

Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

2006-07 Annual Report



Providing Employment Opportunities for
People with Disabilities Since 1920

Director's Message

For 2006-07, the Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation assisted 11,089 individuals in obtaining or retaining employment, an increase of 293 individuals—almost 3% over the record-breaking 2005-06 which increased successful placements by 15%.

The Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reemployment Services provides comparable services to individuals who are injured on the job. By returning 1,767 injured workers to suitable employment, the bureau achieved almost a 20% increase over the prior year. These numbers represent new record high marks for the Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reemployment Services with 91.5% of closed cases returning to gainful employment.

Over the past two years, the Division has increased its focus on the needs of youth transitioning from high school to work and the community. The Division has embarked on a major project to cost share employment specialists in high schools. These specialists work with Vocational Rehabilitation counselors and help youth with disabilities plan for employment and obtain jobs during the school year or the summer. At this time, 33 of the 67 school districts have agreed to provide these services.

Vocational Rehabilitation could not have achieved these milestones alone, and we would like to thank the Florida Legislature for its support in providing matching funds for this federal/state partnership. We also thank the Vocational Rehabilitation employees for their dedication and professionalism, all of our many partners in the disability community, and the employers who reap the benefits of hiring qualified individuals with disabilities.

Our future holds an opportunity for growth and change. Congress is still considering proposed changes to the Rehabilitation Act and the Florida Legislature is challenged by revenue shortfalls making it difficult to balance the state budget. During 2008, the Division will be developing a new 5-year Division Strategic Plan. Our stakeholders will be invited to participate in the planning process that will help shape our vision and direction for the future. That process will include issues and questions such as: Should we focus our resources more on the most significantly disabled individuals? Should we apply an economic means test and require individuals who can afford to pay for services to do so? Should we continue our focus on students who transition from school to work? As we embark on our strategic planning process, I invite you to make your voice heard.

Sincerely,



Bill Palmer

Vocational Rehabilitation Director



After spending several decades doing construction and maintenance work, George Davis, Sr. still wasn't ready to slow down, but coronary heart disease, hypertension and glaucoma left him no choice.

Vocational Rehabilitation enrolled Davis in the tailoring program at Orlando Tech and helped him launch his own garment alteration business.

"VR gave me the chance to retrain myself when I could have been at home withering away and dying," he said. "Now I'm able to have an impact."

*George Davis
Orlando*



What is Vocational Rehabilitation?

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation administers two major employment programs. The public Vocational Rehabilitation program is a federal/state partnership committed to helping eligible individuals with disabilities find meaningful careers. Vocational Rehabilitation may assist with services so that an individual with a disability may obtain, maintain, or regain employment.

Florida's Injured Worker program works with Vocational Rehabilitation to provide rehabilitation and reemployment services to an individual injured on a job that is covered by Workers' Compensation.

Vocational Rehabilitation and the Injured Worker program have 129 offices and 1,013.5 employees to provide services to individuals and employers around the state.

Facts at a Glance

Results for the State Fiscal Year in Review

July 1, 2006 – June 30, 2007

Persons with disabilities who entered gainful employment	11,089	Active caseload	36,039
Average hours worked per week.....	37.7	Average monthly caseload per counselor.....	98
Average hourly earnings.....	\$11.49	Number of injured workers reemployed.....	1,767
Projected average annual earnings	\$20,706	Number of injured workers provided reemployment services	2,817
Total projected earnings in the first year	\$228,533,201		

Services to Floridians with Disabilities

Depending on an individual's needs and a plan for employment developed with a counselor, Vocational Rehabilitation may be able to provide:

- Medical or Psychological Treatment
- Prosthetics
- Self Employment Consultation and Support
- Wheelchairs and other Assistive Technology
- Rehabilitation Engineering Services
- Education or Training
- Job Placement Services

Services to Business and Industry

- Identify qualified, dependable employees
- Provide free on-the-job training for employees with disabilities
- Provide technical assistance and advice on how to provide accommodations
- Share businesses' best practices
- Provide information about federal tax credits
- Provide American Sign Language interpreters for interviews
- Provide free training on disability-related issues
- Post job opportunities at FLJobConnections.com

DID YOU KNOW?

Florida has an estimated 3.3 million persons with disabilities (ages 5 and up).

Of the 1.9 million Floridians with disabilities ages 21-64, 58% are employed.

Source: US Census 2000

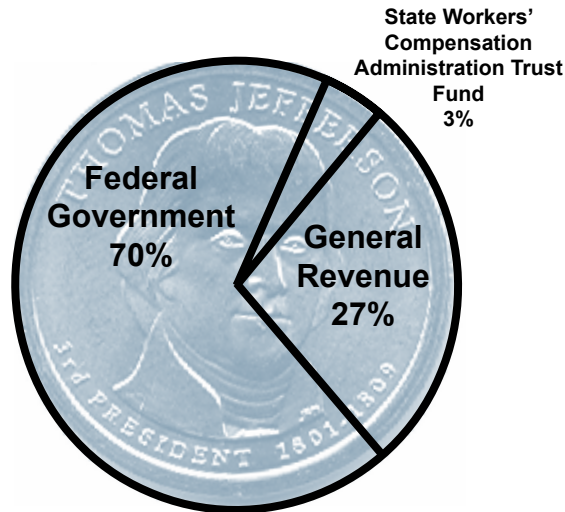


Carla DePolito, born with cerebral palsy, needed a job in a calm environment that would allow her to sit down whenever she became fatigued. Her Vocational Rehabilitation counselor helped her overcome these obstacles by providing job coaching, counseling, and guidance.

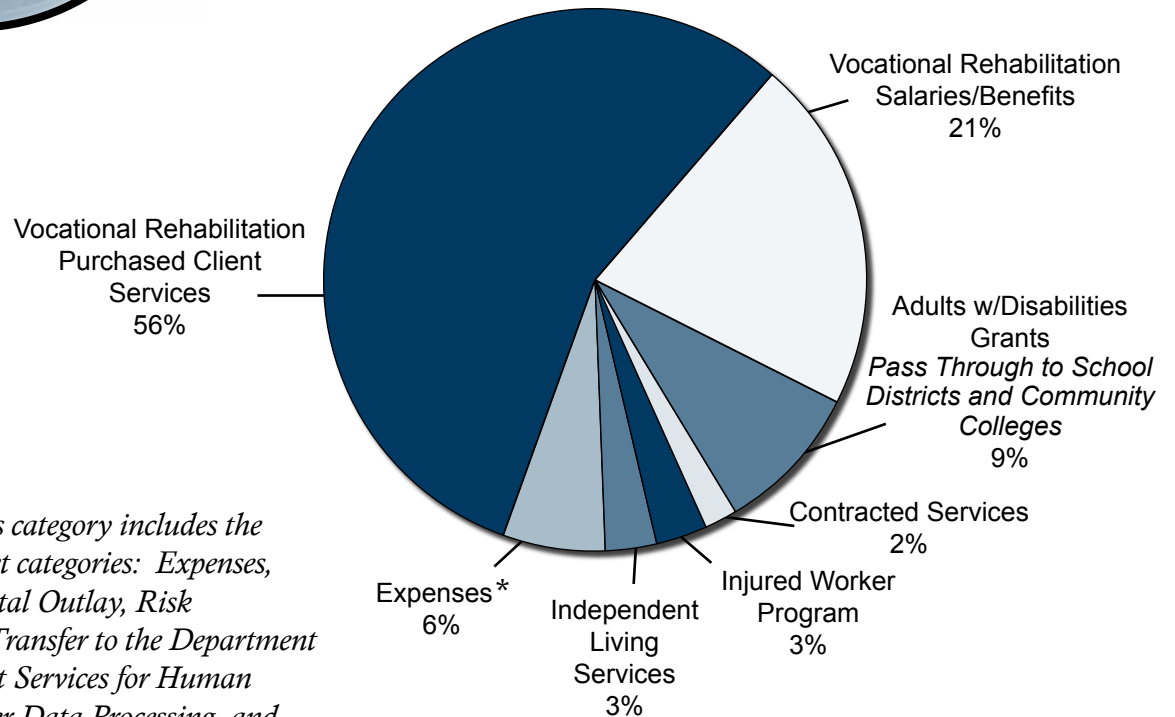
Today, Carla works at the Wonder of Truth Christian bookstore. Her boss Bonnie Kaczmarek says, "If all my employees were as gracious and quick on their projects as she is, I'd have twenty of her."

*Carla Depolito
St. Augustine*

Where Does VR Get the Money It Spends?



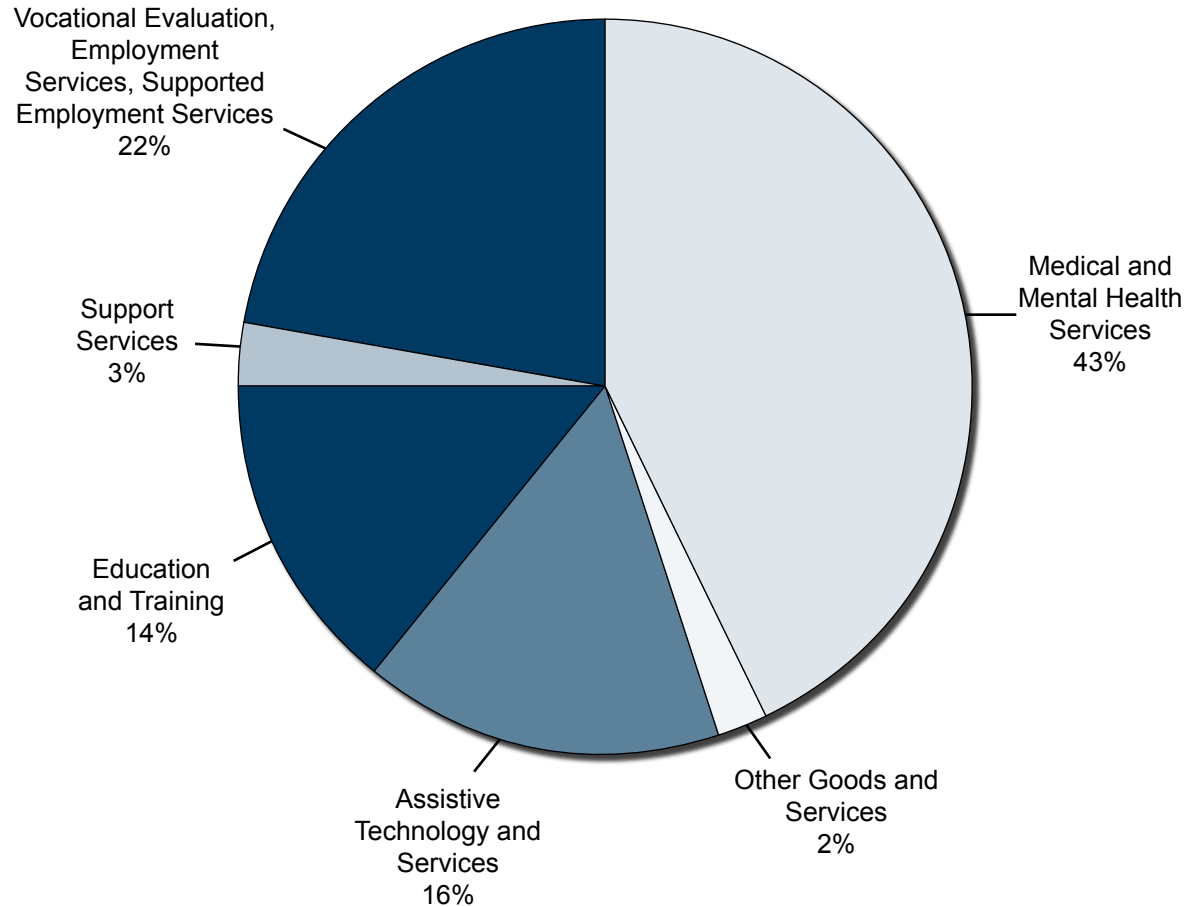
VR Expenditures



** The Expenses category includes the following budget categories: Expenses, Operating Capital Outlay, Risk Management, Transfer to the Department of Management Services for Human Resources, Other Data Processing, and Educational Technology and Information.*



Distribution of Purchased Client Services Expenditures by Category



DID YOU KNOW?

According to a 2005 report by the American Association on Persons with Disabilities, 80% of all Americans will be disabled at some point in their lives.



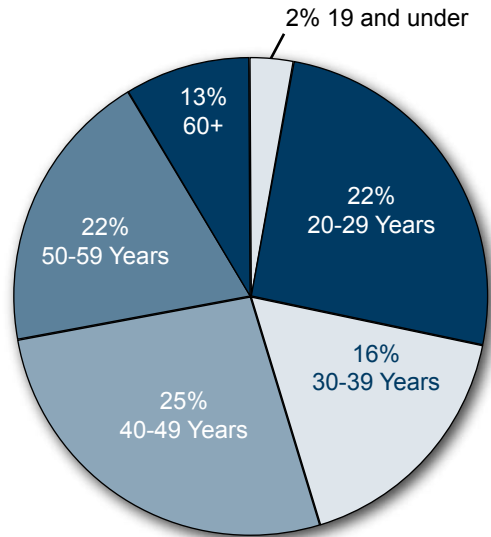
When your job requires heavy lifting, nothing is more important than a healthy body. So when Quincy Farms worker Sonia Cornejo experienced severe abdominal pain, she thought her working days were over.

With Florida Vocational Rehabilitation providing medical services, Sonia was soon back at work. She is thankful to VR, saying "It's a very good program for those who don't have the resources to take care of themselves."

Sonia Cornejo
Quincy



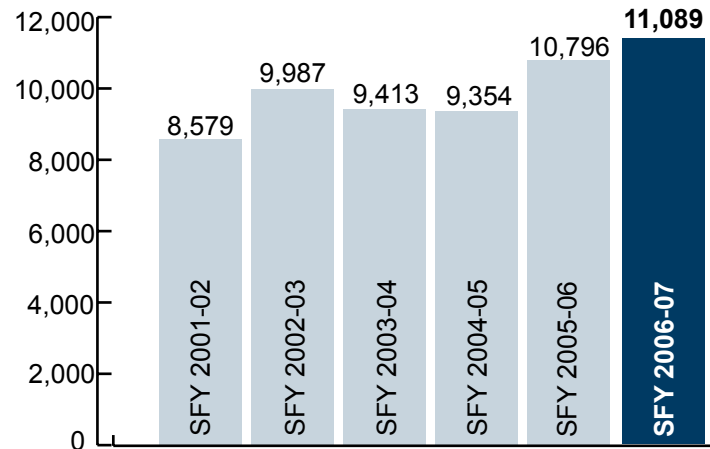
Age of Gainfully Employed* VR Customers



Ethnicity of Gainfully Employed* VR Customers vs. 2000 Census

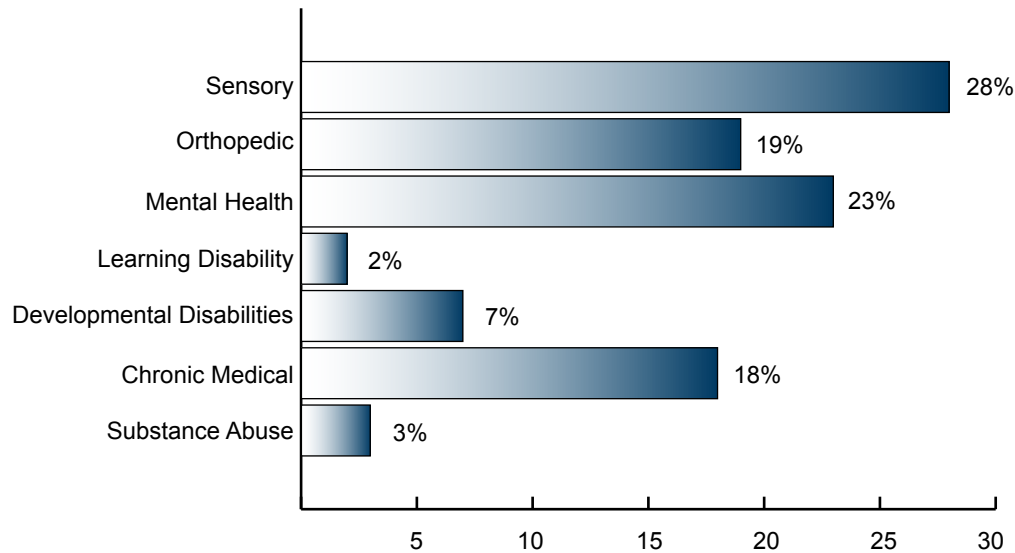
Ethnicity	VR Closures	2000 Census
Asian	.9%	1.6%
African American (non-Hispanic)	19.6%	14.2%
Hispanic	12.4%	16.8%
American Indian/Pacific Islander	.6%	.3%
Other	0	1.7%
White (Non-Hispanic)	66.5%	65.4%

Customers Gainfully Employed* or Rehabilitated



**Gainful employment occurs when a customer is placed in employment that is not in a sheltered workshop and has job stability for 90 days.*

Number of Gainfully Employed* by Disability Category



DID YOU KNOW?

Almost 70 percent of people with disabilities say they need no special equipment to perform their jobs.

The cost of accommodating qualified workers with disabilities is 40 times less than the cost of training and replacing workers.

Source: 2004 Harris Poll

Chronic Medical	Includes cystic fibrosis, metabolic disorders, speech impediments, disabling conditions of the cardiopulmonary, circulatory, endocrine, gastrointestinal, genitourinary, respiratory or nervous system
Developmental Disability	Mental retardation and autism
Learning Disability	Congenital and acquired learning disabilities
Mental Health	Includes attention deficit and adjustment disorders; anxiety, and related conditions; dissociation and mood disorders; psychoses; somatoform and personality disorders, mental health and eating disorders.
Orthopedic	Includes cerebral palsy, multiple sclerosis, muscular dystrophy, Parkinson's disease and disability of one or more limbs due to a congenital condition or acquired through accidents or disease (including arthritis, polio and intracranial hemorrhage)
Sensory	Includes blindness and visual impairment whether congenital or acquired, and deafness and hearing impairments that are prelingual, prevocational or adult onset
Substance Abuse	Abuse of or dependence on alcohol or drugs



A serious back injury usually means the end of your career if your job happens to be loading and driving tractor-trailer rigs. But instead of feeling sorry for himself at the prospect of starting over, Joseph Fiore went to Vocational Rehabilitation's Injured Worker program for assistance.

After a full evaluation, it was recommended that Fiore attend Florida Atlantic University where he became a Certified Construction Project Coordinator. He is now employed by the University as an instructor.

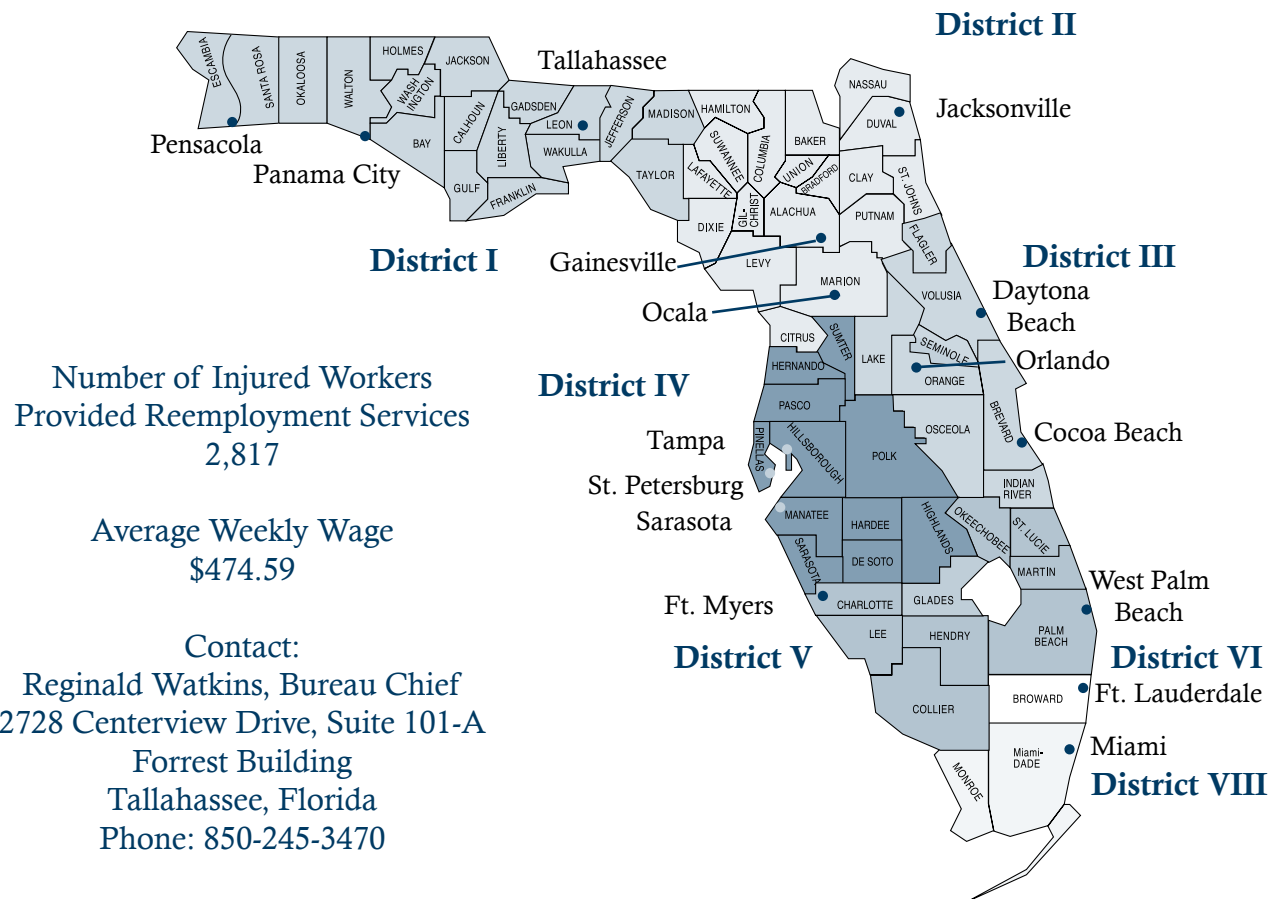
When one career ended, Vocational Rehabilitation helped Fiore find another one.

*Joseph Fiore
Miami*

Injured Worker Program

The **Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reemployment Services** within the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation provides services to assist individuals injured on the job in returning to suitable employment. **In 2006-07, 1,767 injured workers returned to jobs.** The injured worker program provides appropriate and necessary reemployment services to assist injured employees in their return to gainful work.

This is a state program and is funded from the Workers' Compensation Administrative Trust Fund.



DID YOU KNOW?

According to a 2004 report from the National Safety Council, a person suffers a disabling work injury every nine seconds.

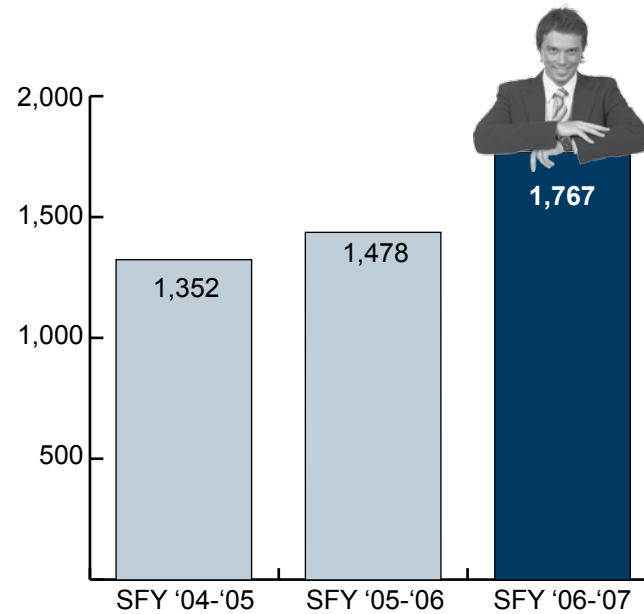
Construction and manufacturing jobs have the highest rate of nonfatal occupational injury and illness incidence rates.

In 2005, the average economic cost of fatal & nonfatal work injuries was \$62,500,000.

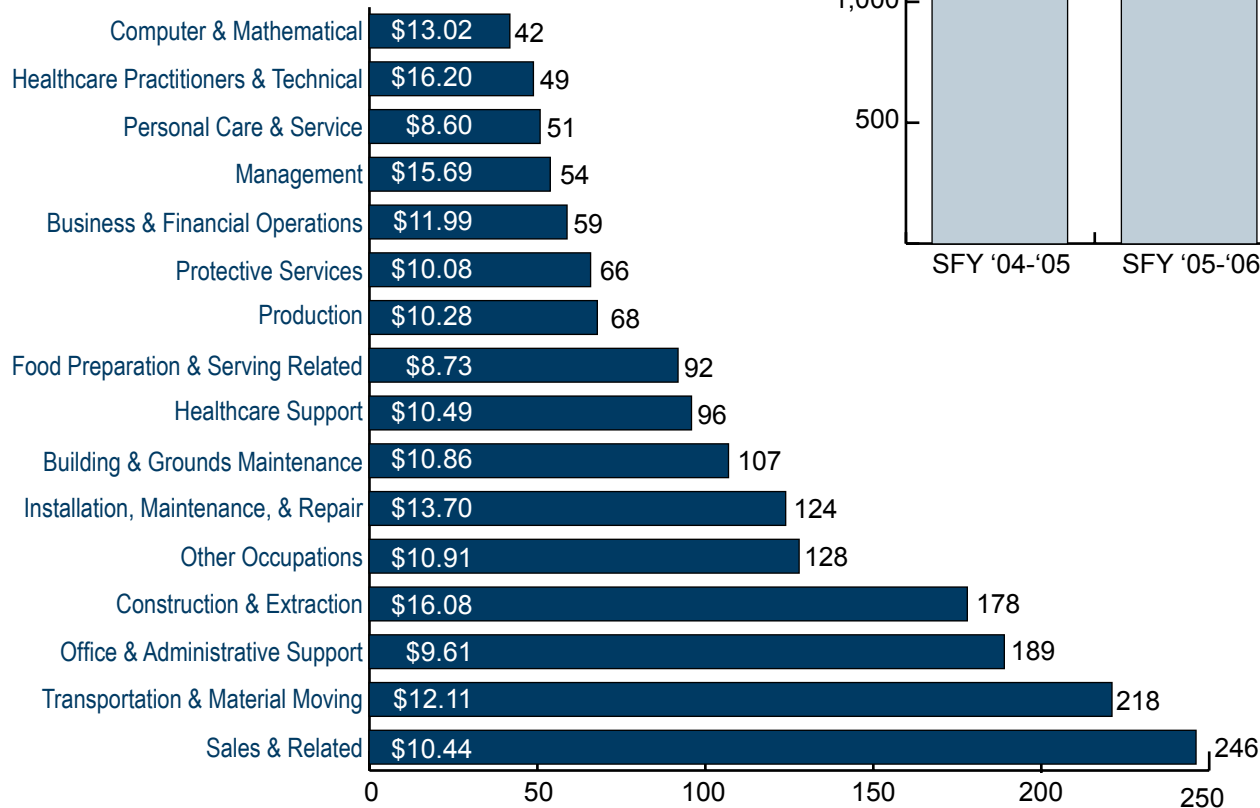
During 2005, a total of 4.2 million nonfatal injuries and illnesses occurred in private industry workplaces.

Source: United States Department of Labor, 2006

Number of Injured Workers Returned to Work



Occupations and Average Hourly Wage of Injured Workers Returned to Work



A learning disability and depression made Nicole Ferrara's job outlook grim. A friend suggested she turn to Vocational Rehabilitation and her fortunes quickly changed. Vocational Rehabilitation provided her the tools she needed to become a Licensed Massage Therapist.

Nicole attributes her success to her Vocational Rehabilitation counselor. "My counselor is the most wonderful person I ever met in my life," says Ferrara. "He got me approved for the grant that paid for school, books, and equipment and he never stopped helping me."

*Nicole Ferrara
Miami*

Independent Living Program

Vocational Rehabilitation's Independent Living program promotes a philosophy of empowering individuals with disabilities to live productive lives, become fully integrated in the community and to advocate for themselves. The 16 Centers for Independent Living (CIL) provide information and referral services to everyone. For individuals with disabilities, they provide independent living skills training, peer counseling, and advocacy. Each CIL also provides other services based on local priorities.

In 2006-07, the statewide network of centers:

- Developed independent living plans with 9,088 individuals,
- Assisted individuals to pursue 24,096 independent living goals, and
- Assisted 44 individuals to move out of nursing homes.

Contact:

Julia Kates, Independent Living Program Manager

(850) 245-3338

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www.rehabworks.org/IL

Florida Independent Living Council

The Florida Independent Living Council, Inc. (FILC) is created by state and federal law to work with the Vocational Rehabilitation Independent Living Program, the statewide network of Centers for Independent Living (CILs) and the Division of Blind Services to develop and implement the three-year State Plan for Independent Living. The Plan promotes a philosophy of independent living, including: consumer control, peer support, self-help, self-determination, equal access, and advocacy. Members are appointed by the Governor.

Contact:

Molly Gosline, Executive Director

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Florida Rehabilitation Council

The Florida Rehabilitation Council (FRC) is a federally-mandated, independent council appointed by the governor that reviews and analyzes the Vocational Rehabilitation program and advises on issues such as eligibility, effectiveness, and other state functions. The FRC submits its annual report to the governor and to the federal Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

Working in strategic partnership, FRC and VR:

- Develop the VR Federal State Plan and the VR Strategic Plan
- Partner with groups to share ideas and concerns
- Facilitate Public Forums throughout the state to collect public comments and concerns and incorporate the relative comments in the State Plan
- Educate the Legislature on program impact to citizens
- Evaluate effectiveness of services
- Form affiliations within the business and disability communities, such as local Workforce Boards
- Conduct statewide needs assessments every 3 years
- Explore funding resources
- Develop policy affecting persons with disabilities receiving services from VR



The FRC is a valued strategic partner to Vocational Rehabilitation. The influence and support of this volunteer stakeholder group provides an important perspective in designing and implementing vocational rehabilitation services that respond to a customer's needs. Vocational Rehabilitation appreciates all the work of this citizens' group.

Contact:

Vicki S. Welch, Program Administrator

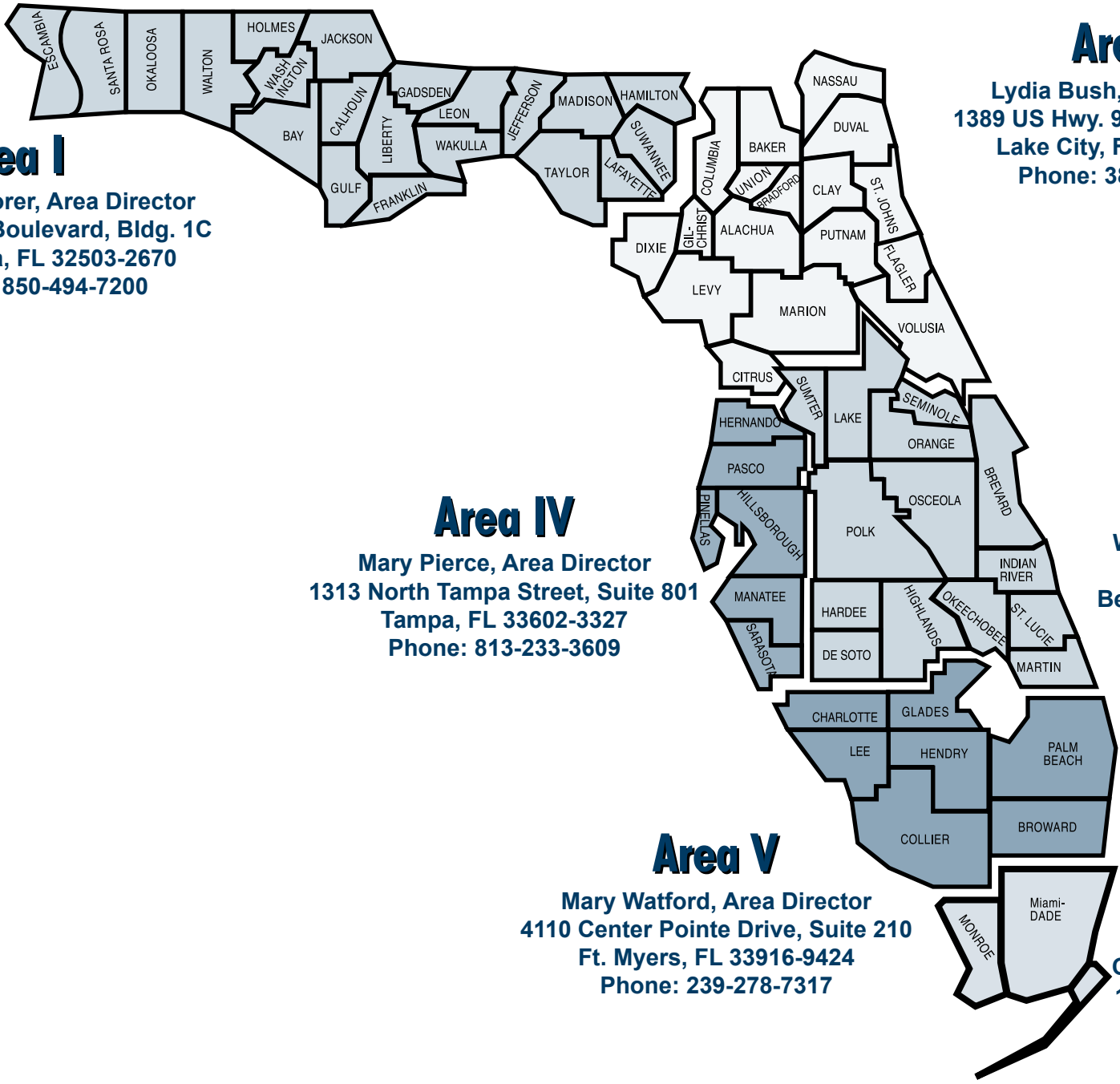
(800) 451-4327

Vicki.Welch@vr.fl DOE.org

DID YOU KNOW?

The 2004 Harris poll indicated:

- *Twenty-six percent of individuals with disabilities live in poverty.*
- *Youth with disabilities are twice as likely to drop out of high school as students without disabilities.*
- *Individuals with disabilities are twice as likely to have inadequate transportation and a much higher percentage go without health care.*



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www.FLJobConnections.com**

An equal opportunity employer/program. Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities. All voice telephone numbers on this document may be reached by persons using TTY/TDD equipment via the Florida Relay Service at 711.

***If you have comments about this publication,
send a note to VRPublications@vr.fldoe.org***

***This annual report was funded by an outside source.
No state or federal funds were used to print this report.***