



**Florida**  
**WR**  
**Vocational  
Rehabilitation**



**2009-10  
Performance  
Highlights**

**Putting people  
to work!**

## 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. In 2009-10, 3,874 people with severe disabilities found jobs.

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 2009-10, 1,236 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.....	3,874
Average hours worked per week.....	39.49
Average hourly earnings .....	\$10.78
Projected average annual earnings .....	\$16,791
Total projected earnings in the first year .....	\$65,048,334
Average monthly caseload .....	45,912
Average monthly caseload per counselor.....	121

## BRRS Facts at a Glance

Number of injured workers reemployed .....	1,236
Number of injured workers provided reemployment services .....	2,702
Projected average annual earnings .....	\$24,756



## From the Director



Bill Palmer

In 2009-10, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) achieved numerous successes, despite daunting economic challenges. Although Florida’s unemployment rate remains at historically high levels (around 12%), we continue to achieve employment outcomes for VR customers and injured workers. Our employees are our greatest strength, consistently demonstrating compassion, professionalism, and expertise. We continue to be innovative and creative as we focus on services that will lead our customers to achieve their employment goals.

Since invoking an Order of Selection in August of 2008, VR Field Services has experienced a significant transformation. We now primarily serve customers with complex needs and significant barriers to reaching their employment goals. This transformation occurred during a time of economic recession, making goal achievement difficult for our field staff and customers. Nonetheless, we weathered the storm, and by August of 2010, Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities (Priority 1) and Individuals with Significant Disabilities (Priority 2) were no longer placed on a waiting list.

Also in 2009-10, VR customers gained work experience and earned wages while learning through our On-the-Job Training (OJT) program. The OJT initiative began with a significant amount of new federal funding from the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA), and will continue when ARRA funds are gone, as one of our best tools. The job market will eventually improve, and we will do everything possible to prepare our customers to be competitive and successful in that improved job market. Let’s help people with disabilities get to work!

For more information, contact:  
Florida Department of Education  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
2002-A Old St. Augustine Rd.  
Tallahassee, FL 32301-4862  
(850) 245-3399 (Voice/TDD)  
(800) 451-4327 (Voice/TDD)  
[Rehabworks.org](http://Rehabworks.org)  
[FLJobConnections.com](http://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.



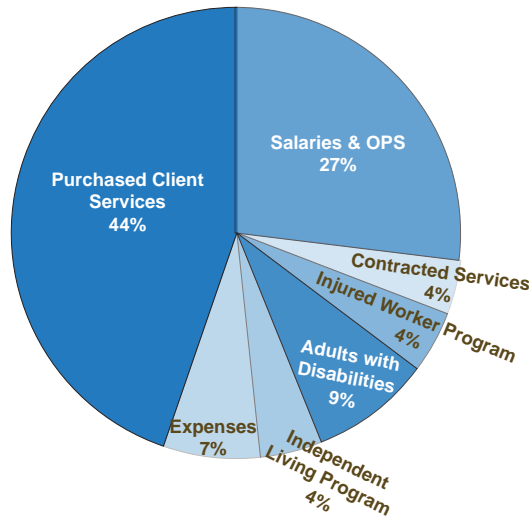
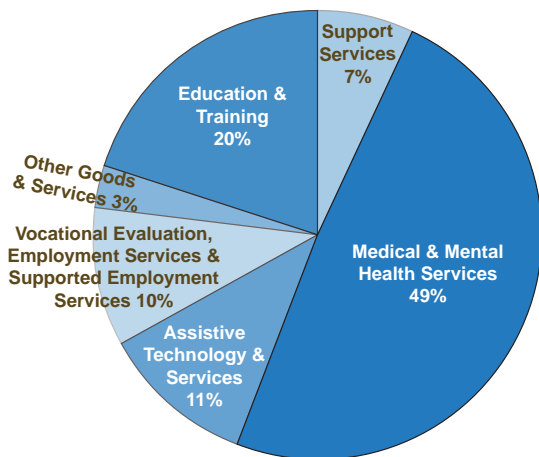
# VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROGRAM

## 2009-10 Performance Highlights

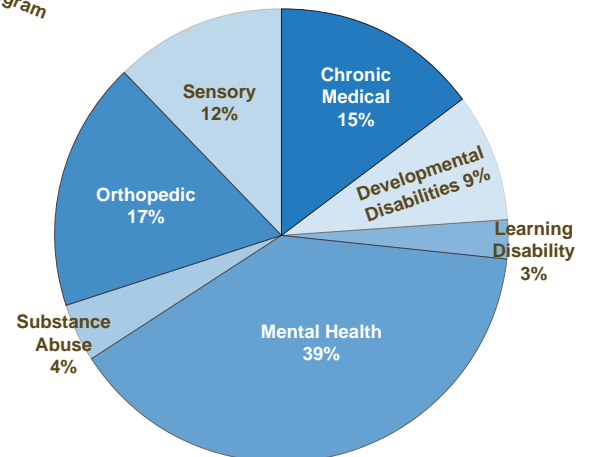
VR is a federal/state partnership – 78.7% of its funds come from federal sources and 21.3% from General Revenue.

### 2009-10 VR Expenditures

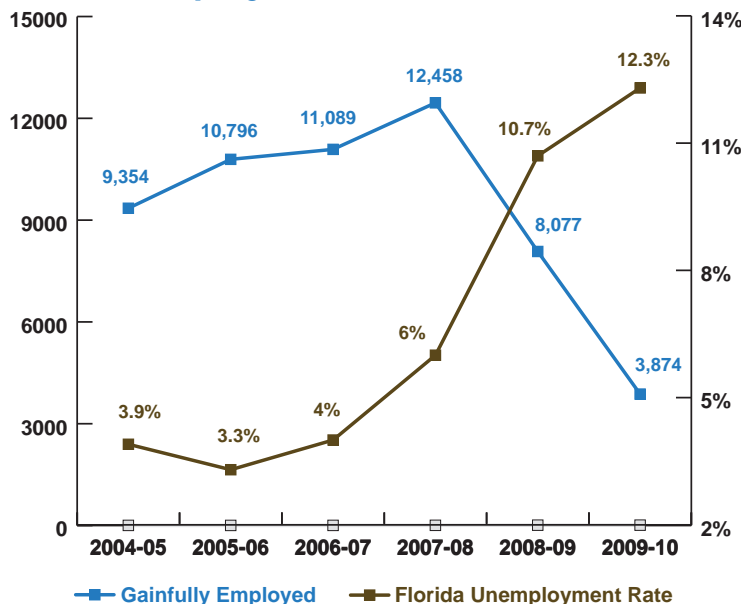
**Distribution of VR Purchased Client Services Expenditures by Category**



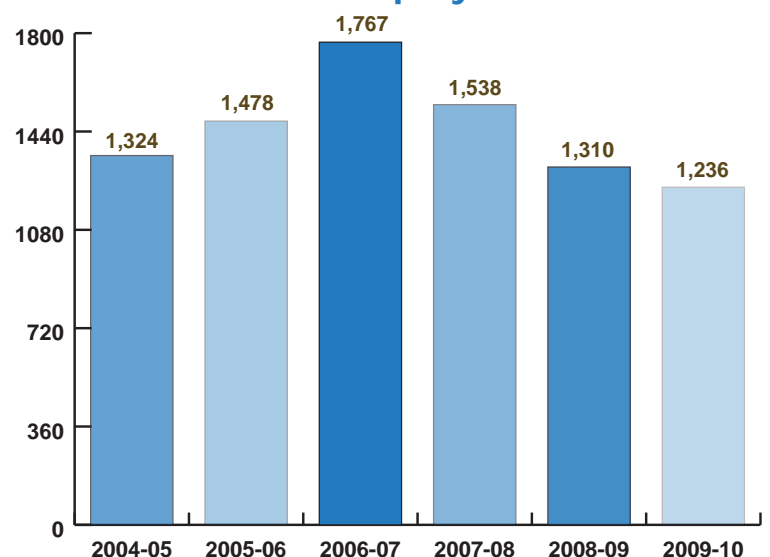
**VR Customers Gainfully Employed\* by Disability Category**



**VR Customers Gainfully Employed\* or Rehabilitated**



**Number of Injured Workers Reemployed**



\*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.

# SUCCESS STORIES

## Teamwork Leads to an All-Star Worker



**Ryan Gardner** pushes his cleaning cart with passion, pride and purpose. The 28 year-old from Volusia County wakes up every morning at 5:30 a.m., eagerly anticipating his work at Countryside Lakes Assisted Living Facility. "I love my job," says Ryan, who has Down syndrome and a Bilateral Hearing Impairment.

Ryan may describe his job as a janitorial worker with a few words, but

the animated grin on his face says much more. "His job is what gives meaning to his life," explains his mother, Patricia Gardner-Gucciardo. The people living at Countryside Lakes love Ryan. Since Ryan cleans most of the main areas, he has gotten to know many people who live in the building.

Teamwork between the Volusia County School System, Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), and Ryan's extended services job coach, employer, and family has provided the foundation for his successful six-year career at Countryside Lakes.

Ryan took advantage of VR's School to Work Transition services. VR provided Ryan with uniforms and help with VoTran Gold – a transportation service that takes him to and from work everyday. VR also placed Ryan with an extended services job coach, Tina Horne. Tina checks in with Ryan on a monthly basis.

Some of Ryan's highest praise comes from his supervisor at Countryside Lakes, Celia Laureano. "Ryan is a gentleman. He follows the rules. He does a good job," she says.

Patricia is forever thankful for the teamwork between all of the counselors and job coaches throughout Ryan's career. Without their concerted effort, Ryan's life would be vastly different. His career adds balance in her son's world.

---

## Volunteer Assistant Brings Awareness to Disabilities

**Alonna Torres** was always shy and quiet, but lately she has blossomed, becoming more outgoing and confident in her new job as volunteer assistant for Great Explorations Children's Museum. Alonna, who has spina bifida and uses a wheelchair, works closely with Program Director Shelly Lee, helping her with the museum's 300+ volunteers.

Alonna is a superstar of VR's On-the-Job Training program and a role model for young people with disabilities everywhere. She worked hard, learned new job skills, and did such a good job with her training that museum management decided to make it permanent. With the On-the-Job Training program, VR reimburses employers for the



trainee's salary, training costs, and any accommodations needed. It's a win-win situation for both the business owner and the employee.

For Alonna's On-the-Job Training, VR provided the accommodations she needed – a special desk, laser printer and special file cabinet – so she could work more comfortably. VR also supplied transportation so Alonna could get to and from work each day.

Alonna has brought new awareness to museum staff and volunteers. Through her everyday interactions with the museum volunteers, Alonna educates them about disabilities and what it means to use a wheelchair every day. Alonna calls her job "rewarding" and enjoys helping at the events and meeting new people. She hopes to continue working at the Children's Museum for many years to come.

---

## Overcoming Adversity to Follow Her Dreams



**Erica Whorley** lives life to the fullest – and for good reason. She has reached her goal of having a successful career in the medical field and is forever thankful for the assistance she received from VR. Erica now teaches classes at Medvance School, but her entire world was almost taken away in the blink of an eye.

It was February 2006 when another driver t-boned Erica as they traveled Fort Pierce county roads. The accident caused brain damage and hearing loss and crushed her left arm and leg. Erica

had recently been accepted into a training program to become a physician's assistant, but she couldn't walk and was emotionally deflated. Her goals seemed unreachable.

While Erica was connected to machines in her parents' Fort Lauderdale home, she began services with VR, working with Counselor Jane Haughian, who provided her with psychological support, as well as assistance with Medicaid paperwork.

Jane helped Erica develop a practical blueprint so that she could follow her dreams. She assessed Erica's skills and advised her that teaching could be a great career path. Erica had never given teaching much thought, but trusted Jane's expertise. It paid off, and Erica now enjoys using her skills to better the lives of future medical professionals.

Erica's turnaround is nothing short of remarkable. She teaches students studying to become medical assistants. Erica is also the mother of a beautiful 15 month old girl. "Anything is possible, and I thank God for VR services, because I can honestly tell you, I don't know what I would have done without them."