

CONNECTICUT STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL



Annual Report 2023

The Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)

A Division of

The Connecticut Department of Aging and Disability
Services (ADS)



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Message from the SRC Interim Chair



Dear friends: I truly consider myself lucky to be able to work with the group of individuals who make up the CT State Rehabilitation Council. This group, diverse in their experience, background, and membership role, all share a common desire- to act as the voice for individuals receiving services through the CT Bureau of Rehabilitation Services.

2023 brought continued challenges and opportunities for both BRS and the SRC, and both are working to position themselves to continue to solve and plan for these in 2024. Individuals receiving services remain the obvious focus of both, with the quality and accessibility of service delivery at the forefront of the decisions being made. The stability of Community Rehabilitation Providers across the state, as well as the accessibility of BRS offices and services, continue to be closely reviewed.

The SRC assisted with and offered insight into the CT Statewide Needs Assessment, prepared recommendations for BRS to be included in the State Plan and gave feedback on the VR portion of the State Plan. The SRC has welcomed several new member appointees this year and is grateful to have these committed new voices. We have also had several members exit after years of service to the SRC, and we are grateful for their commitment and the time they have given. Two successful planning retreats were held, with members reviewing the purpose and commitment necessary to move the work of the SRC forward and restructuring the committees of the SRC to better focus on the mandated functions of the group. New consumer satisfaction survey tools were explored, and the SRC looks forward to implementation of these in 2024. Members continued to represent CT on the Board of Directors of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Council, facilitating 2 national conferences over the year.

The SRC continues to be appreciative of the collaborative working relationship with BRS Director David Doukas, and other BRS staff. The SRC looks forward to this continued partnership in the next year.

Kate Travis

Interim Chair, SRC

Services Director, Ability Beyond

Mission, Goals, Functions

MISSION

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) provides assessment, advice, and recommendations to the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) and others regarding coordination and effectiveness of programs and strategies which promote community-based competitive employment for persons with disabilities.

GOALS

- To assess the effectiveness and delivery of vocational services provided by BRS to individuals with disabilities.
- To improve the coordination of vocational services among BRS, state agencies, and public and private entities for the benefit of BRS job seekers.
- To make recommendations to BRS, the Governor, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and others for developing and improving strategies for the employment of, and vocational services for, individuals with disabilities.

FUNCTIONS

- To review, analyze, and advise BRS regarding its performance in carrying out its responsibilities as the state agency designated to administer the public Vocational Rehabilitation Program.
- To provide input to BRS regarding the Bureau's coordination of activities with Connecticut's workforce investment system.
- To review the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with, the performance of the Bureau and other public and private agencies in providing vocational rehabilitation services to Connecticut residents with disabilities.
- To prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor of Connecticut and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).
- To coordinate with other advisory councils in the state which oversee services to individuals with disabilities.
- To perform other functions as appropriate to the mission of the Council.

SRC Committees

THE PROGRAM REVIEW & EVALUATION COMMITTEE

Purpose:

The purpose of the Program Review and Evaluation Committee is to review and evaluate programs within BRS and provide recommendations for future presentations to the group. This committee will also be responsible for obtaining consumer viewpoints of their satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation services and the effectiveness of BRS in assisting consumers to obtain and maintain competitive employment.

Members:

Stephanie Trelli, Carissa Decelles, Andrea Richardson, Kate Travis, Joe Wendover, and Joshua Werner

Review of 2023 Accomplishments:

- Arranged for presentations and review of several BRS programs. CT Customized Employment, Level Up, BRS Data reporting, the new BRS website and changes to the Employment Consultants Division.
- Involved in the coordination and completion of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, including discussion and contracting with vendors, identification of questions to be utilized, and focus areas.
- Surveyed other SRCs across the country for best practices regarding the collection of satisfaction surveys, in order to increase the responses and value of the data being received. Contacted several recommended sources that provide this service to explore options and pricing, with meetings still happening to determine a final service and product to utilize moving forward.
- Implemented a set meeting schedule for the committee.

Goals for 2024:

- Finalize plans and method for satisfaction surveys to be administered to recipients of BRS services, in order to gather more data to make decisions with.
- Continue collaboration with other SRCs across the country for best practices regarding the collection of satisfaction surveys, in order to increase the responses and value of the data being received.

- Seek out opportunities for collaboration among other SRCs across the country for best practices regarding the service types and supports for identified high needs groups.
- Develop template of questions to focus the presentations and review of BRS programs, as well as the recommendations and follow up questions that may come from those reviews.
- Continue to set a schedule for BRS staff members to present on programs and grants. Identified programs/grants for the 2024 calendar year will be: CT PIE; CT Customized Employment; Community Rehabilitation Providers
- Consideration and utilization of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment results to inform SRC input on BRS practices
- Monitor access to offices and services, to ensure adequate quality of supports are being provided to those seeking services and those choosing in person supports.

THE MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Purpose:

The purpose of the Membership Committee is to recruit, interview, and nominate potential members to the SRC. They may assist in training SRC members to foster effective council teamwork.

Members:

Thomas Boudreau, Jill Larmett, and Shannon McCann

Review of 2023 Accomplishments:

- Reviewed SRC full committee meeting notes and relevant forwarded information.
- Continued efforts to recruit potential candidates in accordance with Title I, Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act 1973, as amended for appointment to the SRC from the Governor.
- Reviewed the SRC Membership Composition Mandates and those members filling the roles.
- All committee members developed a simple “Interview and Score” worksheet to use with potential candidates during the process and to be forwarded to the executive committee as requested.
- Three new candidates were recommended to the executive committee.
- Developed a postcard for recruiting businesses and offering information to the community.
- Published the postcard and increased exposure on the new BRS website.

Goals for 2024:

- Recruit potential candidates to fill historically vacant categories of membership on the SRC, specifically employers, individuals with disabilities, and individuals from parent and advocacy groups.
- Identify prospective members to invite to SRC meetings.
- Conduct SRC applicant interviews, facilitate new member orientation, and provide mentorship to foster the ongoing learning process of becoming an active and involved SRC member.

LEGISLATIVE, POLICY, & PLANNING COMMITTEE

Purpose:

The purpose of the Legislative, Policy, and Planning Committee is to assist in developing the State Plan and strategic plans for vocational rehabilitation services and stay updated on federal and state regulations related to employment of persons with disabilities to assure that the CT Rehab Council and BRS staff have the knowledge and skills, values and attitudes, and resources needed to facilitate CIE that is a win-win for all jobseekers, employees, and their current and prospective employers.

Members:

Linda Rammler, Melissa Taylor, Tom Cosker, and Beth Reel

Review of 2023 Accomplishments:

- Developed a vision and mission statement for committee work to assure compliance with the purpose of the committee.
- Provided technical assistance to SRC discussions about WIOA and Level Up (Pre-Et Reviewed SRC full committee meeting notes) as well as policy discussions about, e.g., virtual vs. in-office staffing and services.
- Provided technical assistance to SRC discussions about proposed legislation for the 2023 legislative session.
- Participated in conceptualization and implementation of the systems change activities of the Pathways to Integrated Employment grant (main work group, committees, and Communities of Practice).
- Supported the collaboration of BRS and the CT Department of Developmental Services, as well as BRS collaboration with other entities such as the UConn Center for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities, individuals with disabilities, employers, and CRPs.
- By proxy, assisted in preparation of the Annual Report, the VR portion of the Unified State Plan, and assured SRC input to the Unified State Plan.

Goals for 2024:

- To meet regularly as a committee.
- Develop policy recommendations to address:
- Streamlined eligibility and assessment processes that are person-centered and strengths-based in collaboration with systems changes via the PIE grant.
- Assure disability expertise is developed in other employment activities of the State of CT.

- Transition (pre-ETS) supports that build on individual strengths, existing skills, interest, and preferences and are family friendly.
- Barriers to BRS counsellors' ability to embrace "Employment First for All" values and skills to implement strategies to obtain and retain employment for challenging individuals.
- Other service gaps this group has identified from personal and professional experiences.
- Needs of people with disabilities not eligible for DDS, ASD, or other eligibility-based employment supports.
- Develop legislative recommendations as necessary:
- To support policy recommendations of this Committee.
- To assure legislative proposals at the state and federal levels are consistent with SRA mandates that support coordination, collaboration, braiding or blending of funds for individuals, and other activities to increase employment outcomes of people with disabilities in CT.
- As appropriate, to address multi-agency involvement with employment services for all disenfranchised populations without duplication of services or a "one-size fits all" approach.
- Consider or support external monitoring of BRS services that go beyond "counts and amounts."
- Assist and provide input to the SRC, and BRS by extension, in preparation of the Annual Report and the VR portion of the Unified State Plan.

National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils, INC.

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) for the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) is a member of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC). The NCSRC strives to cultivate the strengths and necessary expertise of local SRCs, so they become effective, viable partners in the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program. While SRCs in each state collaborate with their local VR program to address common issues, members of the NCSRC share best practices and strategies to address common concerns. The NCSRC gives a national voice to jobseekers with disabilities as it works on issues that impact the VR program on the national level.

OUR MISSION:

On behalf of people with disabilities, our national membership coalition will advocate for and work in partnership with the national public vocational rehabilitation system's continual quest for excellence.

OUR VISION:

The NCSRC will be the premiere national organization of the consumer voice to enhance the employment opportunities of persons with disabilities through the public vocational rehabilitation program.

The NCSRC currently consists of 53 SRCs of states and territories that provide public VR services. In addition to conference calls bi-monthly, the NCSRC hosts two training conferences each year that coincide with the national meetings of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). SRC member Kate Travis and SRC Liaison Kerri Fradette are NCSRC board members. Ms. Fradette Serves as the Vice Chair for this organization.

For more information about NCSRC, please visit <https://ncsrc.net>



Message from the BRS Director

Dear Friends,

As 2023 draws to a close, it is my pleasure to share this year's annual report from Connecticut's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). Connecticut's general Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program is a part of the Department of Aging and Disability Services, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS). We welcome opportunities for collaboration with other programs to best aid individuals with disabilities. This report highlights the achievements of BRS to accomplish that mission and its partnership with the SRC.

In retrospect, 2023 was a year marked with great challenges, as well as the emergence of great opportunity within BRS and in public vocational rehabilitation program. Ongoing capacity issues precipitated by both internal staff attrition, as well as amongst external Community Rehabilitation Providers and other relied upon contracted vendors have made meeting consumer's demand for services difficult. The Bureau has focused much energy on the recruitment and retention of staff, as well as in seeking to implement changes in our service delivery model to improve efficiency. Despite the many challenges, BRS was awarded the US Department of Education, Rehabilitation Services Administration, Disability Innovation Fund, Pathways to Partnerships grant. The Demonstration Project, which has been named "Bridge CT," will seek to examine the impact of early introduction of vocational planning and increase coordination of services amongst various partners that serve CT's population of students with disabilities. When coupled with additional staffing availed through recently passed state-level legislation and BRS already robust investment of resources to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services through our Level Up program, this grant will be leveraged to inspire system-wide advances in challenging and changing perspectives concerning the potential for students with significant disabilities to seek post-secondary training and competitive integrated employment. In addition, BRS continues to be sought to work closely with our partners in CT's Workforce system and directly with employers to ensure training programs and work environments are created with the principles of universal design and access in mind. The SRC's continued support and guidance has been invaluable as we have worked to address our capacity deficits, while at the same time developing strategies to maximize available opportunities to expand our VR program.



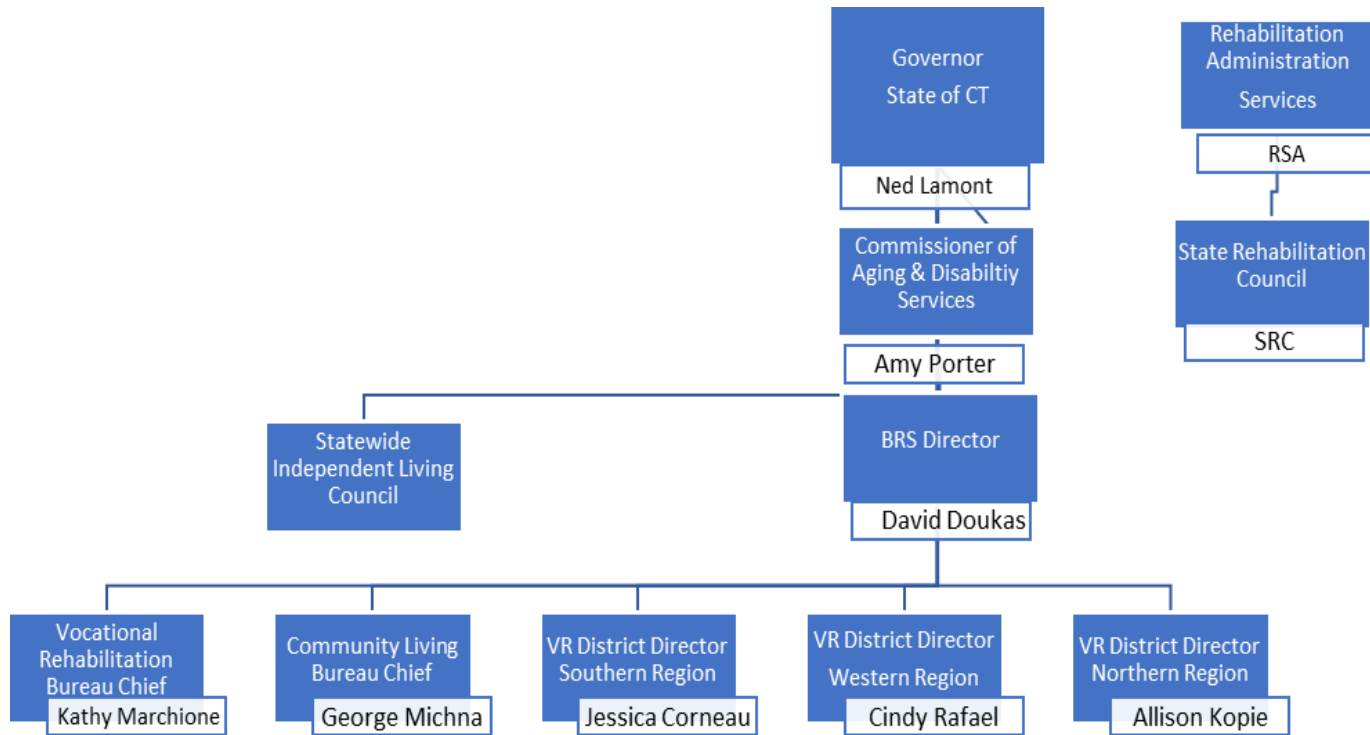
It is certain that BRS and the SRC will continue to collaborate next year, united in the common belief that all individuals should have the opportunity for competitive employment in an integrated setting where they can realize their full potential. I sincerely thank the SRC for all its great work, valuable guidance, and unwavering support of our VR program. We are excited and look forward to building our relationship in the next year and in the years to come.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "David F. Doukas".

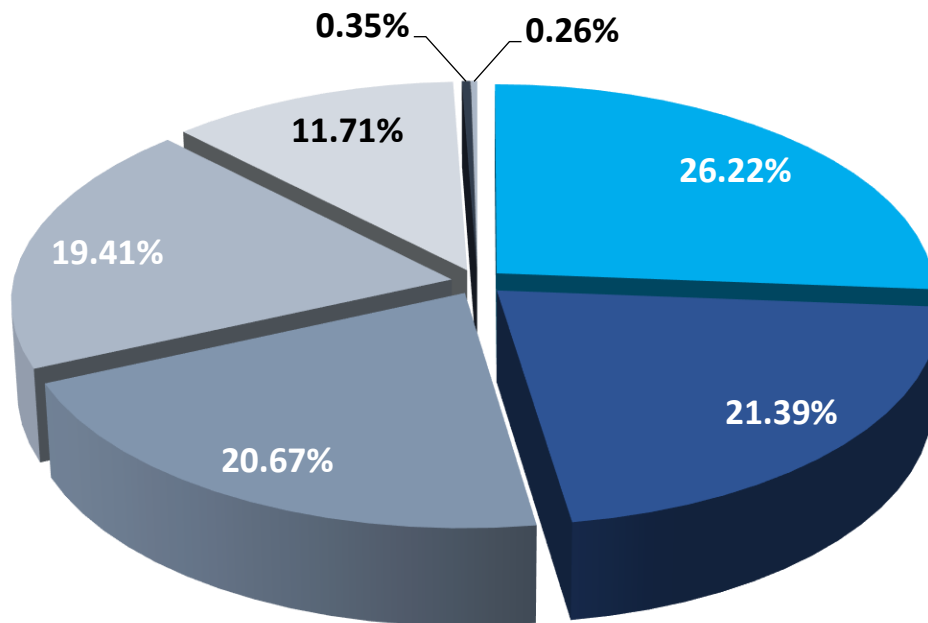
David F. Doukas, Director
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

BRS Organizational Chart



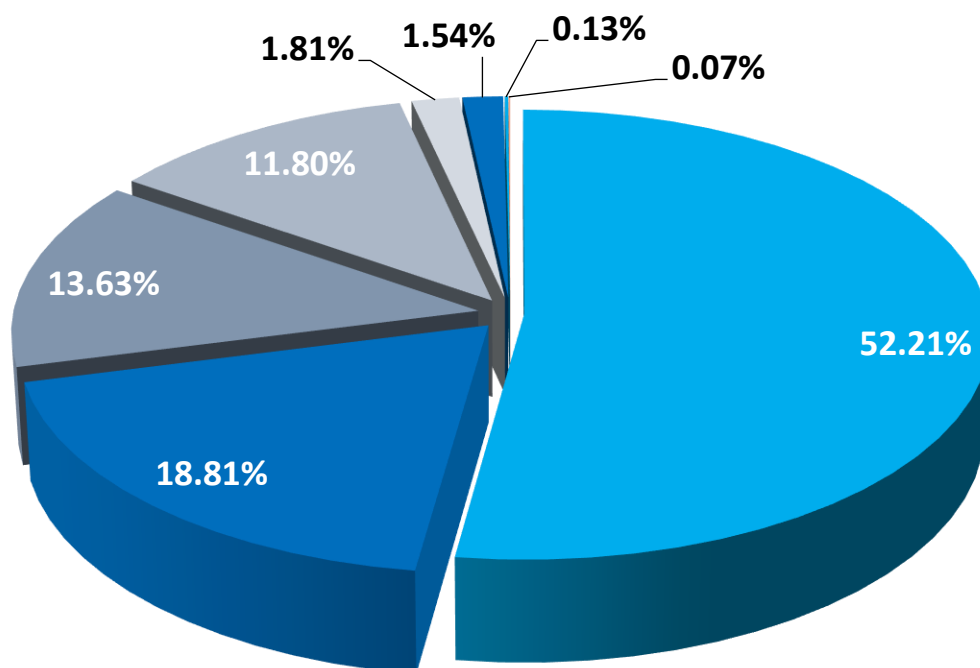
BRS Statistics -Federal Fiscal Year 2023

Primary Disability Type of Job Seekers BRS Assisted **5,343** Job Seekers with Various disabilities in Federal Fiscal Year FFY 2023



- Mental and Emotional Disabilities
- Unknown
- Hearing Disabilities
- Cognitive Disabilities
- Physical Disabilities
- Visual Disabilities
- Communicative Disabilities

Race/Ethnicity of BRS Job Seekers Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023



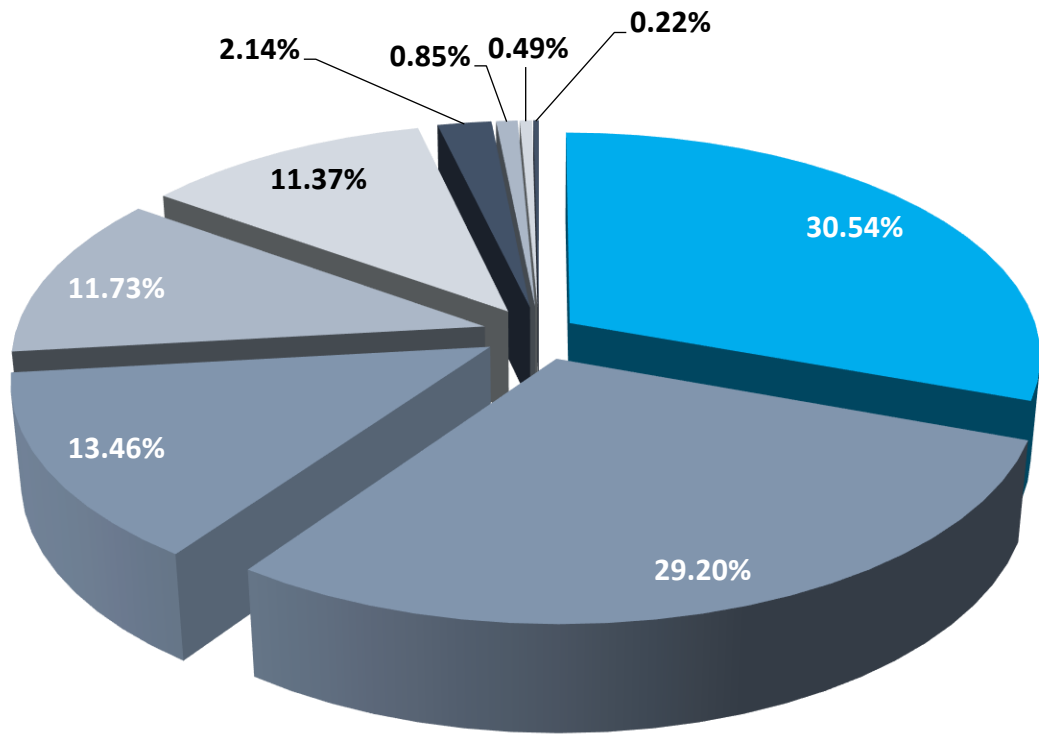
- 52.21% White
- 18.81% Unknown
- 13.63% Black or African American
- 11.80% Persons of Hispanic or Latino Origin
- 1.81% Multiracial
- 1.54% Asian
- 0.13% American Indian or Alaska Native
- 0.07% Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander

NOTE:

Unknown has increased because this accounts for Level Up cases. Prior to July 1, 2017 we were not required to collect race/ethnicity.

Referral Sources

**BRS Received 2,238 new applications for services
in Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023**



- 30.54% Unknown
- 29.20% Self-referral
- 13.46% Educational Institutions (elementary/secondary)
- 11.73% Other sources
- 11.37% Physician or other Medical Personnel or Medical Institutions (public or private)
- 2.14% Community Rehabilitation Programs
- 0.85% Welfare Agency (State or local government)
- 0.49% Educational Institutions (post-secondary)
- 0.22% Social Security Administration (Disability Determination Service or District office)
-

Competitive Employment Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023

BRS assisted 806 job seekers to enter or maintain employment in FFY 2023

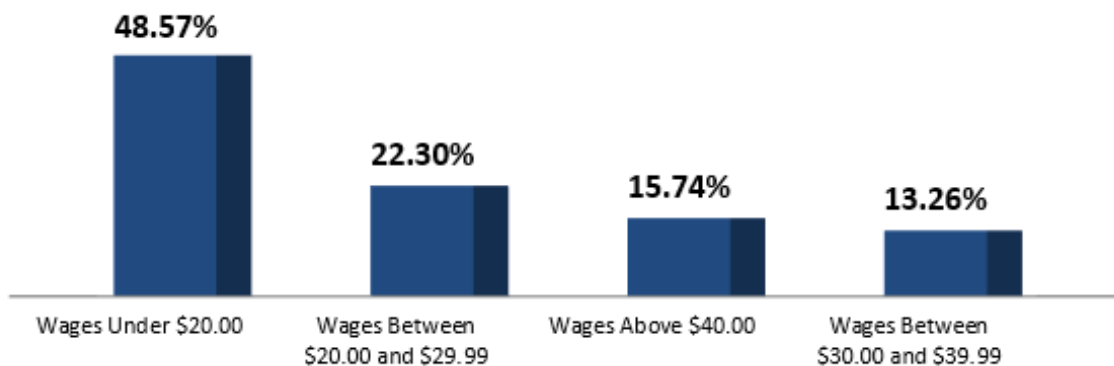
Average Hourly Wages

\$26.63

Average Annual Salary

\$47,263

Hourly Wages at Closure - FFY 2023



Average # of Hours Per Week

31.97

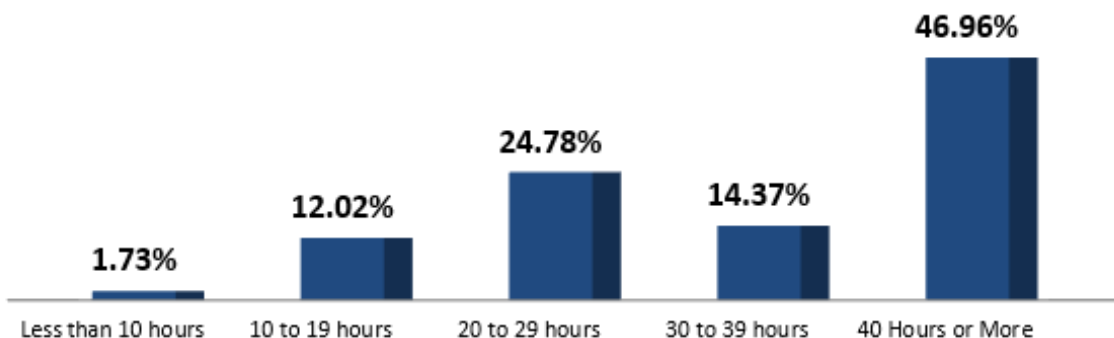
% of Job Seekers working F/T (>= 35hrs)

55.39%

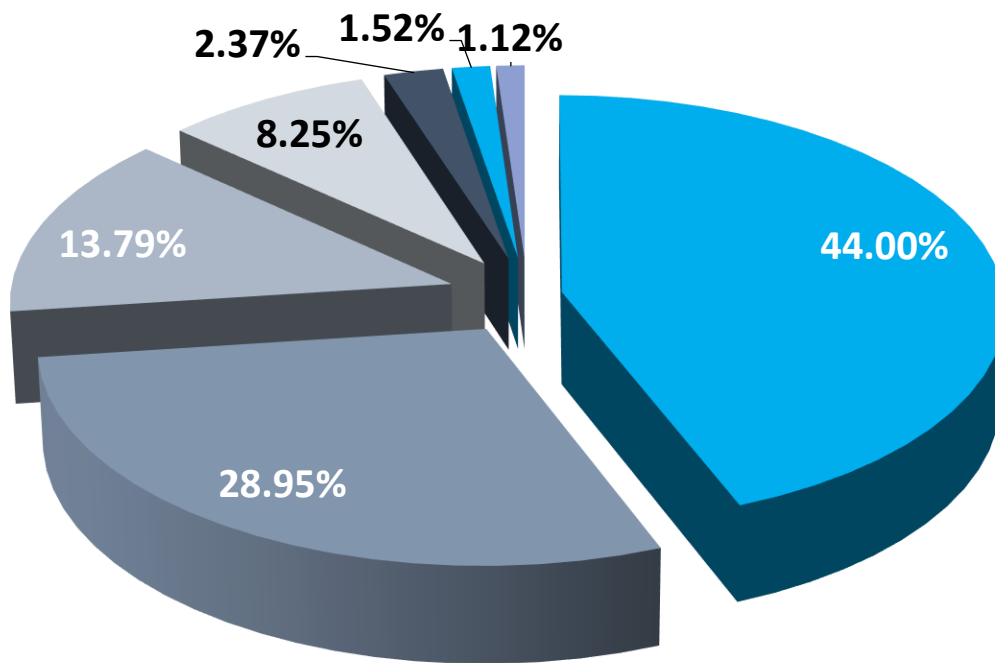
% of Job Seekers w/ Medical Benefits from Employer

40.32%

Hours Worked Per Week - FFY 2023



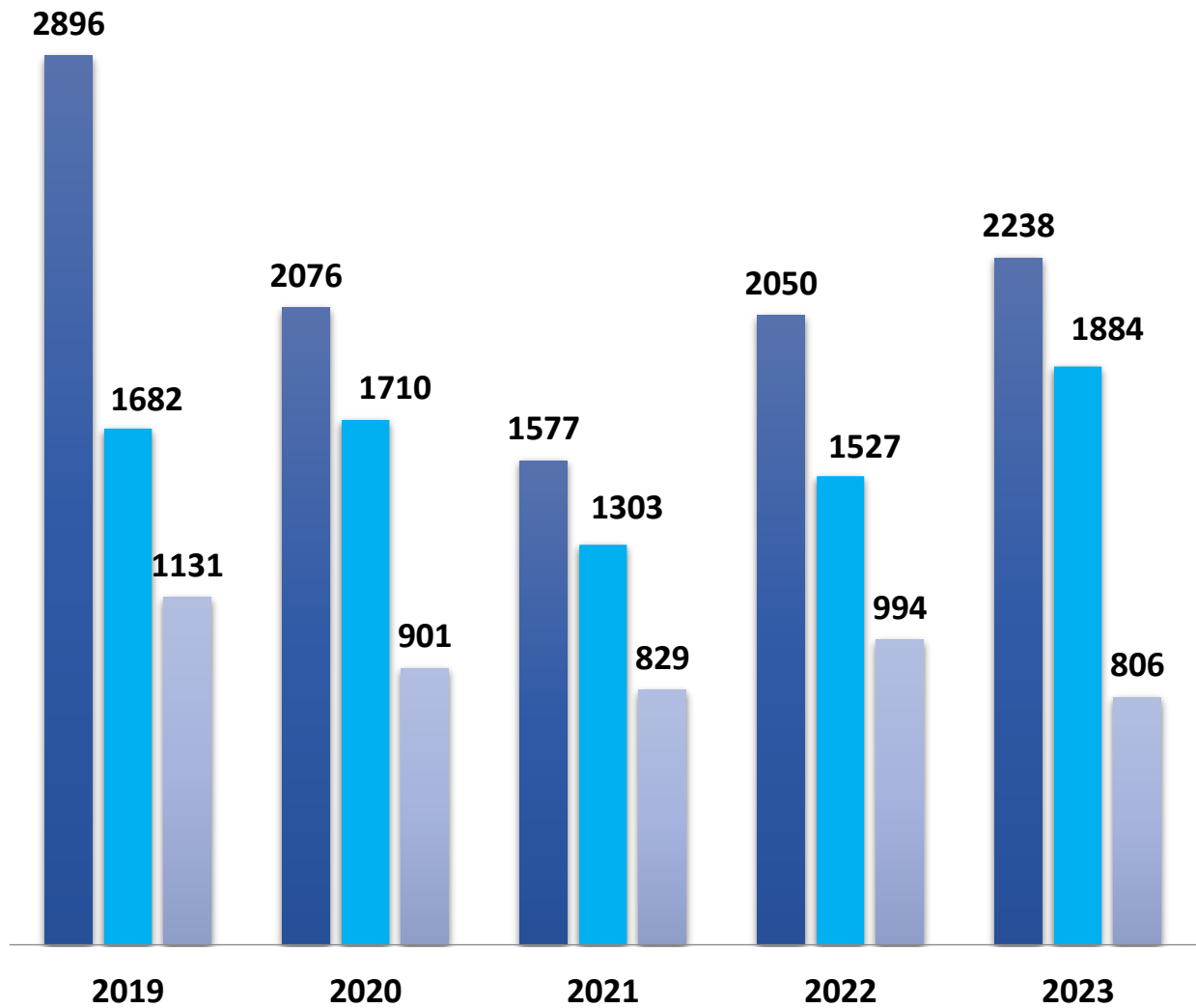
**Services Purchased From
Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP)
Total Expenditures **\$5 Million**
in Federal Fiscal Year 2023**



- 44.00% Pre-Employment Transition Services
- 28.95% CRP-Assessment
- 13.79% CRP-Placement/SD
- 8.25% CRP-Job Coach
- 2.37% Work Readiness Training
- 1.52% Customized Employment
- 1.12% CRP-Other

Comparison of Applicants, Plans, and Successful Closures Over Last 5 Years - 2019 to 2023

■ Applicants ■ Plans ■ Rehabs



BRS Office Telephone Numbers

Central Office

55 Farmington Avenue, 12th Floor, Hartford, CT 06105
Telephone: 860-424-4844 Fax: 860-424-4850
Toll-Free in Connecticut: 800-537-2549 Video
Phone: 860-920-7163

Northern Region

184 Windsor Avenue, Windsor, CT 06095
Telephone: 860-697-3550 Fax: 860-730-8473
Video Phone: 860-920-7171

Local Offices

Danielson: 860-455-1617
East Hartford: 860-929-3888
Manchester: 860-647-5960
New Britain: 860-612-3569
Willimantic: 860-455-1606

Southern Region

370 James Street, Suite 306, New Haven, CT 06513
Telephone: 203-974-3000 Fax: 203-789-7850
Video Phone: 203-584-984

Local Offices

Middletown: 860-740-1080
Uncasville/Montville: 860-848-5950

Western Region

1057 Broad Street, Bridgeport, CT 06604
Telephone: 203-578-4553 Fax: 203-579-6903
Video Phone: 203-416-6761

Local Offices

Danbury: 203-702-0152
Stamford: 203-653-1939
Torrington: 860-294-0013
Waterbury: 203-578-4550

Effective December 2023

SRC Members

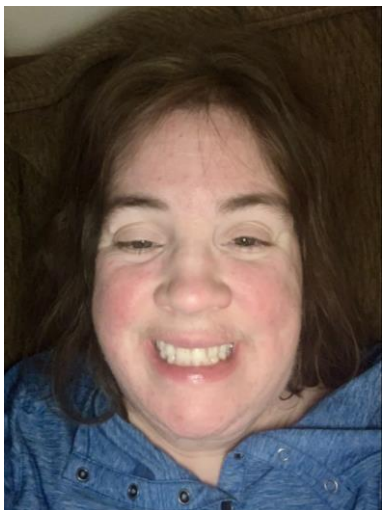
Officers



*Chairperson - Shannon McCann
Until September 2023*



*Interim Chairperson - Kate Travis
Treasurer - Kate Travis*



Vice Chairperson - Melissa Taylor

Secretary - Vacant

Voting Members



Andrea Richardson



Joe Wendover



Carissa Decelles



Donna DeVito



Jill Larmett

Linda Rammler

Jennifer Jenkins

Joshua Werner

Tom Boudreau

Tom Cosker

Nicole Rico-Serrano

Beth Reel

Ex-Officio Members



David Doukas



Stephanie Trelli

SRC Liaison



Kerri Fradette

SRC 2023 Meeting Dates

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) to the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) will meet on the following dates in 2024 via TEAMS:

- January 17, 2024 -virtual
- March 20, 2024
- May 15, 2024
- June 19, 2024
- September 18, 2024
- November 20, 2024

The SRC meetings will occur 9:30a.m. - 12p.m. and **are open to the public**. Meetings will be held virtually until further notice via TEAMS. **Accommodations must be requested three weeks prior to the date of the meeting.**

Please contact Kerri Fradette, 860-424-4858 or kerri.fradette@ct.gov for any questions, accommodations, or to register your attendance.

How to Become a Member of the SRC

Members of the State Rehabilitation Council are appointed by the Governor of Connecticut for a term of three (3) years. They represent BRS jobseekers, business and industry, community-based providers of vocational rehabilitation services, advocacy organizations, and state agencies that serve persons with disabilities. A majority of the SRC members have physical and/or mental disabilities.

If you would like to be considered for appointment to the SRC or would like to recommend someone for appointment, please email or fax the completed SRC application, along with a current resume, to the SRC Liaison listed below.

SRC Liaison

Kerri Fradette, SRC Liaison

Department of Aging and Disability Services (ADS) Bureau
of Rehabilitation Services (BRS)
55 Farmington Avenue, 12th Floor
Hartford, CT 06105

Work cell # 860-876-9596
Fax: 860-424-4850
Email: kerri.fradette@ct.gov
Website: www.ct.gov/brs



State Rehabilitation Council to the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services Application Form

Name of Nominee: _____ Home

Address/City/Zip: _____ Home

Telephone: _____ Home E-Mail: _____ Employer:

Address/City/Zip: _____ Work

Telephone: _____ Work E-Mail: _____ Name

of the Nominator (if different than nominee): _____ Address/City/Zip:

Day Telephone:

Day E-Mail:

Please identify your race/ethnicity (voluntary).

African American _____ *Asian* _____ *Caucasian* _____ *Other* _____

Multi-racial _____ *Hispanic/Spanish Speaking* _____ *Native American/Alaskan* _____

The SRC membership must include representatives of the following categories:

- ❖ At least one representative each of the **Statewide Independent Living Council, the Parent Training and Information Center, the Client Assistance Program - CAP (Section 112), Community Rehabilitation Program service providers, the State Education Department, the State Workforce Investment Board, and Section 121 (Vocational Rehabilitation [VR] for Native Americans)**;
- ❖ A **qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor**;
- ❖ Four representatives of **business, industry, and labor**;
- ❖ **Representatives of disability advocacy groups** representing physical, cognitive, sensory, and mental disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves; and
- ❖ **Current or former applicants or recipients** of VR services.

Which membership category is the most appropriate match for you?

Please feel free to add extra pages to answer the following questions.

Why are you interested in serving on the State Rehabilitation Council?

What is your interest in vocational rehabilitation and the employment of persons with disabilities?

Please list any organizations in which you have held leadership positions, and your accomplishments while holding such positions:

Have you ever done legislative advocacy? If so, please describe your activities.

Do you have a disability? If so, please describe.

Have you ever been enrolled in the Bureau's Vocational Rehabilitation Program?

If you are employed, does your supervisor support your application for appointment to the State Rehabilitation Council?

Statement of Commitment

"I, the undersigned, understand that the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a working council which meets at least six times per year for the full Council and at other times for the committees, as needed. I also understand that I must work on an SRC committee, support legislative and public awareness campaigns, participate in the process to complete the BRS State Plan and the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), and attend at least one public meeting, as scheduled. If appointed to the SRC, I will earnestly strive to meet these commitments."

Signed,

(your name)

(date)

IN ORDER FOR YOUR APPLICATION TO BE CONSIDERED, YOU MUST INCLUDE A RESUME.

You may attach any other information you feel would be valuable in evaluating your application. Please mail, email or fax all information to **Kerri Fradette, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Department of Aging and Disability Services, 55 Farmington Avenue, 12th Floor, Hartford, CT 06105** kerri.fradette@ct.gov, fax: 860-424-4850.

SRC 2022 Annual Report Credits and Pictures

Statistical Data:

David Johnson, *BRS Consultant*

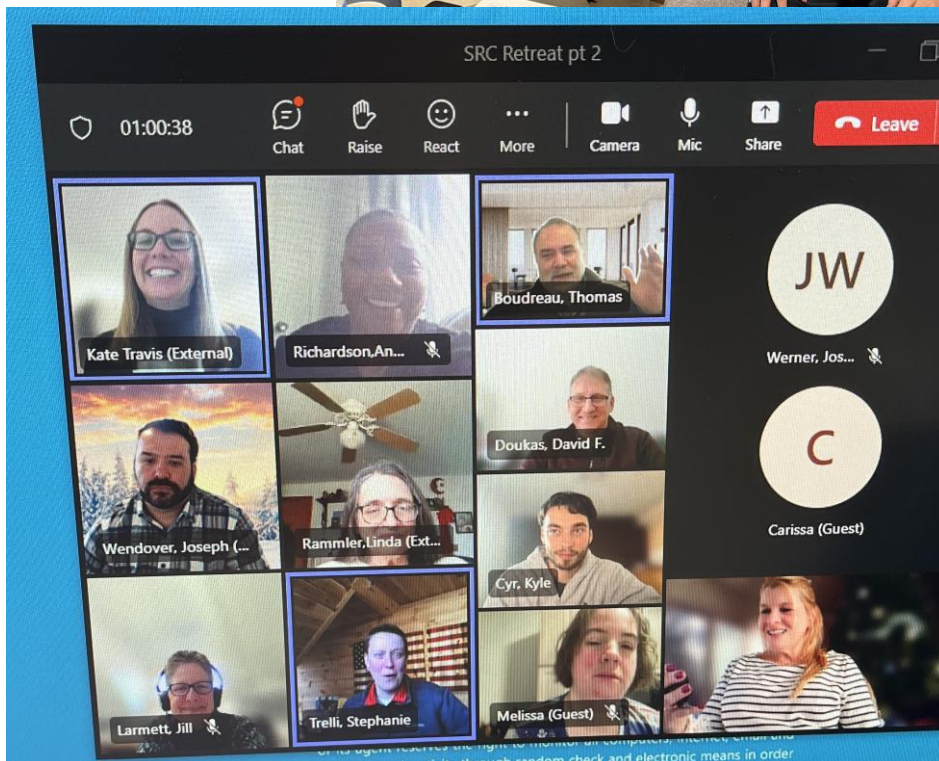
Editing & Layout Design:

Kerri Fradette, *BRS Consultant and SRC Liaison*

Kyle Cyr, *Central Office Intern*







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In compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, this report is available upon request in large print, Braille, or on audiocassette. If you need this report in an alternate format, please contact kerri.fradette@ct.gov.