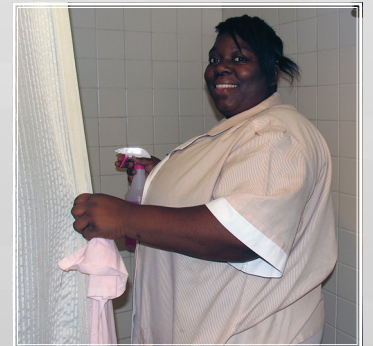


# 2011-12 Performance Highlights

Employment  
is our  
**TOP**  
Priority



*Vocational  
Rehabilitation*



## Message from the Director



*Aleisa McKinlay*

Florida's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has enjoyed a very productive year! In FY 2011-12, 6,071 Floridians with significant disabilities found employment and hope for a better future through the good work done by VR staff and community partners – that's a 21% increase over FY 2010-11 and reason to be proud.

Since my appointment as Division Director (November 1, 2011), my priority has been to travel the state to work collaboratively with other public and private partners and to spend time with VR staff on their home turf. I've learned a great deal, and enjoyed seeing and hearing about the important issues we're tackling together. VR has also been an integral member of the Governor's Commission on Jobs for Persons with Disabilities. The Commission is an appointed body tasked with identifying systemic barriers to the successful employment of Floridians with disabilities and promoting state-level strategies to eliminate them.

It is critical that we continue to understand the changing needs of VR customers and never cease in our quest to meet our mutual objectives more effectively. People want to work, and we want to give them the tools they need to achieve that goal. We're all different in the way we perceive and interact with the world – reasonable people can and frequently do disagree. The best decisions get made when all relevant information makes its way into the marketplace of ideas, and people talk through the challenges and opportunities presented. We have listened to staff, to customers, and to our community partners. As a result, we have made many substantive changes in our infrastructure and our business practices. We look forward to continuing that work in FY 2012-13, and to stronger, strategic collaborations across the board. It is a privilege to be part of this most exciting joint venture!

### VR Mission

To help people with disabilities find and maintain employment, and enhance their independence.

### VR Vision

To become the first place people with disabilities turn when seeking employment and a top resource for employers in need of qualified employees.



Statutory authority and governing guidelines may be found in 34 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Chapter III, Part 361 and Chapter 413, Part II, Florida Statutes (FS).

### VR Facts at a Glance

	2011-12	2010-11
Persons with disabilities who entered gainful employment .....	6,071	5,018
Average hours worked per week .....	31.99	31.06
Average hourly earnings .....	\$10.86	\$10.89
Projected average annual earnings .....	\$17,286	\$17,597
Total projected earnings in the first year .....	\$104,944,723	\$88,302,131
Average monthly caseload .....	55,035	50,515
Average monthly caseload per counselor .....	132	127
Rehabilitation Rate .....	48.9%	45.6%

## Overview

The Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, within the Florida Department of Education, administers the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, Florida's employment service for people with disabilities. The division maintains 80 service locations across the state, and has 931 employees. During the 2012 session, the state legislature terminated the division's responsibility for Florida's Injured Worker Program, the Bureau of Rehabilitation and Reemployment Services (BRRS), transferring those duties to another state agency.

VR is a federal/state partnership that works with people who have physical or mental disabilities to help them prepare for, gain or retain employment; this is a singular, focused mission. VR differs from other state agencies that provide support and other work services to individuals living with a disability, in that we do not maintain long-term caseloads or ongoing responsibility for the health and welfare of vulnerable individuals. Once an individual has been successfully employed for a designated period of time (90 or 150 days), the VR case is closed.

Four additional programs receive funding through VR. The Adults with Disabilities program provides funds to

40 school districts and 10 state colleges to give adults and senior citizens with disabilities who are unlikely to enter the workforce the opportunity for enhancement of skills consistent with their abilities and needs. The Independent Living Program provides services through a statewide network of private non-profit, non-residential, locally-based, and consumer-controlled Centers for Independent Living. Their mission is to maximize the leadership, empowerment, independence and productivity of individuals with disabilities. Services are intended to lead to the integration and full inclusion of individuals with disabilities in their communities of choice. Florida Alliance for Assistive Services and Technology (FAAST) provides assistive technology products and services. The Able Trust partners with VR on 'High School-High Tech,' transition services to high school students with disabilities.

According to the 2011 American Community Survey Year Estimate, there are 2.2 million Floridians age 16 and over who have a disability. Of those, only 17.3%, or 397,115, are employed. Although Florida's unemployment rate remained at historically high levels (around 9.6%), VR continued to achieve employment for VR customers and injured workers.

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## Young Man with Disability Motivates and Inspires Other Students

MIAMI – Labrawn Safford (far right) was a junior at a Tampa high school when an automobile accident changed his life – he was actually declared dead upon arrival at the ER. The accident broke his spine leaving him with “incomplete quadriplegia,” which means he has use of his upper body from the middle of his back up, including his arms/hands.

Labrawn decided that since he was given a second chance at life, he would find a purpose and make a difference in positive ways for others. Immediately after graduating high school, he came to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) for assistance. He was unsure of what he wanted to do next – work or college.

A vocational evaluation determined that he had a high aptitude for business and communications, so he decided to pursue a degree in Business Administration at Hillsborough Community College. He later changed his major to Mass Communications.

A Pell Grant covered most of his tuition, and VR covered the rest of the costs. He also needed a lighter wheelchair, to better accommodate his needs. VR provided a lightweight wheelchair that fit his body and had good cushioning, and he used this wheelchair all through school.

Tampa General Hospital's Wheelchair Rugby Team donated a



vehicle to Labrawn. He also received donated hand controls (which were not installed at the time). VR sent him for driving lessons and installed the hand controls.

He transferred to Florida State University (FSU) where he received his bachelor's degree with a double major in Mass Communications and History. Once again, VR assisted him with tuition and items not paid by his Pell Grant.

During this time, Labrawn began doing speaking engagements and became widely known as a motivational speaker. He still does this today and is very much in demand, going to schools and working with children from rough neighborhoods such as the one he was raised in, inspiring them to not give up and to strive to reach their goals.

When Labrawn graduated from FSU in May, he was immediately hired by Macy's as a department manager. He is very proud to be giving up his social security benefits for this full-time, salaried position. The job is in Miami, so he has relocated and looks forward to this new and exciting stage of his life.

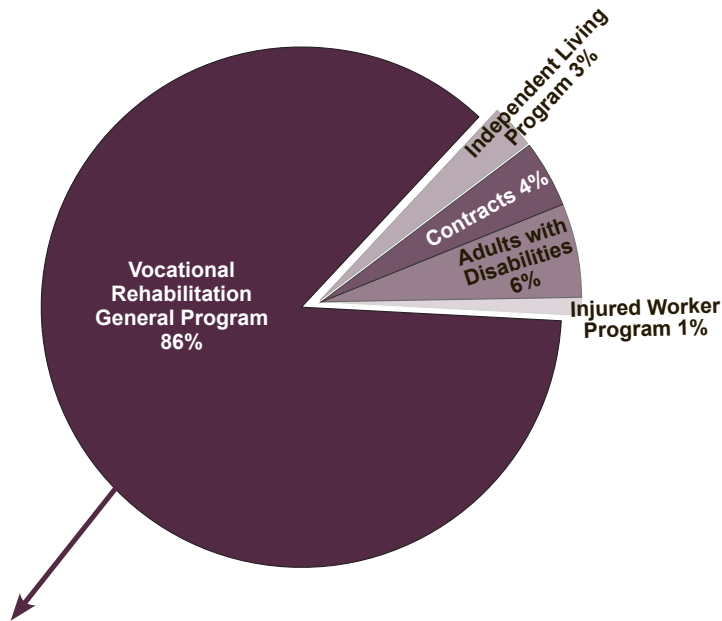
Labrawn's VR Counselor, Frances Branch, is very proud of him and says, “He came to VR as a kid with no family support and no plan, just a desire to do something positive with his life and the second chance he was given. It took seven years, but with VR's support and his own determination, he has become very successful in so many ways. He is truly an inspiration.”

# Performance Highlights

VR is a federal/state partnership – 78.7% of funds for VR program expenditures come from federal sources and required match of 21.3% from general revenue.

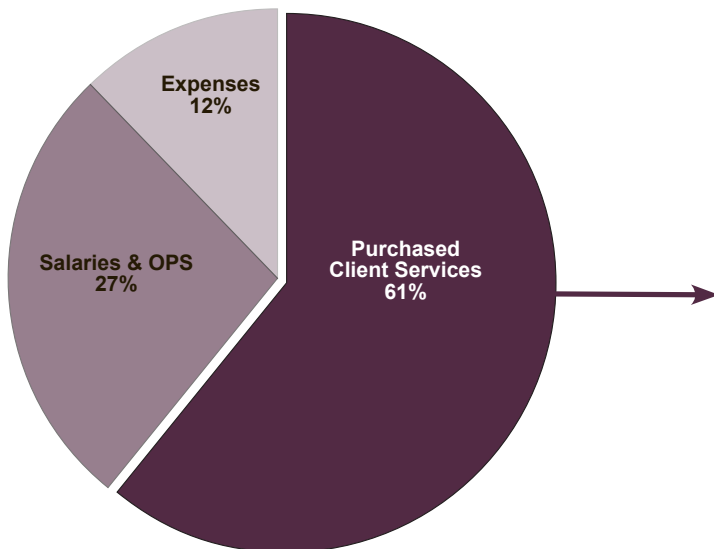
## 2011-12 Division Programs

Total Division Expenditures \$191,208,311



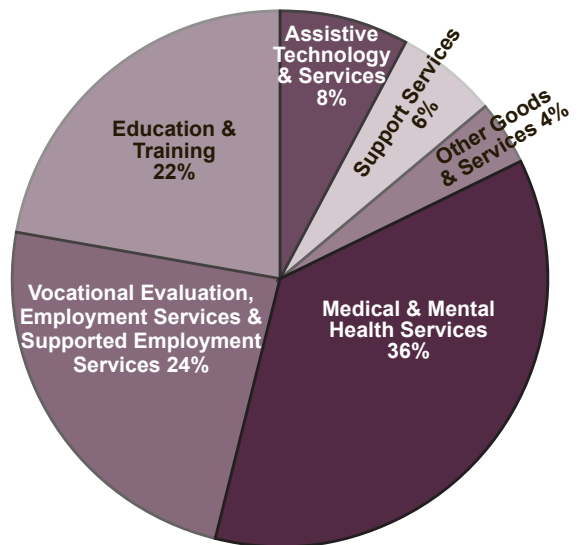
## 2011-12 VR General Program Expenditures

Total VR Expenditures \$169,662,467



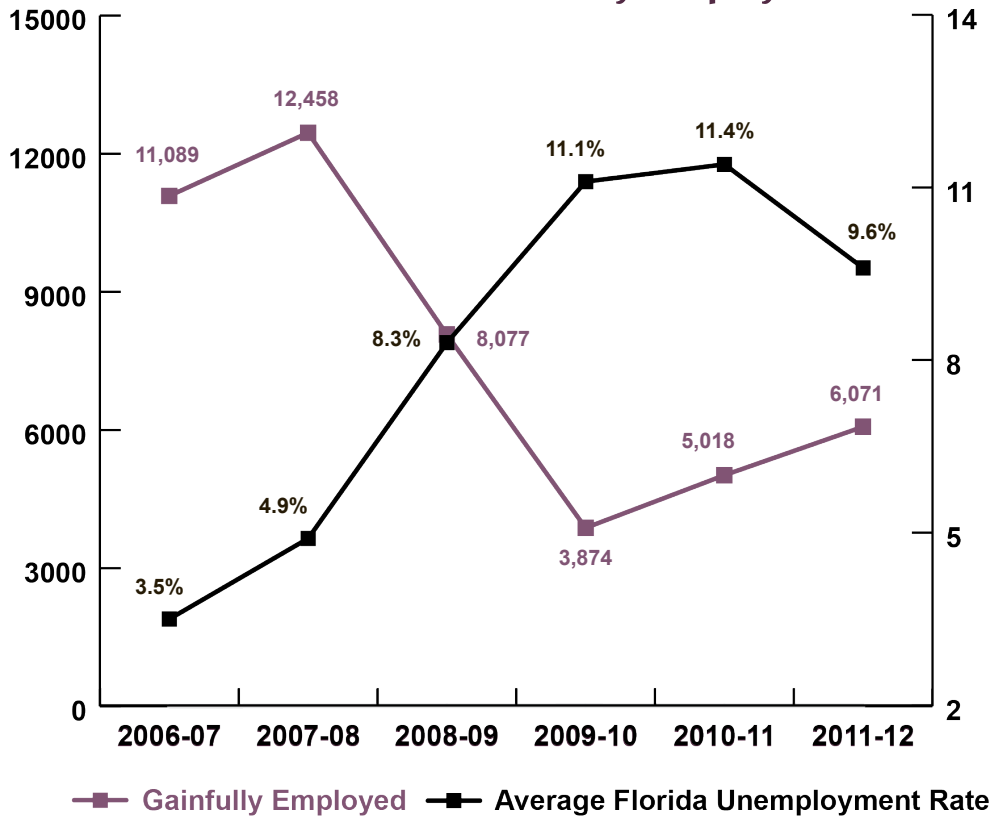
## VR Purchased Client Services (PCS) Expenditures by Category

Total PCS Expenditures \$104,385,690



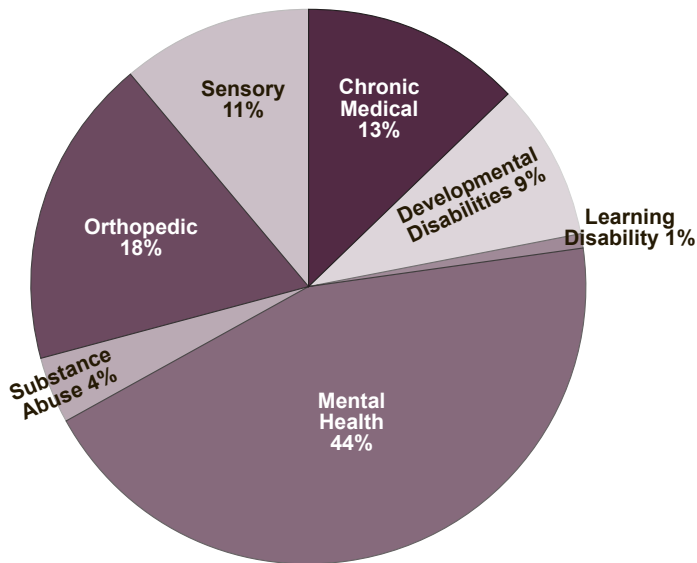
For every \$1 invested in rehabilitating the customer, an estimated \$6.97 was returned to the economy in state fiscal year 2011-12.

## VR Customers Gainfully Employed\*



\* 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. This table shows that there is an inverse relationship between the number of VR customers gainfully employed and Florida's unemployment rate. As the unemployment rate decreases, the number of gainfully employed customers is likely to increase.

## VR Customers Gainfully Employed\* by Disability Category



The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) defines primary disability as the individual's primary physical or mental impairment that causes or results in a substantial impediment to employment.

## Order of Selection Waiting List Status Summary

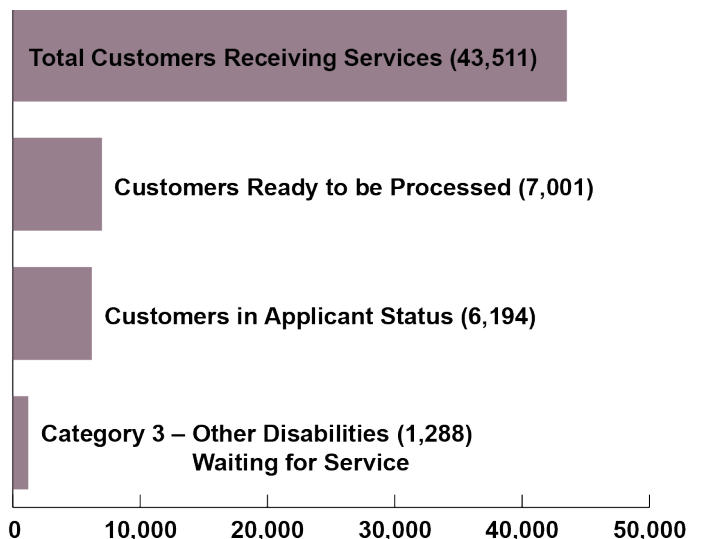
October 1, 2012

Under Order of Selection, all eligible individuals are placed on a prioritized waiting list based on the significance of their disability. Federal law requires that individuals with the most significant disabilities be served first.

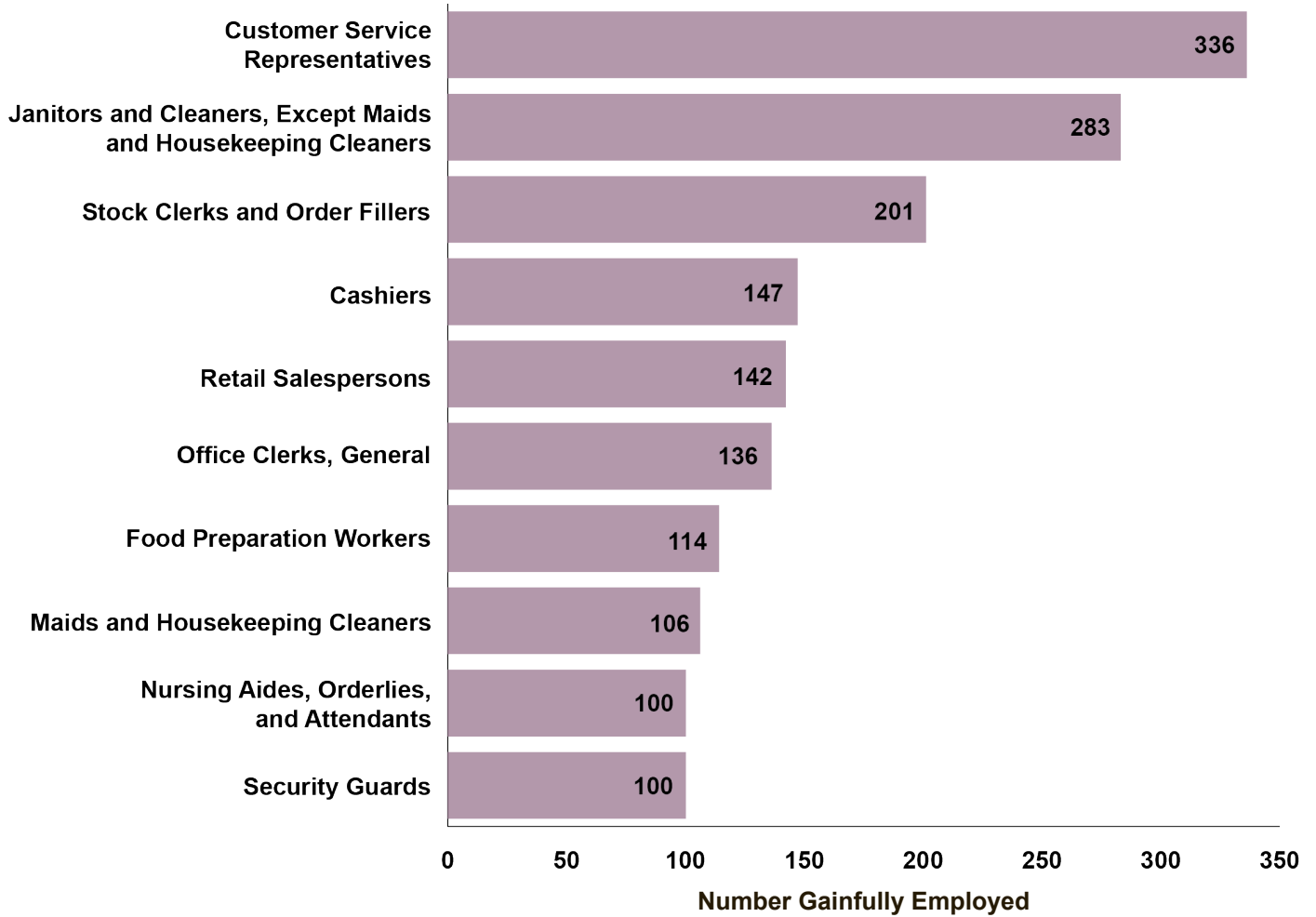
**Category 1 – Most Significant Disabilities (0)**

**Category 2 – Significant Disabilities (0)**

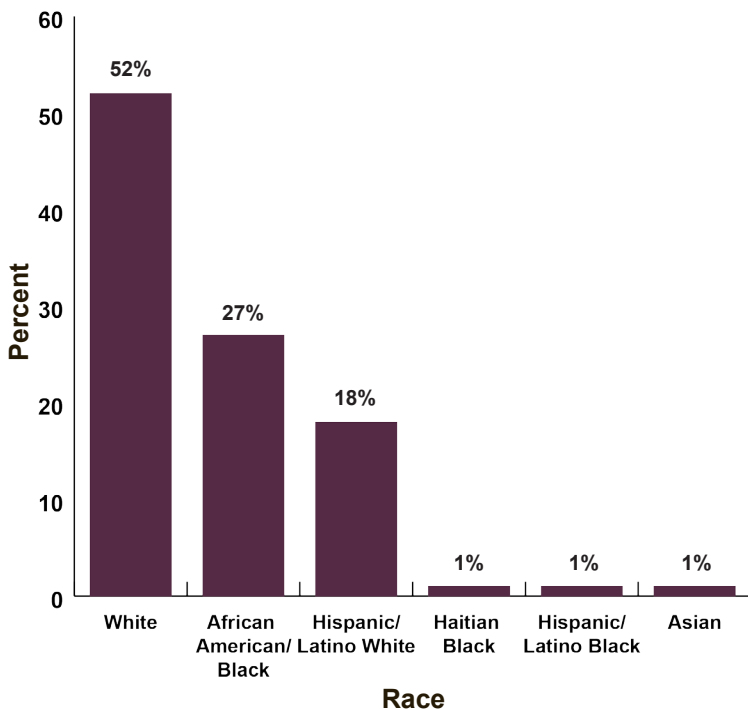
*Categories 1 and 2 are open – no waiting*



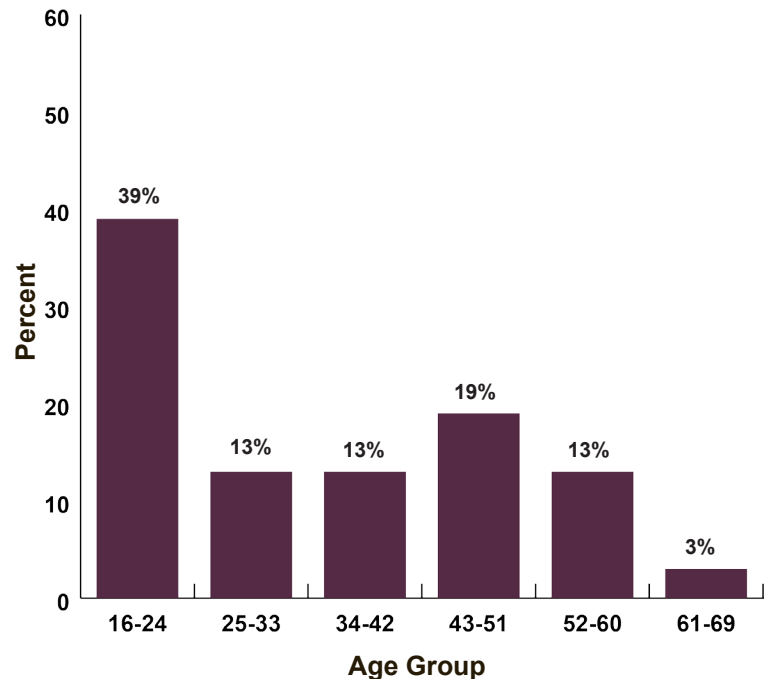
# Top 10 Occupations for 2011-12 Customers Gainfully Employed



Race of Customers who Received Services Under an Individualized Plan for Employment



Age Groups of Customers who Received Services Under an Individualized Plan for Employment



## Teacher with Disability is Role Model for Students

TAMPA – “I’ve been in a wheelchair all my life, and I don’t let it stop me from doing anything,” Carolyn Diaz says. Truer words have never been spoken. Carolyn has Larsen Syndrome, an inherited condition that affects the development of bones throughout the body. Both her father and uncle share the same diagnosis.

Carolyn hasn’t let her condition stop her from setting high goals for herself. She has maintained a job all her adult life, but in 2009, she knew she needed help to stay in the workforce. “I was in a situation where I was going to be unemployed,” Carolyn said. “I found myself in a bad economy, with no employment prospects, so I turned to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) for help.”

Carolyn was paired with her VR Counselor, Kate Seipp, to come up with a plan to keep Carolyn working. Kate worked with Carolyn to help her find the right career path. They decided a job as a teacher would be both fulfilling and attainable for Carolyn. “We assisted with counseling and guidance,” Kate says. “VR paid for a year of education credits, which led to Carolyn’s certification as a special education teacher. VR also purchased a wheelchair for her and helped with making accommodations at her home and modifications to her car.”

Carolyn knows that without help, achieving her goal of becoming a teacher wouldn’t have been likely. “It wouldn’t have been financially available to me if VR hadn’t stepped in,” Carolyn says. “I couldn’t



have done it without VR’s help.”

Equipped with her special education certificate, Carolyn landed a job as a high school teacher in Tampa. She says having a disability gives her an advantage in the classroom. “I teach special education to students with disabilities,” Carolyn says. “I feel I really am able to effect change. I think they need to see someone like me in a professional setting.”

Her supervisor, Jean Mauser, couldn’t agree more. “I think she has a good relationship with the kids,” Jean says. “What impressed me most was during an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) meeting last year, she was telling a student how VR helped her. Also if a student is complaining about his circumstance, she tells him her story and explains how VR helped. She shares her story with the kids and their families.”

Carolyn plans to stay in the classroom teaching long-term. She enjoys being an example of how someone with a disability can turn it into a positive and be a productive member of the workforce.

“It’s important to do the research first about the amount of opportunities in a field before going to school,” she says. “Be realistic about your disability, and advocate for yourself every step of the way.” Carolyn’s students can count on the fact that as long as she’s teaching, they’ll have an advocate fighting for them every step of the way.

## Tidbits Honored for Hiring People with Disabilities

JACKSONVILLE – Lisa Warthen (below) was happy to be alive as she walked away from the accident that left her with organic brain syndrome. “I was the one that was hit by the 18-wheeler off of US-1,” she tells the audience in Jacksonville in May. “I’m supposed to be paralyzed and not remember anything,” says Lisa. “But I’m here. I’m working.”



Lisa and Mandrell Mitchell are two Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) customers working for Tidbits Restaurant and Catering, a local business recently honored for their commitment to hiring people with disabilities. “We’ve benefited from them as much as they’re benefitting from working here,” says Clara Leblac, the

owner of Tidbits. “We see them as having abilities to help us in our business. We look to what they can do, not what they can’t.”

Clara has employed several workers with disabilities in her 29 years in the business. It started when she needed qualified help for her company and called the local ARC, and the relationship has blossomed. “They have a great track record for staying a long time, like most people with disabilities do,” she says.

Clara encourages other businesses that are hesitant to hire people with disabilities to give it a chance and find success, as she has. “They’re missing opportunities for their own business staffing,” she says. “We all have some type of disability. Let them shine with their abilities. You can learn so much from different people.”

Mandrell was a VR customer in Alabama before he came to Florida. Mandrell has a learning disability and Scoliosis, and credits VR for helping him find his footing in Florida. “VR took me from nothing and gave me something,” he says. Until recent medical issues became too much for him, Mandrell worked for Tidbits washing dishes and helping out where he was needed. It was a job he loved.

Lisa also loves working at Tidbits. Her coworkers and managers make her feel happy and loved. Tearing up, she says ‘Ms. Clara’ is like a mother to her, helping her stay on the right track. “Thank you so much from the bottom of my heart, I love you,” says Lisa.

Lisa also thanks VR for helping her find a place where she loves to work. “This is a wonderful program!” When asked about her future goals, Lisa says she is very content. “As long as I keep believing and have faith and have a great job, my goal is complete.”



# *Vocational Rehabilitation*

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[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.