

2008-09 Performance Highlights

Opening Doors to Employment

SUCCESS STORIES

Opening New Doors with Stimulus Funds



Have you been wondering whether the federal stimulus money has made a difference in the unemployment rate in Florida? Well, for one man it has made a big difference. Through a pilot program between the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), **Lee Lefkowitz** was recently hired as a Claims Representative with the Gainesville SSA. Lee has profound hearing loss and relies heavily on reading lips to communicate.

VR paid for Lee's college tuition and school supplies, and he now has his Bachelor's degree. VR also bought new hearing aids and glasses which are essential for Lee to do his job. As a Claims Representative, Lee works with the public and takes

claims for Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance. He is also responsible for determining whether someone is eligible to receive benefits and processes appeals for those claims that are denied or approved only for partial benefits.

VR Counselor Adam Hutton started working with Lee in 2008. "He's just a phenomenal person," says Adam. "He was the first person that stood out for this pilot program. He is incredibly intelligent, charismatic and admired by anyone that knows him."

"He's doing a really good job," says Donna Maitland, Lee's supervisor, "Lee has a lot of initiative and is a self-starter."

Lee's future plans include finishing his Master's degree in May 2010, which will bring him opportunities for advancement in his career. He enjoys working with the public and looks forward to assisting people with disabilities. He says, "It's my way of giving back after receiving assistance during my time of need."

Limited Mobility Didn't Limit His Dream

Angel Rodriguez was born with Jarcho-Levin Syndrome, a rare genetic disorder which causes malformed bones in the spine and ribs. "My shoulders, arms and my waist down are all normal," says Angel. "But I can't turn my neck; the bones are fused and keep me from turning." People with Jarcho-Levin Syndrome also have breathing problems and are prone to respiratory infections. But that hasn't kept Angel from reaching his goal of full-time employment and independence.

Thanks to VR providing him with a computer station, Angel has a new career as a drafting engineer and graphic designer.

Angel believes that VR counselor Phyllis Willingham was instrumental in helping him achieve his dream. "Without her, I don't think

I'd be where I am right now," he states. "She's always so positive; going above and beyond to make sure that I'm OK."



With the flexibility to work from home, Angel has been able to pursue not one, but two careers. At Earth Advisors, Angel does aerial mapping for inventory collections. "It deals with shapes, lines, symbols and coordinate systems. It's very technical," Angel explains. For E-Tech Unlimited, he designs 2-D models of overseas golf courses. Angel outlines the placement of bunkers and where the tee boxes and holes will be located.

Now that his career has taken off, Angel is looking to build his client base and increase business. He credits VR with helping him find success and says, "VR is a service that should never end."

Security Guard Finds Her Own Independence and Security

Mary Ann Lewis's disability was making it difficult for her to keep a job. Still, she was determined to find steady employment and become independent, so she turned to VR for assistance.



VR Counselor Penny Prosser worked with Mary Ann to practice her job interviewing techniques. She offered advice on appropriate clothing and hairstyles, and helped her prepare a resume that focused on Mary Ann's strengths and skills. She also provided a job coach to help Mary Ann

learn and practice her new job responsibilities. Above all, she offered support and encouragement. And the results speak for themselves. Mary Ann is now a security guard for U.S. Security Associates, Inc., stationed at St. Mary's Hospital emergency room, and has been on the job for two and a half years!

Penny is proud of how far Mary Ann has come. "It wasn't just getting her a job; it was helping her develop confidence so she could stand on her own two feet. She's not only made employment changes and kept this job, she's taking care of herself and becoming part of the workforce. She accomplished her goal and is doing extremely well."

Mary Ann credits Penny for her success, saying, "She kept telling me 'you can do it, you can do it, you can do it,' and I did. I came a long way with VR." Mary Ann's goal is to keep working and to one day own her own home.



Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



Mission

To provide services to eligible individuals with physical and/or mental impairments that will enable an individual to achieve an employment goal and/or enhance their independence.

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation administers two major employment programs – Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and the Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reemployment Services (BRRS), Florida's Injured Worker Program.

The public VR program is a federal/state partnership committed to helping eligible individuals with disabilities find meaningful careers. VR may assist with services so that an individual with a disability may obtain, maintain, or regain employment.

Florida's Injured Worker program is a state program funded from the Workers' Compensation Administration Trust Fund. It provides rehabilitation and reemployment services to an individual injured on a job that is covered by Workers' Compensation. In 2008-09, 2,604 injured workers returned to jobs.

VR and BRRS have 1,007 employees statewide who provide services to individuals and employers around the state.



VR Facts at a Glance

Persons with disabilities who entered gainful employment.....	8,077
Average hours worked per week.....	36.2
Average hourly earnings.....	\$12
Projected average annual earnings.....	\$20,485
Total projected earnings in the first year.....	\$165,457,345
Average monthly caseload.....	41,321
Average monthly caseload per counselor	109

BRRS Facts at a Glance

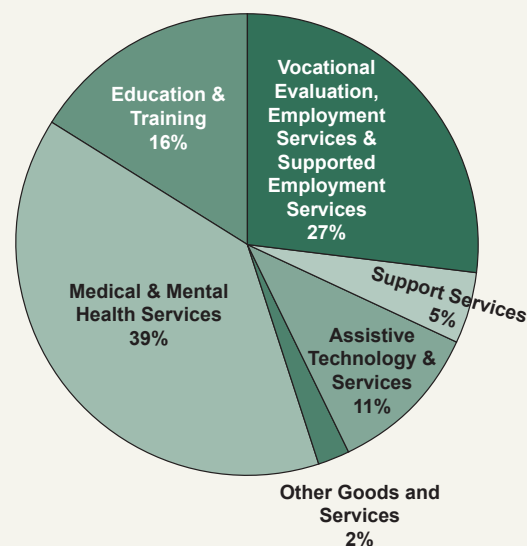
Number of injured workers reemployed.....	1,310
Number of injured workers provided reemployment services.....	2,604
Projected average annual earnings.....	\$26,246

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

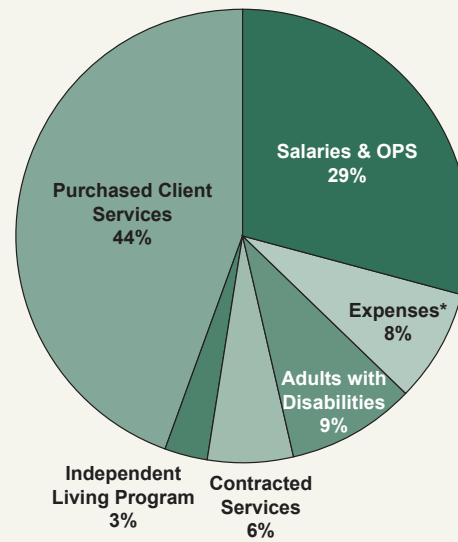
2008-09 Performance Highlights

VR is a federal partner with 78.7% of its funds coming from federal sources and 21.3% coming from General Revenue.

Distribution of VR Purchased Client Services Expenditures by Category

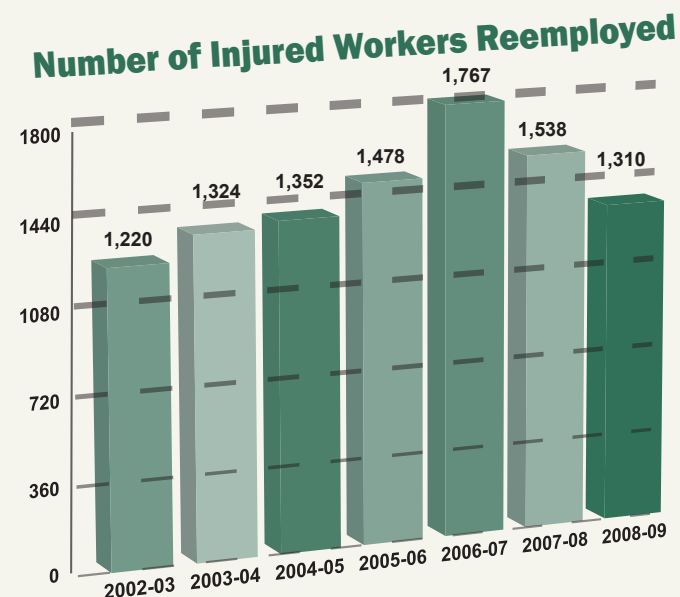
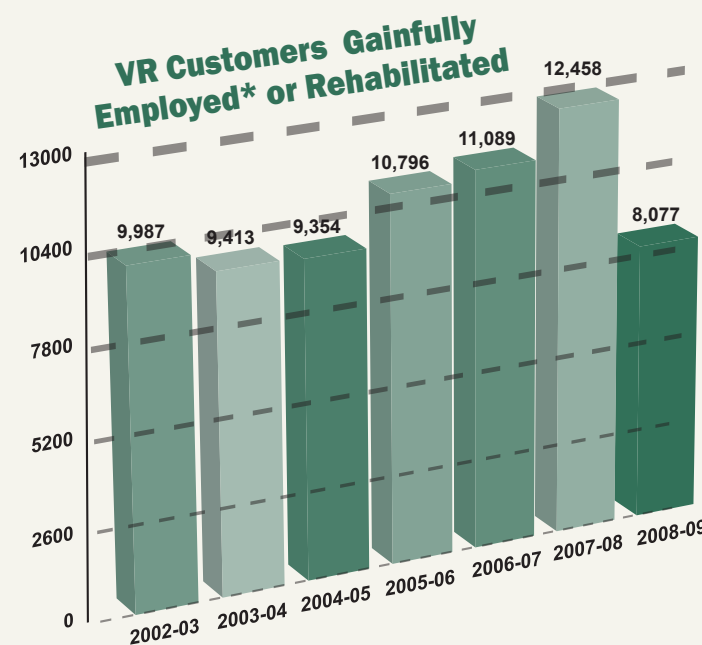
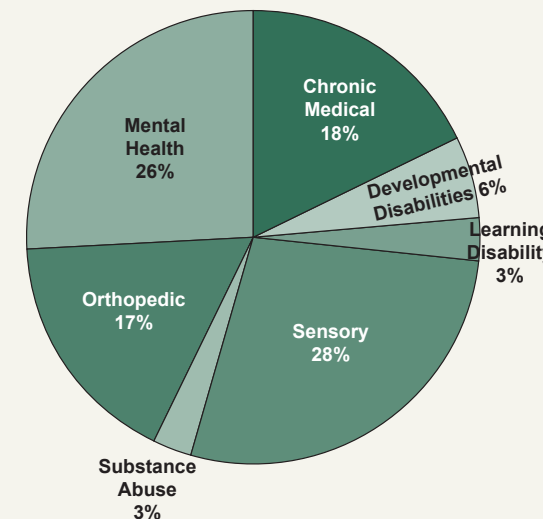


2008-09 VR Expenditures



*For purposes of this chart, the term Expenses includes Operating Capital Outlay, Risk Management, Human Resources, and Data Processing expenditures.

VR Customers Gainfully Employed* by Disability Category



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

From the Director



Bill Palmer

Over the last year, we saw numerous successes among our many challenges. With positive thinking and a can-do approach to serving Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) customers, our employees have made VR a bright spot among state agencies.

Florida's high unemployment rate, approaching 11.5%, has had a predictably negative effect on our customers' rate of employment. The national recession precipitated a drop in the number of employment outcomes in VR Field Services and the number of Injured Workers returned to suitable employment by the Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reemployment Services.

Given the current economic situation, it is important that we focus on providing services that will position our customers at a competitive advantage once employers start hiring again. The job market will eventually improve, and we must do everything possible to prepare our customers to be competitive and successful in that improved job market.

Supporting On-the-Job Training (OJT) opportunities is one example of a service that should give some of our customers a competitive advantage when employers start hiring again. Additionally, a work team is developing an "Invitation to Negotiate" (ITN) process. We will solicit proposals from organizations that provide services to individuals with disabilities with the intent to develop new lines of business, or new types of services or service delivery models directed toward preparing individuals with the most significant disabilities for employment.



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