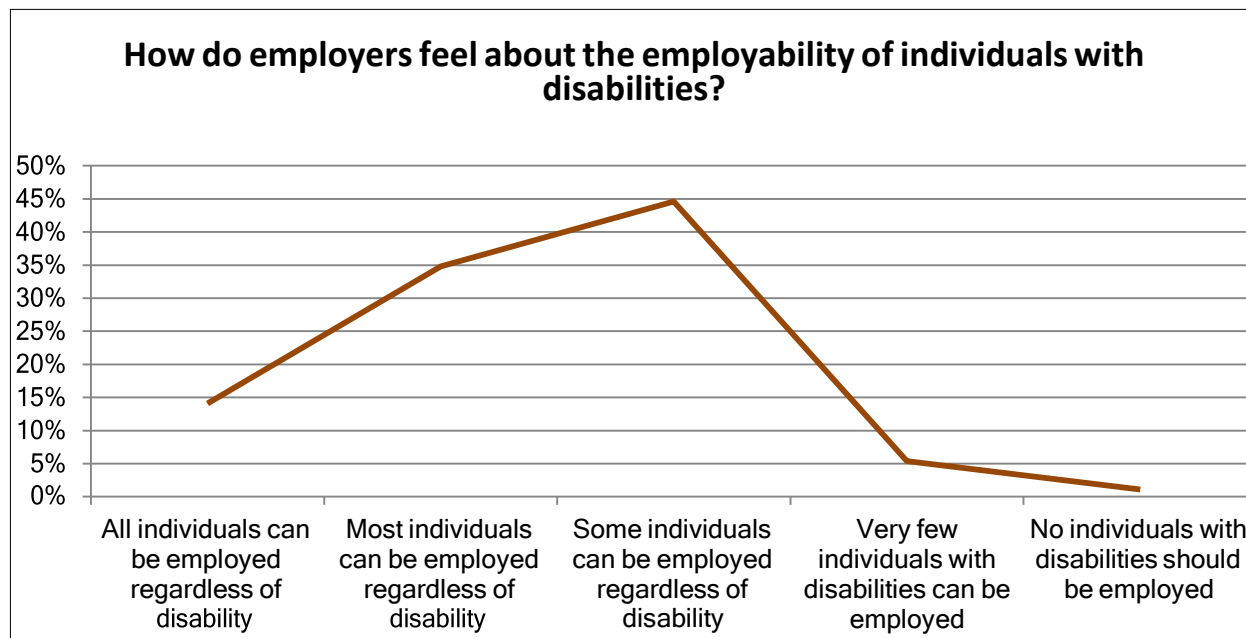
According to the published report from the Governor’s Council on Disabilities & Special Education:

“Survey results included overall positive experiences for those employers that had hired individuals with disabilities. Generally, employers thought “some” or “most” individuals with disabilities could be employed but their general comfort level with doing so was very low. In addition, “hidden” disabilities such as chronic alcoholism and substance abuse were not as easily perceived disabilities by employers, when compared with more “visible” disabilities (i.e. utilizing a wheelchair). With respect to barriers to hiring people with disabilities, the largest concerns are if the individual has the necessary skills for the job; requires additional supervision, training, resources, and costs; or poses increased safety/liability risks in the workplace. Supervisors were concerned with their own ability to properly support individuals who needed accommodations, believing it was too easy to make a mistake and “get sued.” Recommendations for change include educational programs for employers that focus on awareness of various disabilities, instructions on how to include and integrate diverse groups of people in the workplace, and information on accessing resources, supports, and making reasonable accommodations.”

| Which of the following constitutes a disability? (please choose all that apply) |                  |                |
|---|------------------|----------------|
| Answer Options  | Response Percent | Response Count |
| <i>Intellectual / developmental challenges</i>                                  | <b>100.0%</b>    | <b>90</b>      |
| Traumatic brain injury  | 94.4%            | 85             |
| Mental illness  | 93.3%            | 84             |
| Hard of hearing   | 91.1%            | 82             |
| Alzheimer's & related dementia  | 90.0%            | 81             |
| Utilizing a wheelchair  | 86.7%            | 78             |
| Low vision  | 85.6%            | 77             |
| alcohol & chronic substance abuse   | 72.2%            | 65             |
| <i>Advanced age</i>   | <b>48.9%</b>     | <b>44</b>      |
| <i>Poverty</i>  | <b>35.6%</b>     | <b>32</b>      |
| <i>answered question</i>  |                  | <b>90</b>      |

Employers, in general, were uncomfortable with the idea of hiring someone with a disability, with 65% of respondents indicating either very uncomfortable or uncomfortable. Employers listed the need for additional supervision, loss of productivity, perceived lack of skills as well as safety, inability to make a reasonable accommodation, attitudes of other employees, and increased costs.

In spite of being “uncomfortable” with hiring an individual with a disability, almost 80% of respondents thought that it was possible.



Another concern employers shared was liability, risk and lawsuits. Employers feel that only a portion of the disability population can work, and that population mostly consists of individuals with visible disabilities. Fewer employers perceived individuals with chronic alcoholism and substance abuse as having “legitimate” disabilities. Further, alcohol and substance use and abuse are considered to be “lifestyle choices” by some people.

Also of note, is that Federal contractors were not meeting the mandated 7% utilization goal under Section 503 of The Rehabilitation Act, as Amended. Of the 31 federal contractors who took the survey, only three reported meeting this goal, 17 were “unsure”, and 11 indicated they have not met that percentage. This is another opportunity to work with Federal contractors to help them create employment opportunities in order to assist them in meeting this mandatory requirement.

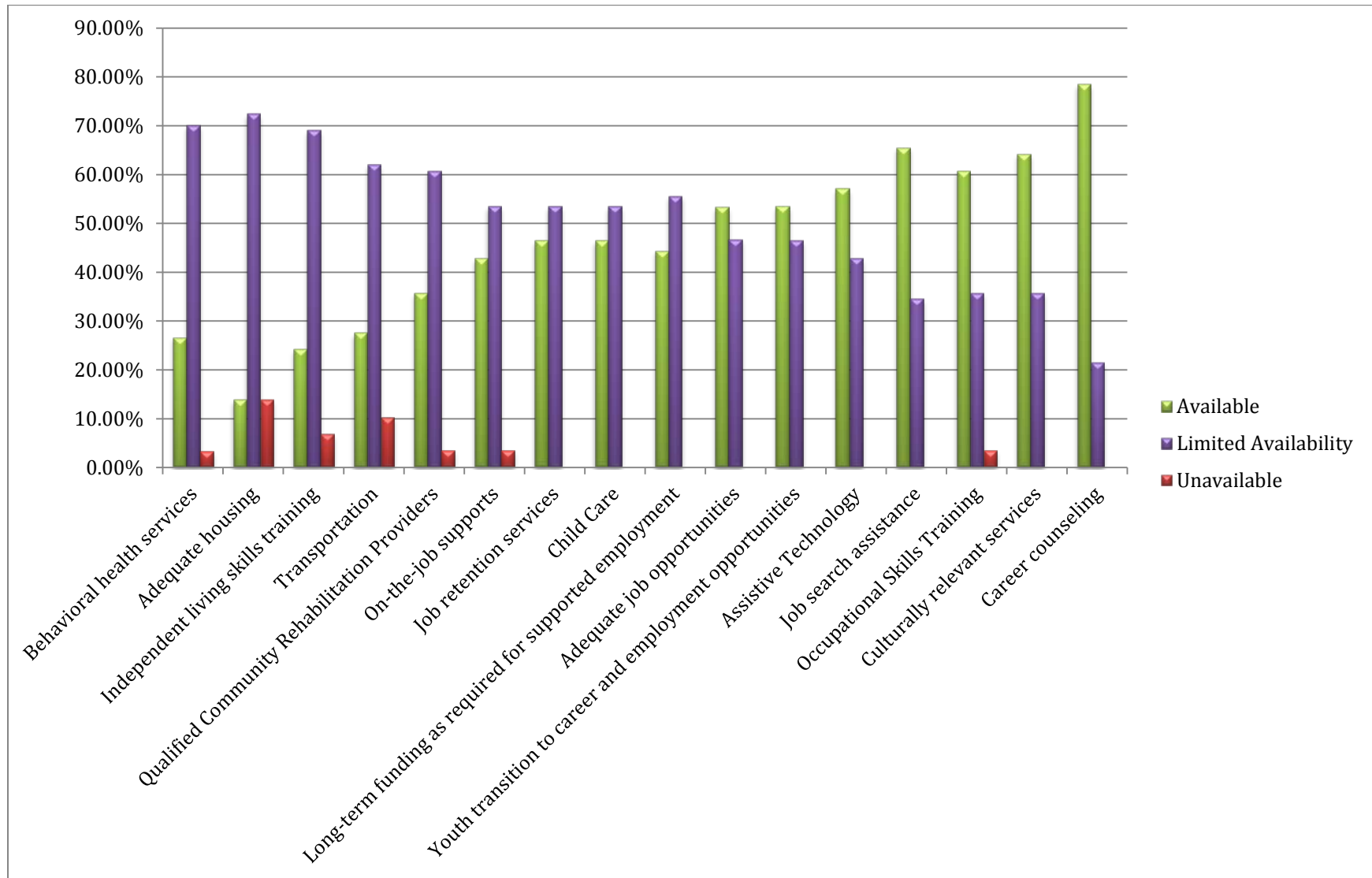
The employers who had hired a person with a disability and had a positive experience (the majority), felt that employers needed to hear more “success stories” and to be educated on the actual risks and rewards. Under the regulations of WIOA, Core Programs are required to effectively serve employers. The results of this survey will be used to help structure future training for employers to address their primary concerns and alleviate myths and perceptions of hiring individuals with disabilities.

## **Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Staff**

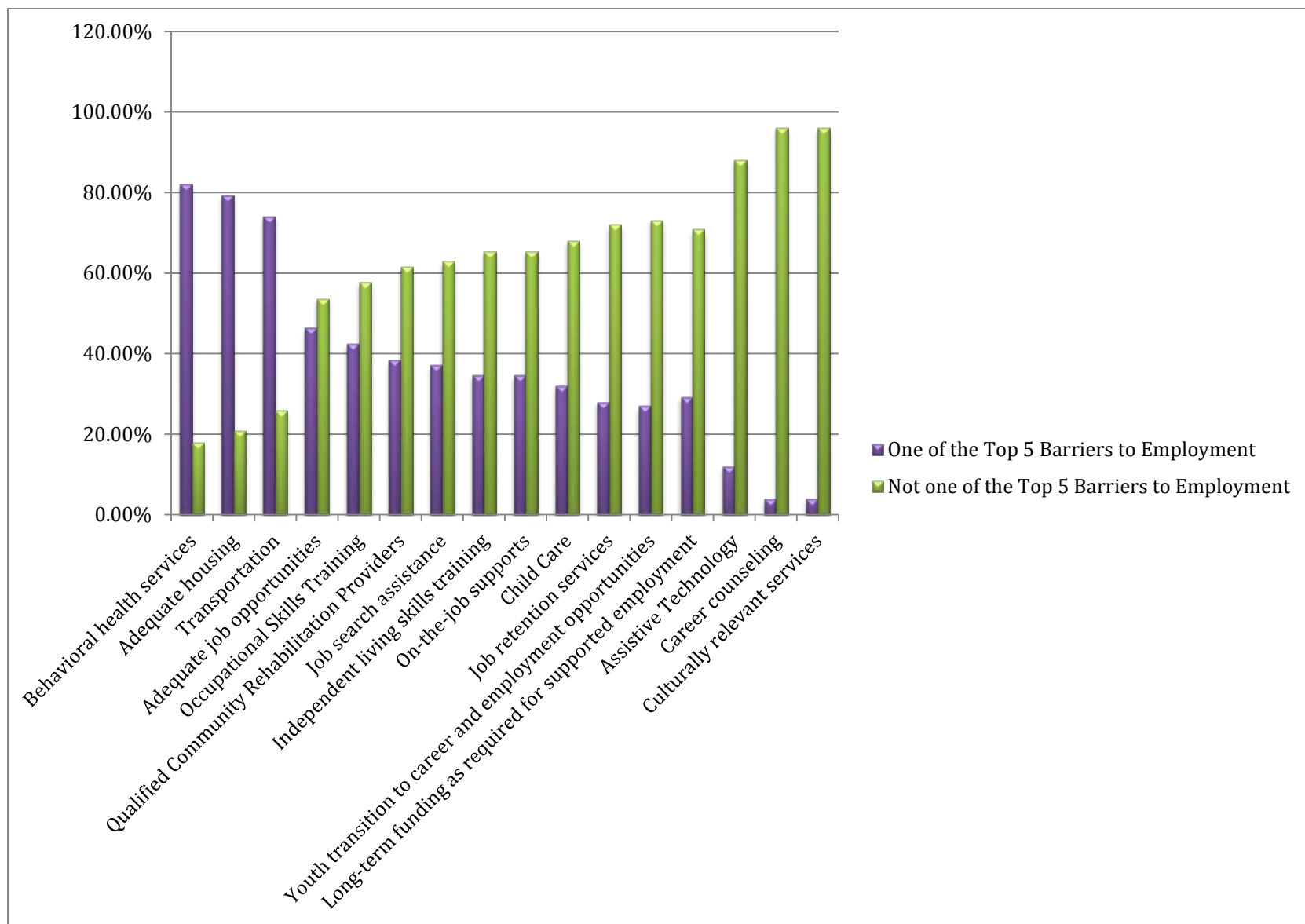
ADVR staff helps eligible Alaskans determine their employment goal, determine the services they will need in order to reach that goal, and who will provide the services. The services identified are specific to the individual's needs, circumstances and employment goal. ADVR employees consist of Administrators, Vocational Rehabilitation Assistants, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors, Vocational Rehabilitation Evaluators, and Rehabilitation Managers. Only ADVR staff that provide direct services to participants were surveyed.

In May 2016, 74 surveys were emailed and 40 (54%) responded. The survey focused on participant feedback, availability of services, barriers to employment, availability and effectiveness of CRPs, and overall experience when working with ADVR partner agencies. When asked the specific services staff wished they had more funding for, the most common responses were: travel funding for face-to-face time, transportation assistance, job search assistance, staff training, and Supported Employment including long-term supports. ADVR staff indicated participants often experience limited access to housing (72%), behavioral health services (70%), independent living skills training (69%), transportation (62%), and qualified CRPs (60%). When asked to identify participant's top five barriers to employment, ADVR staff responded: behavioral health services (82%), adequate housing (79%), transportation (74%), adequate job opportunities (46%), and occupational skills training (42%). The most common needs requested by participants were: assistance with transportation, housing, behavior health services, child care, treatment options, and available behavioral health care providers. Staff also cited participants' need for improved rural area services and Alaska's limited public transportation systems.

## Rating of Availability of Services by ADVR Staff



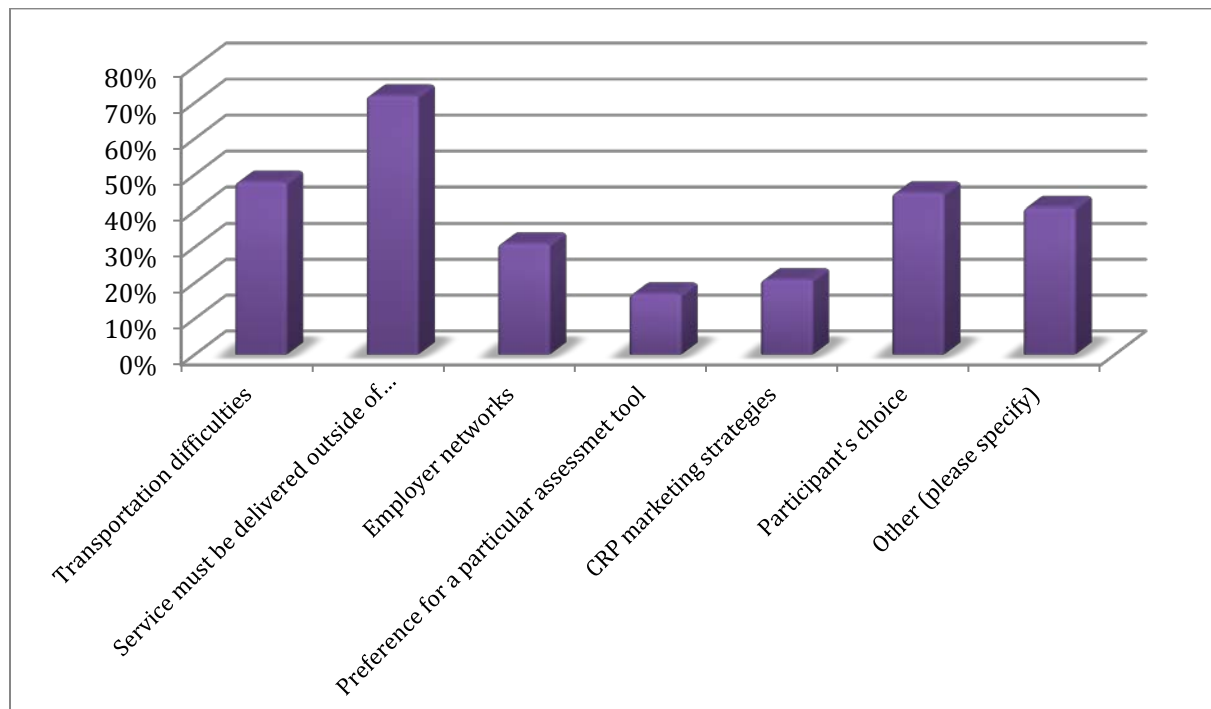
## Rating of Barriers to Employment by ADVR Staff



ADVR works in conjunction with Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Core Programs. ADVR was asked to rate their experience with local Job Centers. Thirty-seven percent rated their experience as “Good”, and 20% rated it as “Excellent”. ADVR staff suggested increased communication and regular meetings with the WIOA Core Programs to improve partnerships.

Other than immediacy of need, ADVR staff reported they utilize CRP services when the service must be delivered outside of regular work hours (72%), when participant transportation difficulties occur (48%), or it is the participant’s choice (45%).

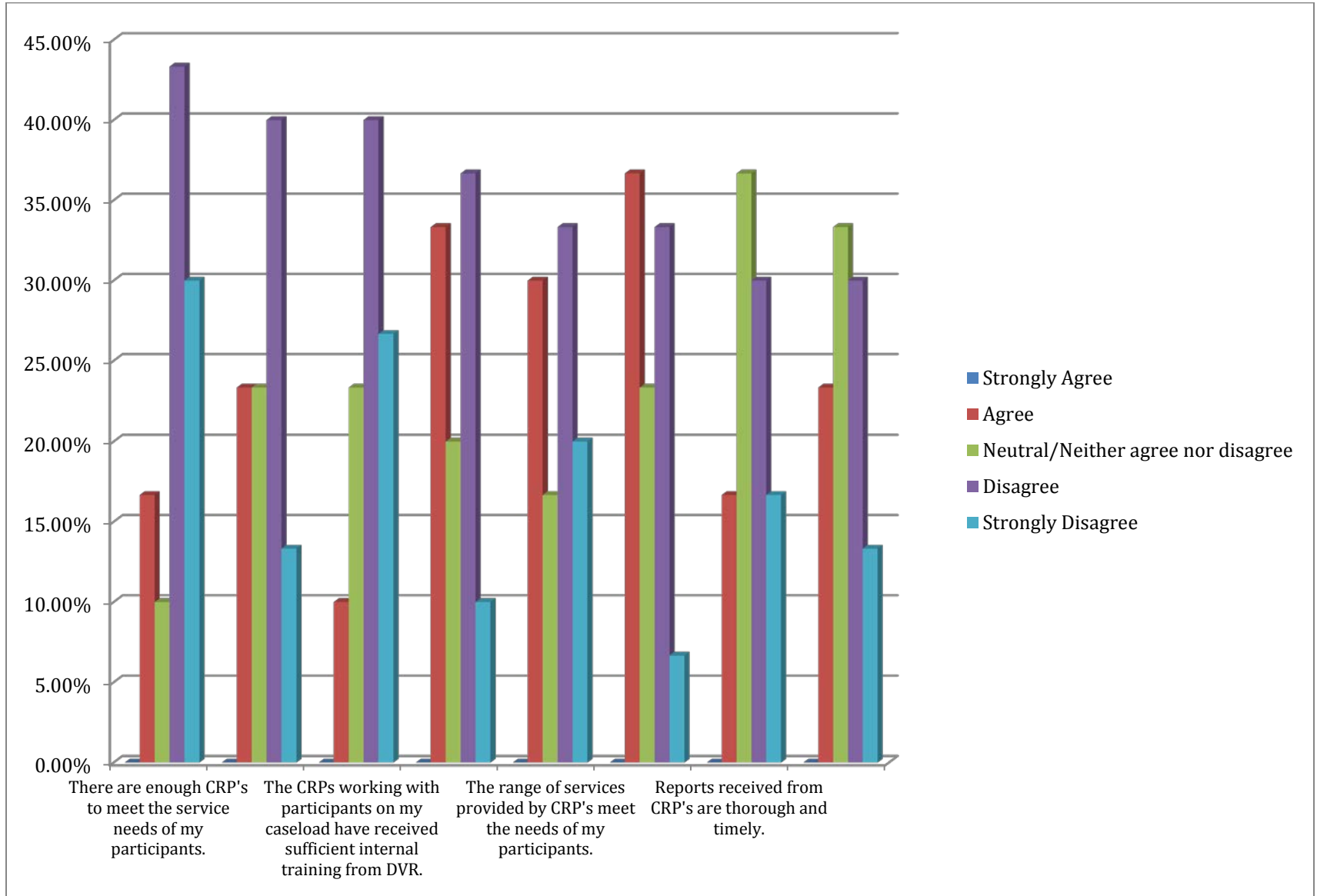
### **Factors that influence the use of a CRP when ADVR staff can deliver the same or similar service**



ADVR staff responses identified that there are not enough CRPs and a need for CRPs to receive more training from ADVR or other approved CRP training opportunities.

The CRP evaluation portion of the questionnaire shows that there are some areas of concern that will need to be addressed when designing strategic goals for the next three years.

# CRP Evaluation



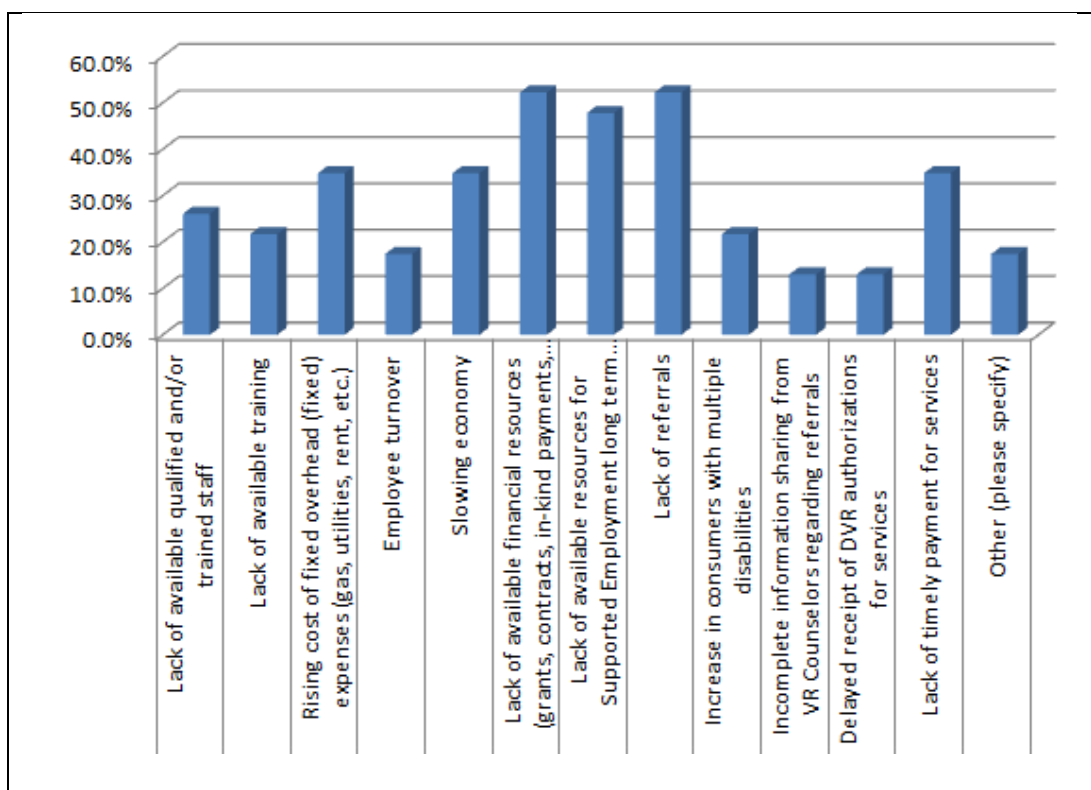


## Community Rehabilitation Providers

ADVR continually assesses the need to develop and improve CRPs within the state. Development of CRPs is an on-going challenge that is compounded by the unique issues of population, distance separation of rural communities, and other factors specific to Alaska. ADVR approves, partners with, and utilizes CRPs to provide specific vocational rehabilitation services to participants in order to maximize the potential for employment. Additionally, ADVR provides training to CRPs both on the ADVR process and to continuously improve CRP service delivery. Through quality assurance measures, ADVR ensures that CRP purchased services are fiscally responsible and the services meet the needs of ADVR participants.

In March 2016, 68 emailed surveys were sent to CRPs, yielding a 35% response rate. Overall, 63% of the respondents felt the overall quality and communication with ADVR staff was “Good”, while 17% rated it as “Excellent”. The majority of CRPs felt they could begin providing services to participants within a week of an ADVR referral. Additionally, 83% of CRPs felt they were provided adequate information at referral to effectively initiate services. CRPs identified transportation, long term funding for Supported Employment, on-the-job supports, adequate housing, and adequate job opportunities as the top 5 barriers to employment for ADVR participants. ADVR has offices in Anchorage, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, Eagle River, Ketchikan, Kodiak, Wasilla, and Sitka, and 54% of CRP respondents reported they are able to serve individuals who live beyond a 50 mile radius of any ADVR office. Respondents expressed that lack of available financial resources (52%); lack of available funds for Supported Employment and long term supports (48%), and lack of referrals (52%) as the biggest issues that significantly impacted their ability to provide services to individuals with disabilities.

## Impact on providing services

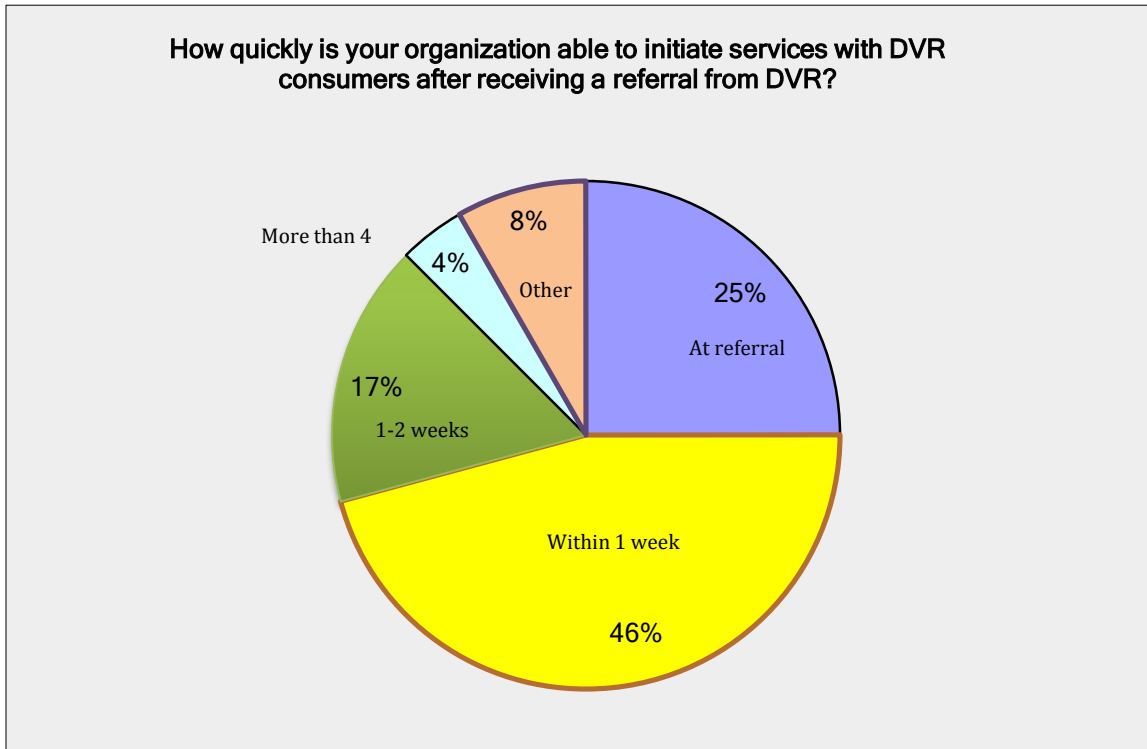


CRP quotes:

- *I feel that I have a good working relationship with good communication.*

- *Local office is great. We had a situation this year where a more streamlined method for getting youth enrolled in ADVR came available but only found out about it by accident. This had great impact on our funding and our ability to provide services to several youth. We were able to work it out and are hopeful in the future we would be informed about changes and improvements.*

## Initiating services



## VI. Pre-transition Employment Services

On July 22, 2014, President Obama signed The Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) into law. Under Title V of WIOA, the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was amended. Section 110 of the Rehabilitation Act requires public Vocational Rehabilitation programs to reserve not less than 15% of federal allotments to carry out activities in Section 113 for the provision of pre-employment transition services to be provided to Students with Disabilities (SWD).

Under Section 113 of the Act, there are five required pre-employment transition activities that must be provided to all students with disabilities who are eligible or potentially eligible for VR services. The required activities include:

- job exploration counseling;
- work-based learning experiences, which may include in-school or after school opportunities, or experience outside the traditional school setting (including internships), that is provided in an integrated environment to the maximum extent possible;
- counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education;
- workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living; and
- instruction in self-advocacy, which may include peer mentoring.

Additionally, authorized activities are allowed with remaining funds available after the provision of the required activities above. Authorized activities include:

- implementing effective strategies to increase the likelihood of independent living and inclusion in communities and competitive integrated workplaces;
- developing and improving strategies for individuals with intellectual disabilities and individuals with significant disabilities to live independently, participate in postsecondary education experiences, and obtain and retain competitive integrated employment;
- providing instruction to vocational rehabilitation counselors, school transition personnel, and other persons supporting students with disabilities;
- disseminating information about innovative, effective, and efficient approaches to achieve the goals of this section;
- coordinating activities with transition services provided by local educational agencies under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1400 et seq.);
- applying evidence-based findings to improve policy, procedure, practice, and the preparation of personnel, in order to better achieve the goals of this section;
- developing model transition demonstration projects;
- establishing or supporting multistate or regional partnerships involving States, local educational agencies, designated State units, developmental disability agencies, private businesses, or other participants to achieve the goals of this section; and
- disseminating information and strategies to improve the transition to postsecondary activities of individuals who are members of traditionally unserved populations.

Local VR offices must also provide Pre-Employment Transition Coordination services, which include

- attending individualized education program meetings for students with disabilities, when invited;
- working with the local workforce development boards, one-stop centers, and employers to develop work opportunities for students with disabilities, including internships;
- summer employment and other employment opportunities available throughout the school year, and apprenticeships;
- working with schools, including those carrying out activities under section 614(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1414(d)(1)(A)(i)(VIII)), to coordinate and ensure the provision of pre-employment transition services under this section; and
- when invited, attend person-centered planning meetings for individuals receiving services under Title XIX of the Social Security Act (42 U.S.C. 1396 et seq.).

The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (ADVR) has made significant progress throughout Alaska to deliver required pre-employment transition activities. The provision of required pre-employment transition activities focuses on Students with Disabilities (SWD) who are a subgroup of Youth with Disabilities (YWD). SWD is categorized as youth ages 16-21 who are currently enrolled in school, whereas YWD are ages 14-24. ADVR delivers required pre-employment transition activities as a three step approach to basic employment readiness, which focuses on personal development and skills enhancement, through job exploration, workplace readiness training, and work based learning experiences. Through the delivery of quality, pre-employment transition services, students will have documented exposure to career counseling, work readiness skills attainment, and work-based learning experiences that reflect the student's individual goals, interests, values and strengths.

ADVR contracts with nine agencies serving youth as Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) to provide a comprehensive and intensive set of required Pre-Employment Transition Service activities. These providers represent a cross section of youth disability services and include two Independent Living Centers, six Behavioral Health organizations and a Developmental Disability agency. These agencies cover both rural and urban areas. ADVR pre-employment transition projects began providing services in April of 2015 and during that time, over 150 students have participated.

### **Transition Camps**

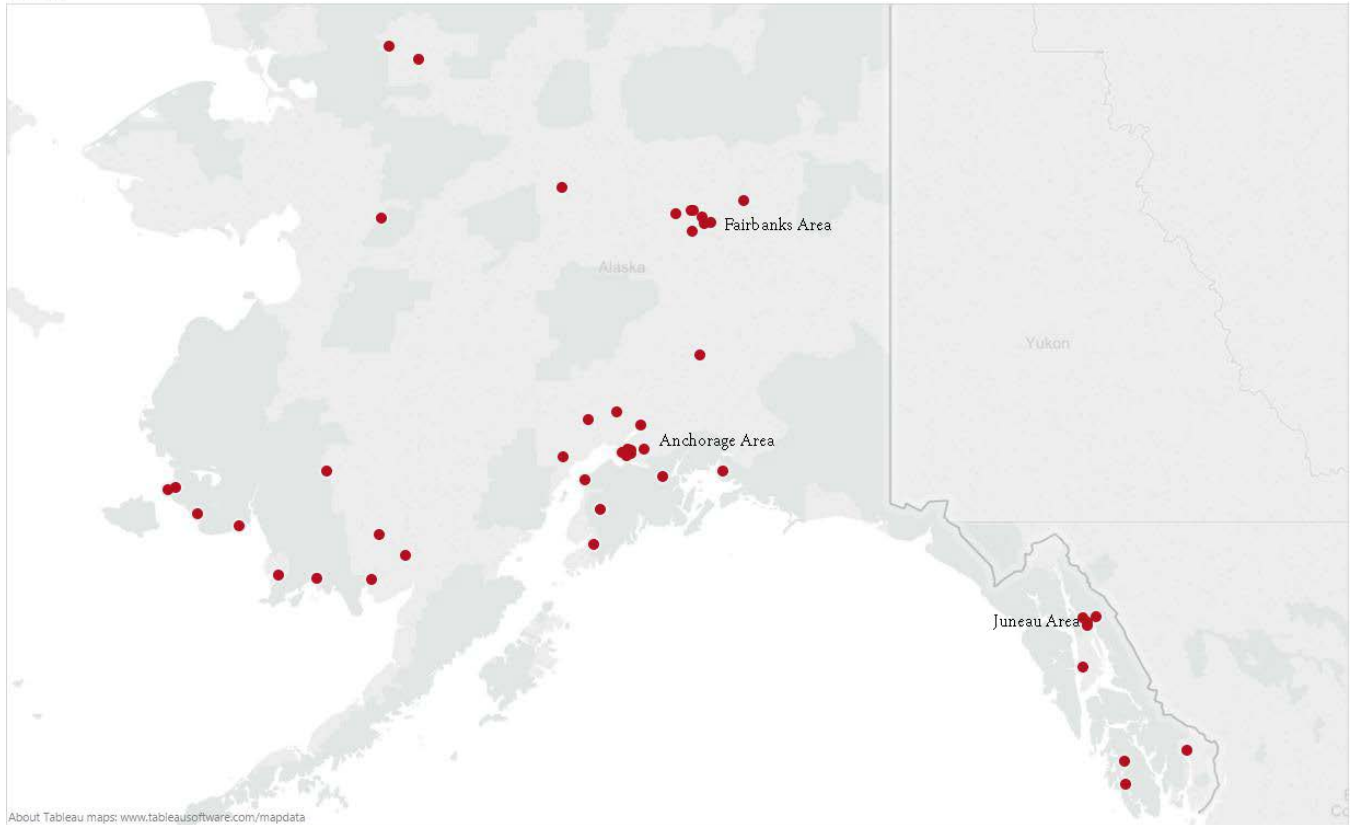
In FFY2016, over 100 students with disabilities from rural school districts, juvenile justice facilities, and state foster care will participate in one of seven Transition Camps funded through the Department of Labor and Workforce Development's Divisions of Vocational Rehabilitation and Employment and Training Services (ETS), and the Department of Education and Early Development (DEED).

Transition Camps provide an avenue of learning for students who are beginning the process of transitioning from school to community life, allowing them to gain information and understanding about themselves, resources and supports available for employment, postsecondary education, or vocational training. Transition Camps are designed based on specific district and student need and often vary from district to district, facility to facility, based on local culture, available community resources and-presenters, and vary in length from three to five days.

Transition Camps engage students in activities and presentations from businesses, postsecondary education and training providers, and community service providers. Each student has the opportunity to learn about employment opportunities (apprenticeship programs, employment trends, Alaska "Hot Jobs"), gain information about creating portfolios on Alaska Career Inventory Systems (AKCIS), and tour or research Job Centers to understand how to access and conduct research for possible future employment. Students also learn about available training and educational opportunities both in their own communities and throughout the state.

As of May 2016, DVR has held transition camps attended by 158 students with disabilities. The students attending resided in 32 cities across the state of Alaska. Of the cities represented, 24 were not on the road system, and 19 were considered rural villages. The camps also occurred in six hub villages and in nine urban cities. The reach of the transition camps across the state of Alaska encompasses over 303,000 square miles. Most of the travel required to reach the remote areas of Alaska require two to three airline flights that can cover up to 1,900 miles, and may take up to two days to reach.

Sheet 1



About Tableau maps: [www.tableausoftware.com/mapdata](http://www.tableausoftware.com/mapdata)  
Map based on Longitude (generated) and Latitude (generated). Details are shown for Zip Code.

Transition Camps have proven to be an excellent option providing students with opportunities to get a snap-shot view of available resources and supports, to network with agencies and community partners, and to learn more about how they see their own life in the future. All Transition Camp students were provided a pre-survey and post-survey. The five question pre-survey, and the six question post-survey, focus on high school graduation, employment, and future educational goals.

# Transition Camp Questionnaire

Students attending the Transition Camps were give a Pre and Post survey.



Date of Birth:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## State of Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – Transition Camp Series Pre Survey

1. Are you familiar with Alaska’s Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services? (Circle one)

Agree

Disagree

Comments:

2. I think I will graduate from high school? (Circle one)

Agree

Disagree

Comments:

3. Graduating from high school will help me get a job. (Circle one)

Agree

Disagree

4. What level of education/training do you think is needed to get a good job? (Circle one)

Elementary education

Vocational (Specialized training) education

Secondary (High School) education

Postsecondary (College) education

Comments:

5. What is the highest level of education/training you expect to complete? (Circle one)

Elementary education

Vocational education

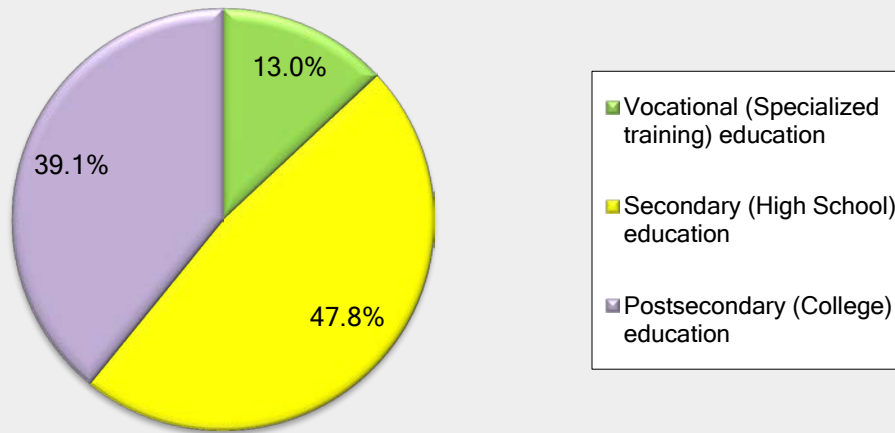
Secondary (High School) education

Postsecondary (College) education

Comments:

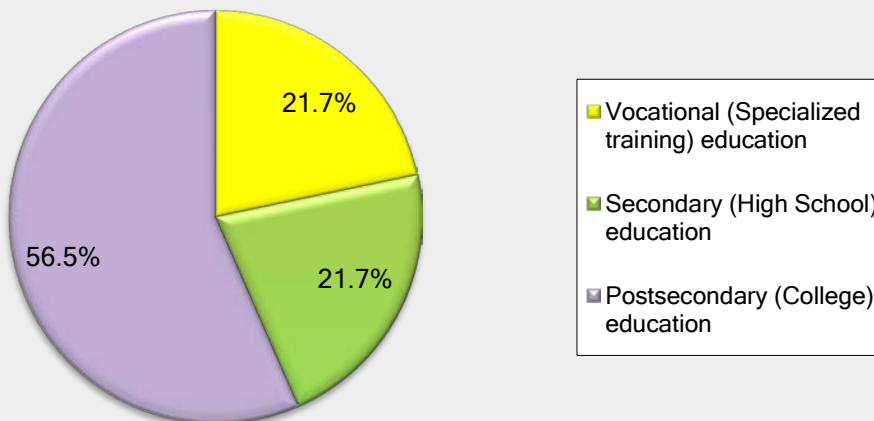


**What is the highest level of education/training you expect to complete?**



All of the respondents (100%) believed that graduating high school would help them get a job. The majority felt that a post-secondary (college) education was the level of education needed to obtain a “good job”.

**What level of education/training do you think is needed to get a good job?**



When students were asked directly if the camp helped them determine future job opportunities, and the importance of enrolling and completing education programs, 91% of the students agreed it had.

In addition to ADVR surveying Transition Camp participants, the Community Rehabilitation Provider, Southeast Regional Resource Center (SERRC), also distributed conference evaluation forms to all students and teachers. Each evaluation form was tailored to the specifics of the camp and its’ presenters, but included a few reoccurring questions. When asked if the students had a better understanding of what



employers expect of an employee, 61% responded as “Strongly Agree”. Students were asked if they would continue to seek information about their future career opportunities, and 72% also expressed that they “Strongly Agree”. Overall the Transition Camp students expressed an understanding of what is needed to achieve their employment goals. Lastly, the students were asked if the conference increased their understanding of how they can live independently; 56% of the students responded “Agreed” and 44% “Strongly Agreed”.

**Transition Camp survey quotes:**

- It was very helpful and I really liked it.
- It was also fun!
- I learned a lot.
- It was great!
- I will use the information I learned in the camp to...Pursue my dreams.

## **JOBZ Club**

Another noteworthy pre-employment transition activity successfully implemented by ADVR is JOBZ Club. JOBZ Club is designed as an after school activity that introduces students to workplace readiness training (Soft Skills). Each of the JOBZ Club's seven modules provides topics of discussion and engaging activities to help students gain the soft skills relating to communication, teamwork, problem solving, attitude, and professionalism. There are currently 155 teachers who participate in the JOBZ Club Network, a listserv that provides transition resources.

Half of the JOBZ Club programs held this year were in rural/remote areas of Alaska. ADVR supported JOBZ Clubs in Chefornak (twice), Manokotak, and Galena.

The JOBZ Club program distributes an exit survey upon completion of the program. The students were asked to answer the questions based on the extent to which they agreed or disagreed with the list of questions. The respondents answered that 76% agreed that what they had learned about professionalism will help them at a job. Students were also asked about communication, and 84% agreed that what they learned about communication would assist in their job opportunities. In addition to communication and professionalism, students learned about the importance of soft skills. When asked, 70% of the students agreed that the activities helped them understand soft skill concepts.

As of June 2016, 45 students had participated in eight JOBZ Clubs facilitated by school teachers. Of those 45, two JOBZ Clubs were held in a residential psychiatric treatment facility, four JOBZ Clubs were in remote rural villages, and two were in urban communities. All students took an exit survey upon completion of JOBZ Club that asked about their experience, what they learned, how they benefitted, and how the skills they learned might impact their future educational goals.

### **JOBZ Club quotes:**

- Jobz Club had everything to show me from day one and it was helpful to me.
- It's amazing and fun!
- Learned more about teamwork.

# JOBZ Club Questionnaire



## Student Exit Survey

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Your feedback can help make JOBZ Club better. Please take a few minutes to complete this survey. Please mark the extent to which you agree or disagree with the following:

|  | Agree | Somewhat Agree | Somewhat Disagree | Disagree |
|--|-------|----------------|-------------------|----------|
| 1. Participating in JOBZ Club helped me understand the importance of soft skills on a job? |       |                |                   |          |
| 2. What I learned about Communication will help me at a job?                               |       |                |                   |          |
| 3. What I learned about Enthusiasm and Attitude will help me at a job?                     |       |                |                   |          |
| 4. What I learned about Teamwork will help me at a job?                                    |       |                |                   |          |
| 5. What I learned about Professionalism will help me at a job?                             |       |                |                   |          |
| 6. The activities were helpful for learning the concepts of soft skills?                   |       |                |                   |          |
| 7. I will be a better employee from the skills I learned from JOBZ Club?                   |       |                |                   |          |

Comments or suggestions to make JOBZ Club better: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

In addition to surveying students attending Transition Camps and JOBZ Club, ADVR also surveyed 98 current transition-aged (16-21) VR participants. This eight question survey focused on graduation status, plans for further education, and what assistance they felt they might need in order to become employed. The surveys were emailed via the online survey tool, *SurveyMonkey*.

## Active pre-employment transition Participant Questionnaire



AGE: \_\_\_\_\_

**State of Alaska**  
**Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

1. I know about the services provided by Alaska's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. (Circle one)

**Agree** **Disagree**

**Comments:**

2. I want a job/career. (Circle one)

**Agree** **Disagree**

3. Graduating from high school will help me get a job. (Circle one)

**Agree** **Disagree**

4. What level of education/training do you think is needed to get a good job? (Circle one)

**Elementary education** **Vocational (Specialized training) education**

**High School Diploma** **Postsecondary (College) education**

**Comments:**

5. What is the highest level of education/training you expect to complete? (Circle one)

**Elementary education** **Vocational (Specialized training) education**

**High School Diploma** **Postsecondary (College) education**

**Comments:**

6. What would help you find a job? (Check all that apply)

**Reliable Transportation**

**High School Diploma**

**Job Search Skills**

**Independent Living skills**

**More training**

**Other (specify)**  \_\_\_\_\_

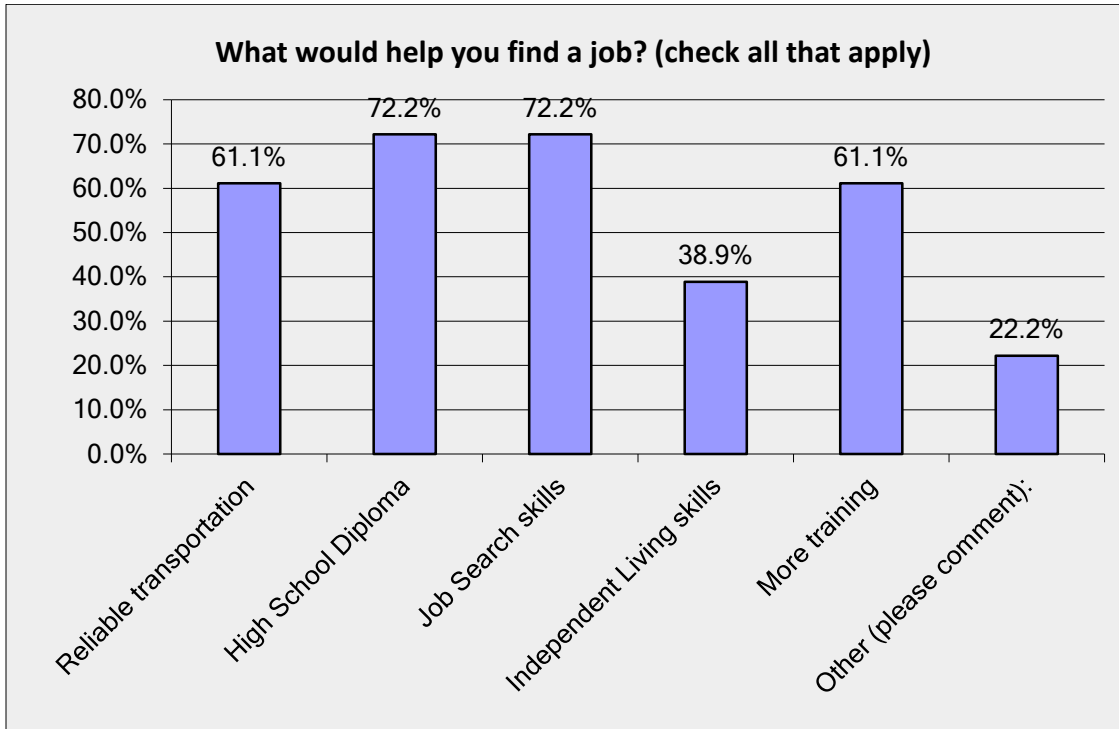
7. What do you plan to do after completing your current education/training program? (Circle one)

**Look for a job** **Stay at home**

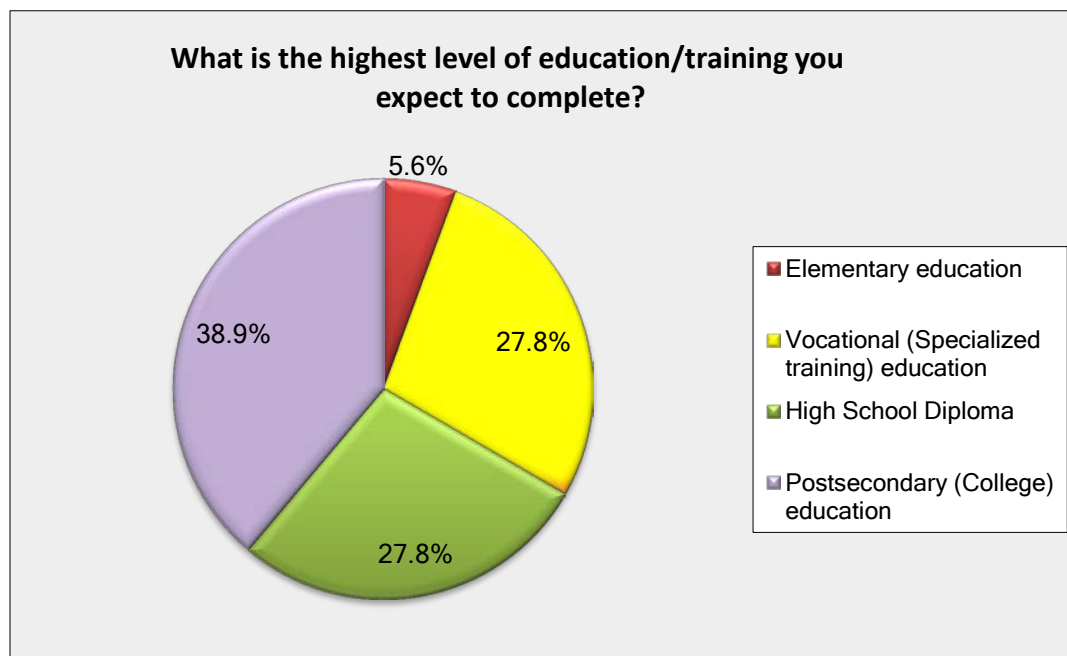
**Enroll in further education/training** **Do not know**

**Comments:**

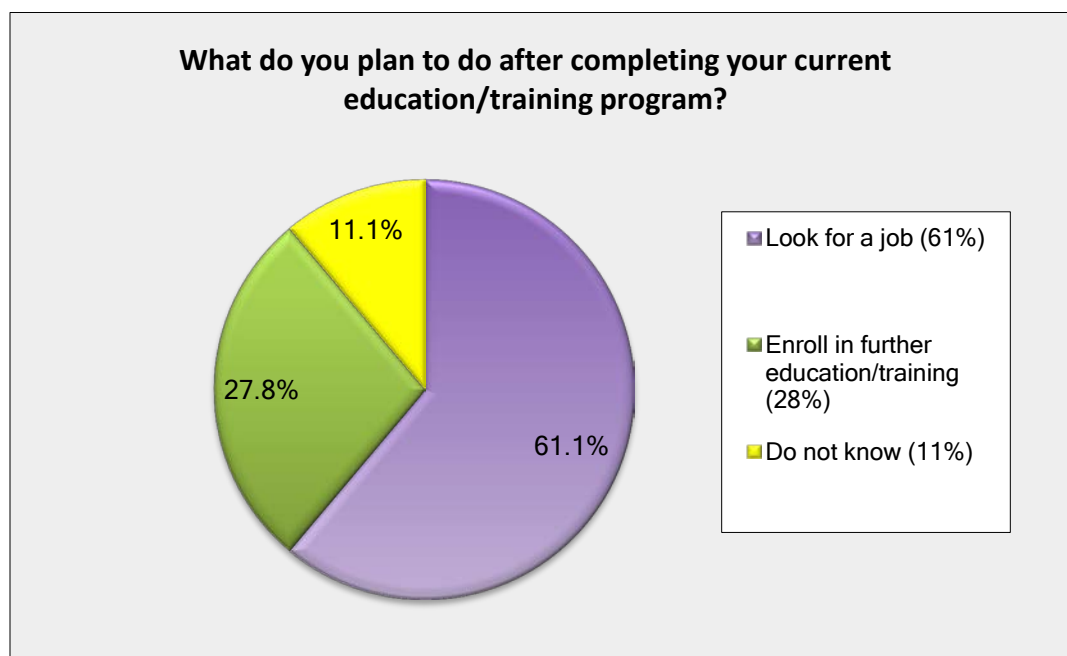
Of the 98 surveys sent, 18 responded giving a response rate of 18% for the group of current participants in VR. The surveys were emailed and then a text reminder was sent a month later to encourage responses. Unlike the Transition Camp students, 94% of the respondents were familiar with ADVR, and, similar to Transition Camp students, 100% of ADVR participants realize that a minimum of a high school education will help them with future employment opportunities. When asked what would help them find a job, having a high school diploma and job search skills were the most common responses at 72% each. Having reliable transportation and additional training were both at 61%. Having reliable transportation and additional training were both at 61%.



The highest level of education ADVR participants expected to complete was post-secondary (college) education at 39%. Vocational (specialized training) education and high school education both represented 28%.



Active participants in the ADVR program are working towards establishing an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) with the goal of employment. The survey results show that 61% of the respondents plan on looking for a job after their current education/training program is completed. Additionally, 28% plan to enroll in further education/training. The results are encouraging; however, the actual number of respondents was fairly small.



**Active transition-aged ADVR participant quotes:**

- I want a career to work and earn money for bills and saving.
- Most preferably, a career in the movie industry.

In February 2016, ADVR staff participated and presented at the Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC), carrying out authorized pre-employment transition activities. The conference was attended by over 400 Alaskan special education educators, administrators, and paraprofessionals. Over 100 received information specific to DVR pre-employment transition services at three breakout sessions and information booth. DVR provided the two day Basic Supported Employment training for 20 special education teachers at ASSEC. The cross training was designed to bring workforce evidence-based practices to build consistency across the transition process from school to work. ASSEC attendees were given a paper survey and were encouraged to use the online survey link. The survey was the same eight question survey that was used in conjunction with DVR and DEED and given to the Special Education Directors in September 2015 across 54 school districts.

The survey focused on availability of services in rural areas. The majority of respondents (55%) rated employment opportunity available to students with disabilities as poor in their geographic area. The teachers identified that students lacked interpersonal skills, professionalism, job search skills, interview skills, and appropriate communication strategies. The respondents were asked to estimate the percentage of students with disabilities who have to leave their communities to pursue employment, postsecondary education, or training. The results showed that teachers believe that many students did leave their communities due to lack of available employment opportunities.



1. How would you rate employment opportunities available to students with disabilities in your community?

- Great
- Acceptable
- Poor
- None
- Not Sure

Comments

2. What skills do your students need in order to be successful in getting and keeping these jobs?

3. What is your estimated percentage of students with disabilities having to leave their community to pursue employment, postsecondary education, or training?

- 100%
- 75%
- 50%
- 25%
- 0%
- Not Sure

Comments

4. Please let us know the degree to which your postsecondary transition program focuses on the following Pre-Employment Transition Services:

|                                     | Always                | Sometimes             | Not Yet Implemented   |
|-------------------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Vocational Evaluation               | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Job Exploration Counseling          | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Job-Seeking Skills Instruction      | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Employment Etiquette Instruction    | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| School-Based Work Experience        | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Community-Based Work Experience     | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |
| Career-Specific Vocational Training | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> | <input type="radio"/> |

5. Does your district conduct any of the following?

- After-School Work Readiness Programs
- Summer Work Readiness Programs
- Transition Camps
- None

Comments



6. What barriers affect students' ability to achieve their postsecondary goals?

- Transportation Obstacles
- Lack of Family Support
- Lack of Existing Programs to Meet Specific Disability Needs
- Lack of Community Resources
- Difficulty Accessing or Navigating Statewide Systems
- Unstable Living Situation
- Other Barriers (please specify)

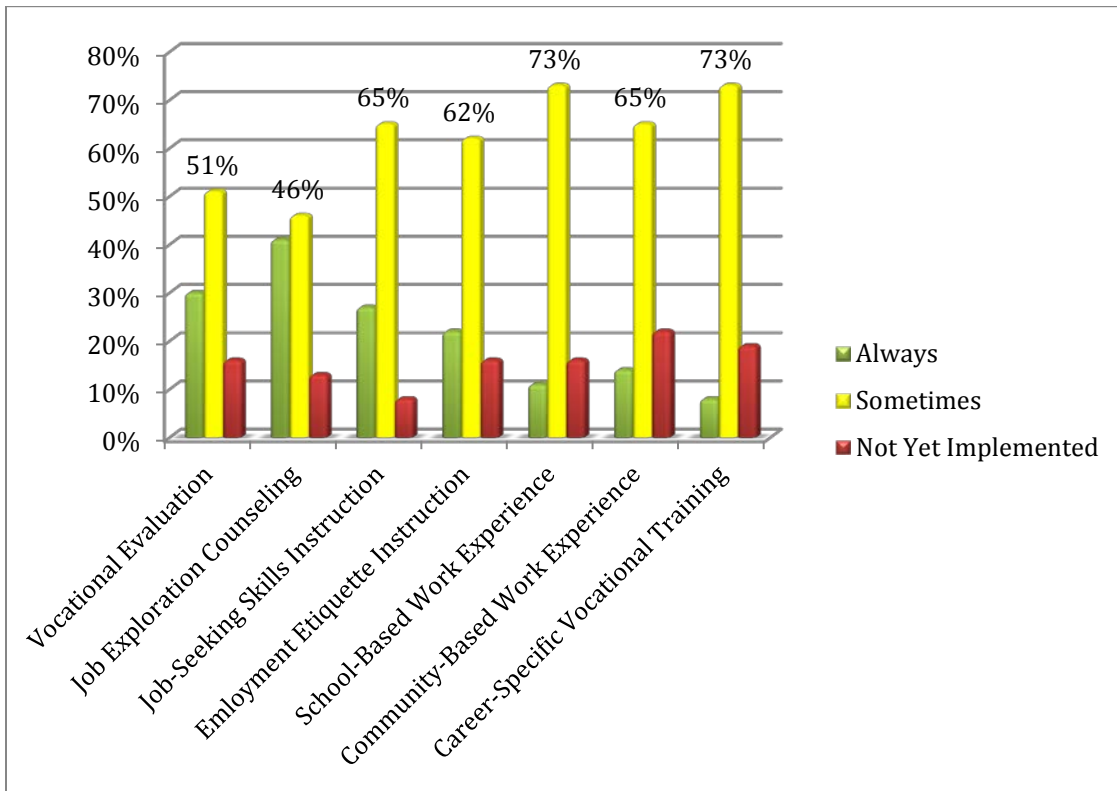
7. DVR utilizes the annual Alaska Statewide Special Education Conference (ASSEC) to provide teachers with information and resources. What topics would be a benefit to teachers doing transition activities?

- Information around appropriate referral and eligibility for DVR services
- Information and resources for accessing state and federal postsecondary transition services (IDD, Behavioral Health, Social Security)
- More information on coordinating pre-employment transition services with DVR
- Basic training for teachers on supporting work experiences (job development and job supports)
- Other (please specify)

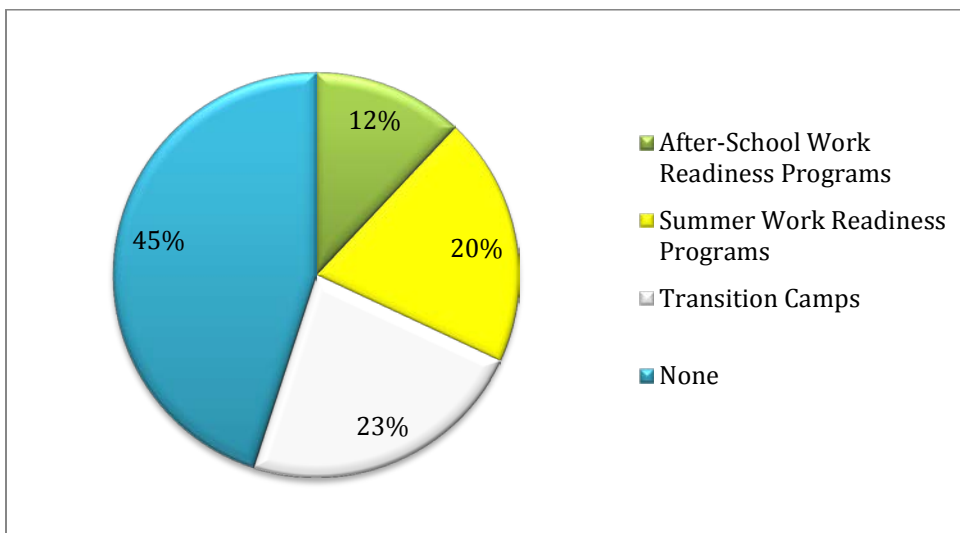
8. Who is the appropriate school point of contact for coordinating DVR services in your school district? (Optional)

|                        |                      |
|------------------------|----------------------|
| <b>Name</b>            | <input type="text"/> |
| <b>School/District</b> | <input type="text"/> |
| <b>Email Address</b>   | <input type="text"/> |
| <b>Phone Number</b>    | <input type="text"/> |

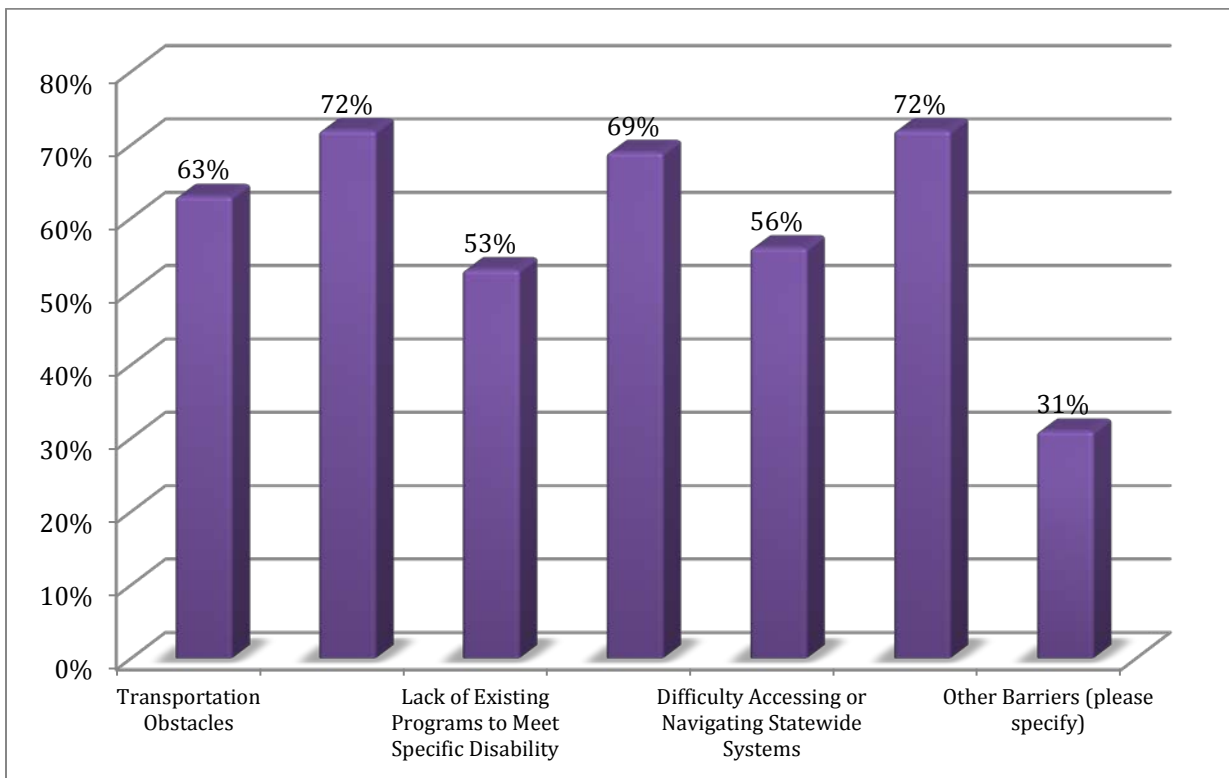
The respondents were provided a list of services and asked to identify which programs had been implemented in their area. The services they believed were “Always” available included job exploration counseling (41%), vocational evaluation (30%), and job seeking skills instruction (27%).



The Special Education Directors in the school districts were asked if they conducted after-school work readiness programs, summer work readiness programs, transition camps, or none of these programs. Transition camps had the highest occurrence at 23%; however, 45% responded that none of the programs were available.



Teachers' responses identified the following top three barriers students with disabilities face when trying to achieve postsecondary goals: unstable living situation (72%) lack of family support (72%), and lack community resources (69%).



Survey results provided feedback on the availability and occurrence of required Pre-employment Transition Service activities provided to students with disabilities throughout Alaska. In an effort to reach out to more participants, electronic versions of the surveys were sent via email to some participants. However, the preferred mode of communication for transition age youth appears to be via text on cell phones, which can be cumbersome to utilize. ADVR will continue to identify strategies to obtain as much information as possible about the needs of transition age youth, specifically students with disabilities. Information from surveys and other activities will be used when designing and implementing new transition programs and to ensure the current transition programs are continuing to provide needed services. In addition, information was disseminated to over 90 Special Education Directors and home school administrators and ADVR will continue to provide information to these individuals.

ADVR will continue to capture the needs of transition age youth and identifying gaps in services. The current method of collecting survey information is by using the opportunities afforded to ADVR through the Transition Camps and JOBZ clubs. The information obtained for the needs assessment of transition age youth encompassed information obtained within FFY16.

ADVR's efforts to expand services designed to maximize the potential of students with disabilities to achieve competitive integrated employment, has grown substantially over the past two years by providing authorized pre-employment transition activities. Under section 113 of the Rehabilitation Act, ADVR must reserve 15% of its federal award to provide pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities. For ADVR, this equates to just over \$1.5 million per year. Much of FFY2015 was spent building the infrastructure and capacity to implement the shift in focus to pre-employment transition service provision. Although substantial authorized pre-employment transition activities were performed in FFY15 and FFY16, the provision of ADVR's required pre-employment transition activities began to drastically increase in FFY16.

ADVR is committed to expanding cost-effective opportunities to deliver required pre-employment transition service activities to students with disabilities throughout the state of Alaska. By the end of June 2016, ADVR had provided required pre-employment transition services to over 250 students with disabilities in pre-application status, at an average cost of \$1,120 spent per student. Another 160 students served under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) were provided required pre-employment transition services at an average cost of \$2,640 per student. The average cost of providing required pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities who were in pre-application status, as well as post-applicant status, was \$1,880.

The 2010-2014 American Community Survey estimated 3,575 Alaskans aged 16-21 who reported experiencing a disability. ADVR provides pre-employment transition services to students with disabilities aged 16-21 who are receiving services under an Individual Education Plan, eligible for section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, or are otherwise potentially eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation services. In FFY16, ADVR was able to provide pre-employment transition services to approximately 11% of this population.

Through continued efforts under authorized pre-employment transition services, ADVR will increase the expansion of required pre-employment transition services. Based on ADVR's pre-employment transition service implementation efforts and data gathered from these activities, ADVR anticipates achieving a target goal of providing required pre-employment transition services to 16% (585) of new students with a disability annually. This will allow for almost 100% of this population to be provided required pre-employment transition services over a six-year time span. With the average cost of required pre-employment transition services being \$1,880, ADVR anticipates it will expend approximately \$1.1 million annually on required pre-employment transition services. The funds remaining after the provision of the required activities will be used to support authorized pre-employment transition services carried out by ADVR.

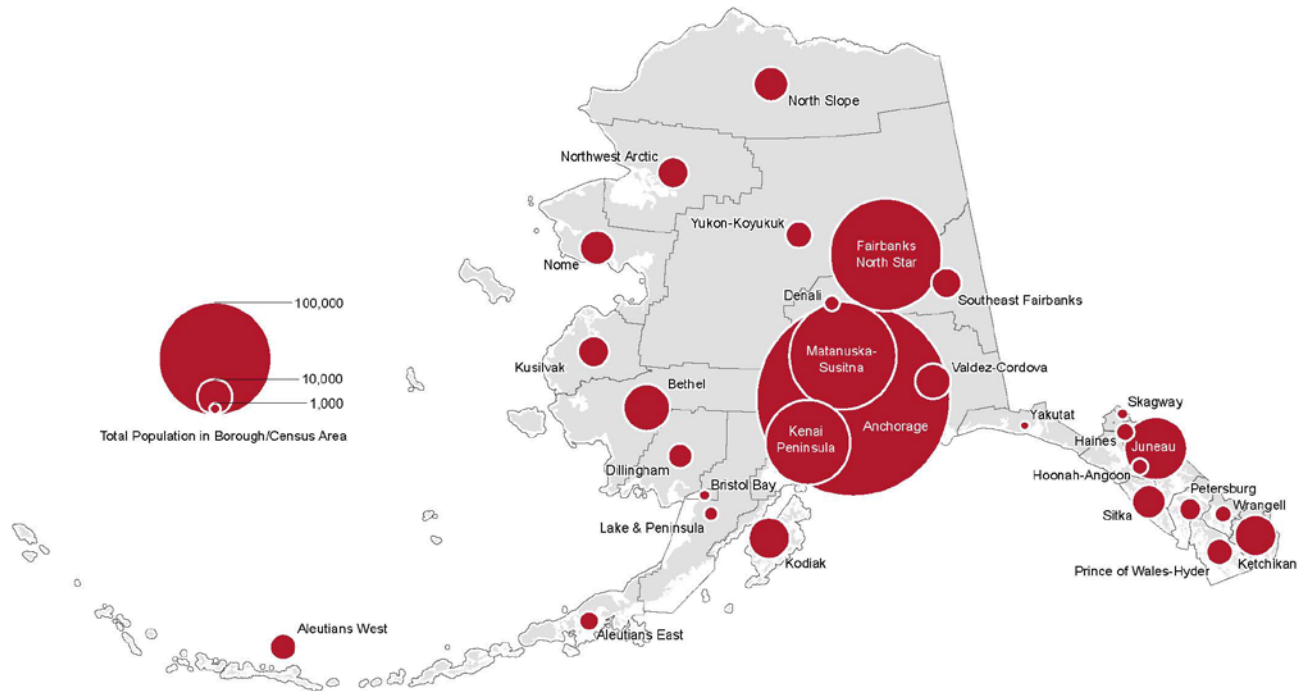
## Summary

The Alaska Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's (ADVR's) Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) was designed to capture the needs of individuals with disabilities and to identify gaps and barriers. The data collected will be used to improve ADVR services through strategic planning efforts which will include ADVR personnel, the State Vocational Rehabilitation Committee, WIOA Core Program partners, American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Projects, and other important stakeholders.

ADVR will begin drafting its three-year Strategic Plan in September of 2016. The Strategic Plan will focus on the needs of individuals with disabilities as well as strategies for addressing gaps and barriers. In conjunction with key stakeholders, ADVR will identify overarching goals to improve service delivery to Alaskan's with disabilities. The goals will include measureable objectives, strategies and identify staff responsible for activities. Additionally, the Strategic Plan will ensure ADVR is performing the activities outlined Alaska's Combined State Plan.

# Appendix 1

## Total Population by Borough/Census Area



Produced by: Alaska Department of Labor and Workforce Development, Research and Analysis Section  
Source: 2010 US Census

Appendix 1