



Vocational
Rehabilitation

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS



2014-2015



EMPLOYMENT IS OUR BUSINESS

Message from the Director



Aleisa McKinlay

Florida's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) has enjoyed another productive year! In State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2014-15, 5,760 Floridians with significant disabilities found or kept a job through the good work done by VR staff and community partners. That means 5,760 lives were changed for the better in ways we can only begin to imagine! Major initiatives and events within the division include:

- Eliminating the waiting list for services Category 1 (most significant disabilities) under the Order of Selection (OOS), with the elimination of the Category 2 waiting list on track by January 2016
- Ongoing improvements to our budgeting processes, data integrity, and management information systems
- Implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
- Developing strong relationships with other WIOA core partners, CareerSource Florida and the Department of Education's Career and Adult Education program
- Continued collaboration with Florida's Agency for Persons with Disabilities in preparation for WIOA-driven changes to participation in sub-minimum wage settings
- Statewide expansion of Pre-employment Transition Services to youth with disabilities
- The development and implementation of a Business Relations program, to better-assess and meet the needs of Florida's employers
- Increased quality improvement and performance management activities

People want to work, and we want to give them the tools they need to achieve that goal. The typical VR customer has changed a great deal since 2008 when OOS was established, as has Florida's business climate. We continue to work with our state and community partners to help VR customers succeed in careers that meet their needs and those of Florida's employers, as well. WIOA brings us many opportunities, and we aim to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars as we work to increase successful employment outcomes, focusing on school-age youth as they prepare for careers in the 21st century. They are Florida's future, and 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).

"The best preparation for tomorrow is doing your best today."

H. Jackson Brown, Jr.

Overview

The Florida Department of Education's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation administers the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program, Florida's employment service for people with disabilities. The division maintains 90 offices across the state and has 931 employees.

VR is a federal/state partnership that helps people who have physical or mental disabilities get or keep a job. According to the 2014 American Community Survey Year Estimate, there are more than 2.4 million Floridians age 16 and over who have a disability. Of those, only 18%, or 443,570, are employed.

Our mission is to increase that number. VR differs from other state agencies that provide support and other 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 (a minimum of 90 or 150 days), the VR case is closed.

Another focus of VR is transitioning students from school to work. The Transition program helps students with disabilities train for a job, continue their education, and/or find a job after

high school. Students who apply for services while in high school are served by 163 VR transition counselors. The number of youth employed following VR services has increased in each of the last four years.

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 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.

The 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' programs for high school students with disabilities.

Project SEARCH Helps Local Students with Disabilities Find Jobs

Melbourne – Finding a job immediately after graduation is a dream for many students, but it was a reality for Alex Boullion. After completing the Project SEARCH program in December 2014, Alex, who has speech and learning disabilities, began working in the central services department at Holmes Regional Hospital within the month. "Project SEARCH was really beneficial," says Alex. "The teachers and counselors saw my inner talents and helped me succeed."

Project SEARCH is a unique program designed to help students with developmental disabilities successfully transition from high school to the workforce. Over the course of a year, students participate in targeted internships hosted at job sites across the state of Florida. It's a collaboration between school districts, community partners, host sites, Vocational Rehabilitation, and the Agency for Persons with Disabilities.

"Project SEARCH is a full immersion experience. It's like we moved the classroom to a job site," says Florida Project SEARCH Coordinator Beth Romans-Corsi. "The program involves extensive periods of training, exploration, and long term coaching from teachers, job coaches, and employers. Our end goal is for students with significant disabilities to be in complex and rewarding jobs."

Florida Project SEARCH leads the nation with 21 sites, the highest number of sites of any state, and approximately 160 youth were served in the program for the 2013-14 school year. It also boasts an impressive 70 percent or higher employment rate for participants.

Holmes Regional Hospital and Cape Canaveral Hospital are two of

six Project SEARCH sites to reach 100 percent employment for their students last year. The four other sites are the City of Hialeah, Rosen Shingle Creek, Florida Hospital-Winter Park, and Florida Hospital-Orlando. Every intern trained at these sites during the 2014-2015 school year has been able to find a job after completing the program.

Maria Trieste, Project SEARCH supervisor for Holmes Regional Hospital and Cape Canaveral Hospital, credits the program's team mentality for its job placement achievement. "A lot of the success has to do with the large team surrounding the students and assessing their strengths," says Maria. "We work as a team to improve the students' skills, and the focus is always on employment."

For Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Lynda Schuchert, who has worked with many students in the program, Project SEARCH has found success because it gives people with

disabilities the chance to prove themselves on the job. "The staff at the job site have been impressed with the students," she says. "They first expected that the students would just do volunteer work, but the students learned real skills during their internships and showed what they can do."

With new job sites and school districts expressing an interest in the program, Project SEARCH is likely to grow in the years ahead, helping to make lifelong employees of more students like Alex Boullion.

"I'm going to stay in my job for a long time," says Alex. "I'm happy here. I don't want to go anywhere."

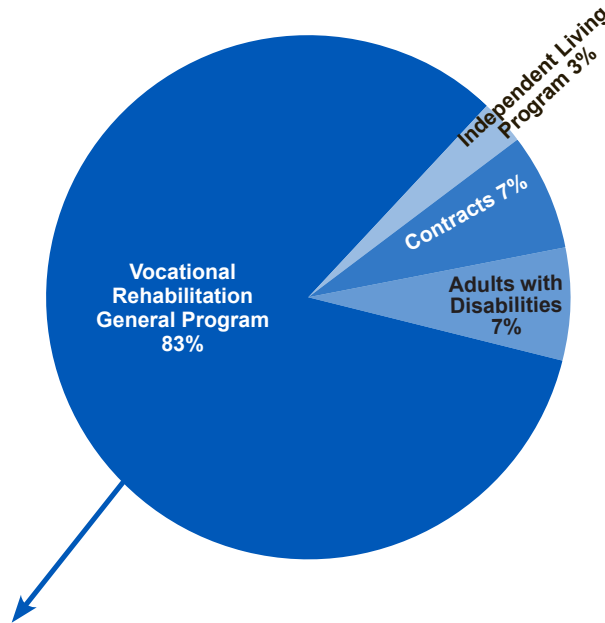


Performance Highlights

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 state general revenue.

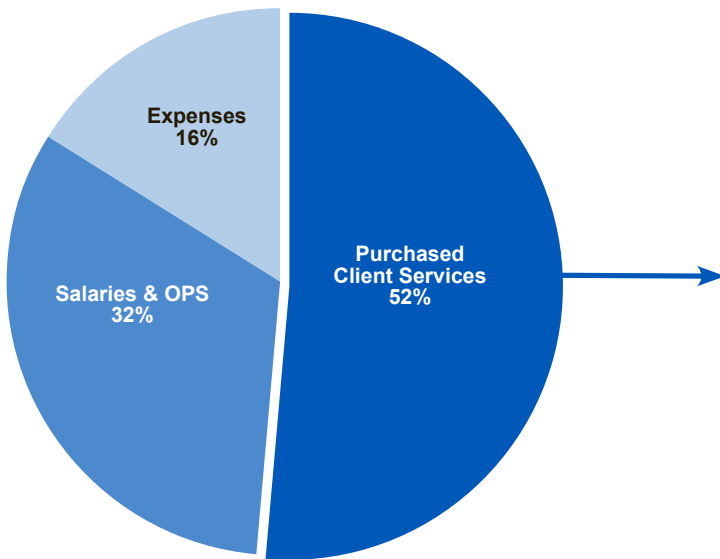
2014-15 Division Programs

Total Division Expenditures \$166,335,296



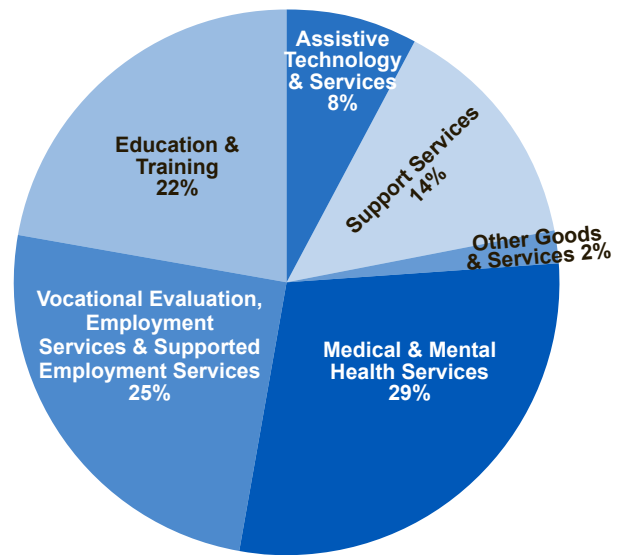
2014-15 VR General Program Expenditures

Total VR Expenditures \$148,111,228



VR Purchased Client Services (PCS) Expenditures by Category

Total PCS Expenditures \$76,861,268



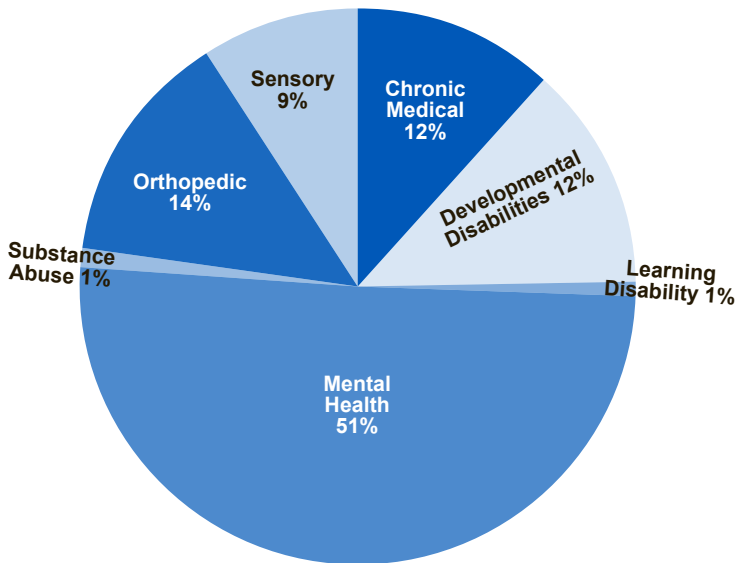
For every \$1 invested in rehabilitating the customer, an estimated \$10.67 was returned to the economy in state fiscal year 2014-15.

VR Facts at a Glance

2014-15

Persons with disabilities who got or kept jobs.....	5,760
Average hours worked per week.....	29.4
Average hourly earnings	\$11.38
Projected average annual earnings.....	\$17,411
Total projected earnings in the first year	\$100,289,248
Median monthly caseload per counselor.....	81

VR Customers Gainfully Employed* by Primary Disability Category



* Gainful employment occurs when a customer has job stability for at least 90 days and is placed in employment that is competitive, integrated into the community, and for which they receive at least minimum wage.

Order of Selection Waiting List Status Summary

as of June 30, 2015

Under Order of Selection, all eligible individuals are placed on a prioritized waiting list based on the significance of their disability. Significance is assessed by the number of barriers created in getting or keeping a job and the nature of VR services needed. Federal law requires that individuals with the most significant disabilities be served first.

Category 1 – Most Significant Disabilities (0)

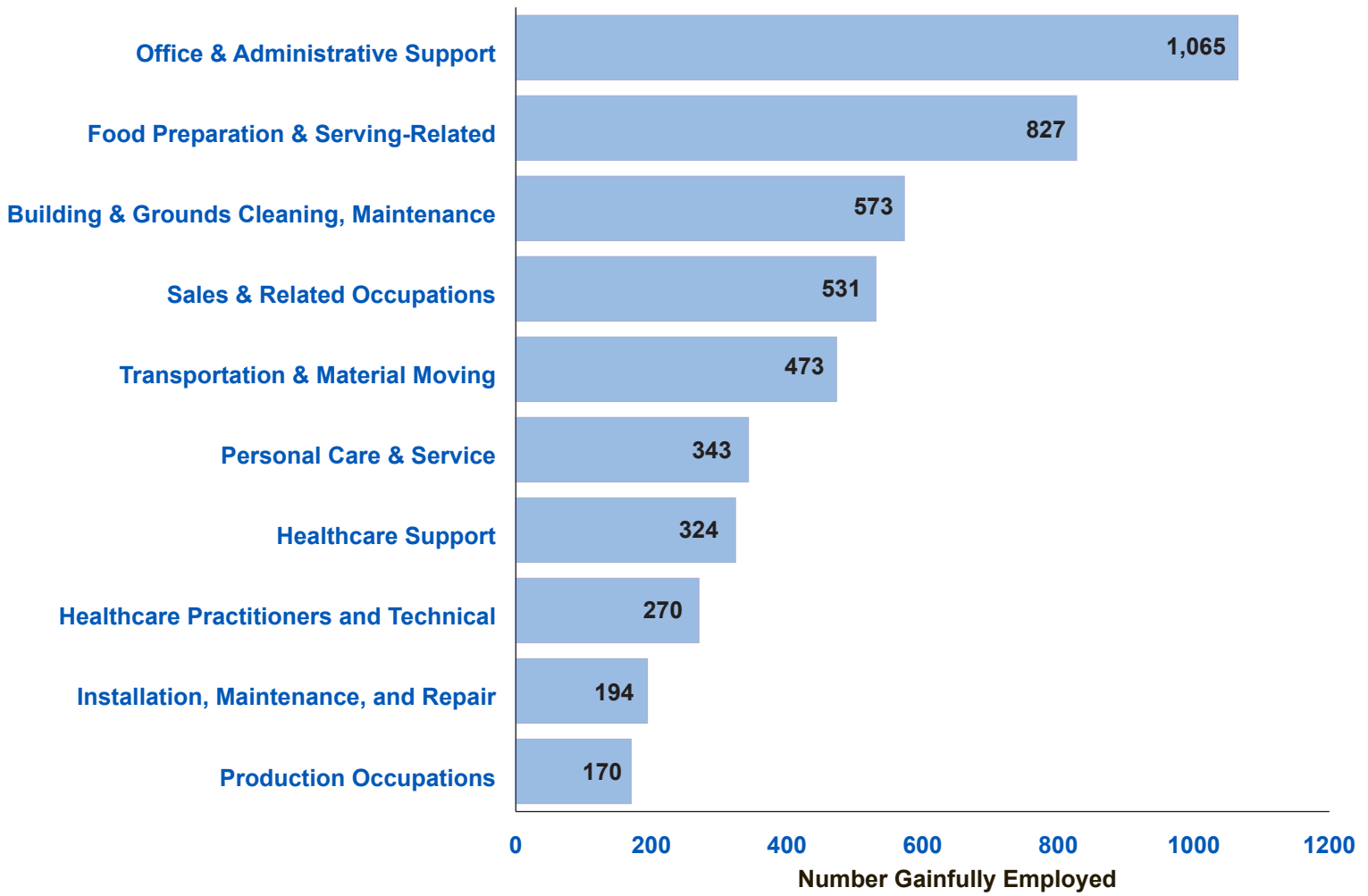
Category 2 – Significant Disabilities (9,364)

Category 3 – Other Disabilities (1,762)

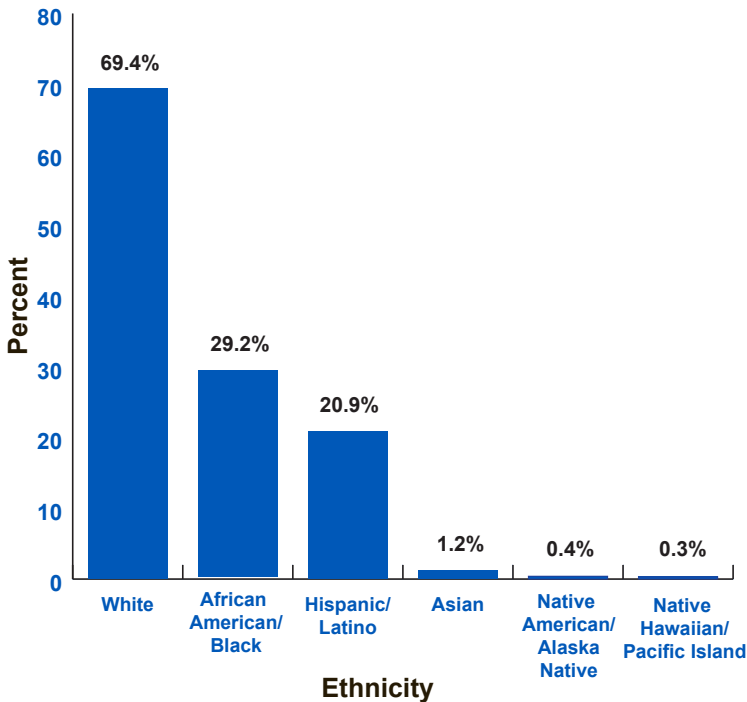
Category 1 and 2 customers are currently being released from the waiting list.

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.

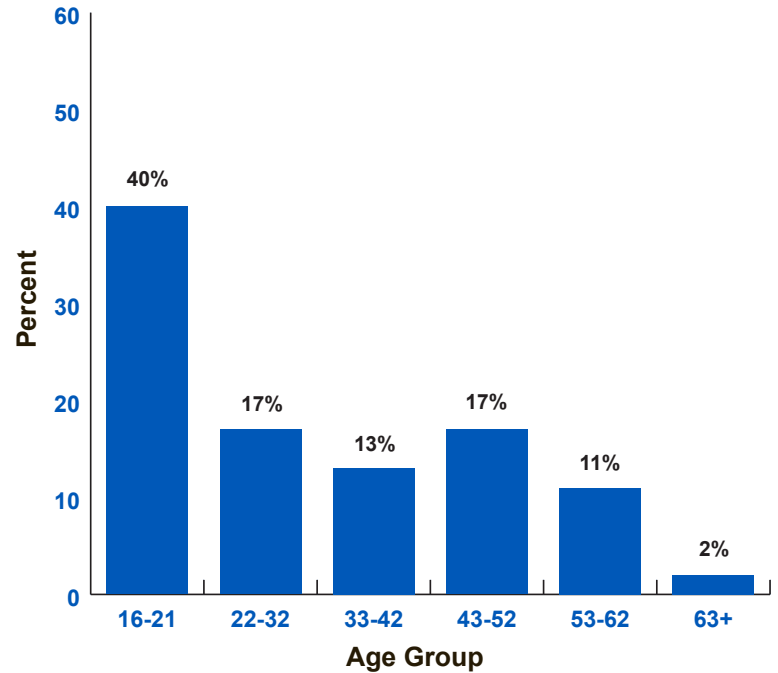
Top 10 Occupations for 2014-15 Customers Who Got or Kept a Job



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



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



Organizations Work Together to Help Karlee Hayes become Employed

Tampa – Karlee Hayes, who has cerebral palsy, a seizure disorder, and difficulty with her vision, came to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) while she was still in high school. That’s where she met VR Technician Lindsey Scherger Gray.

One of VR’s main focuses is the Transition Program to help high school students transition from school to the working world.

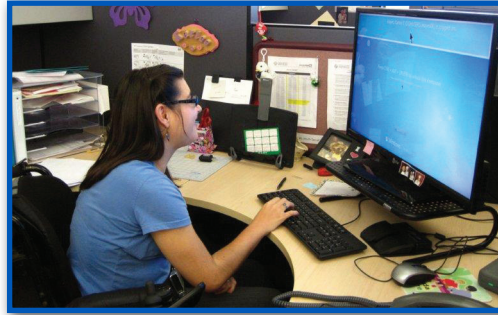
Lindsey and Karlee hit it off right away, and when Lindsey was promoted to VR counselor, Karlee was delighted that Lindsey was allowed to continue helping her plan her future career.

Karlee and Lindsey worked together to come up with her career goal. During that time, Karlee was offered a position working 20 hours a week at Children’s Medical Services (CMS) for the Florida Department of Health on the University of South Florida (USF) campus. She had been volunteering there for two years during her school holidays and summer vacations and enjoyed working there.

Karlee helped stuff envelopes, and sort and deliver the mail to her co-workers. Because she enjoyed her job, Lindsey and Karlee decided to create a vocational goal of office worker. Lindsey then referred Karlee to The Diversity Initiative for supported employment services.

Her job coach, Christine LaPace, immediately began working with

her to fulfill her accessibility needs at her job. Karlee needed a large computer monitor, power hole-punch, right-handed keyboard, monitor stand, metal sorter, foot pedal, a grabber (in case she dropped an item), and a pivot for her wheelchair arm so she could be as close as possible to her desk. All of these accommodations were paid for by VR, one of the many benefits offered to employers who hire someone with a disability.



Karlee’s supervisor, Mary Ordway, says that she has thoroughly enjoyed watching Karlee come out of her shell and is amazed at everything she has accomplished in one year. “Karlee intermingles with the staff very well; she has a great sense of humor and always keeps everyone laughing,”

says Mary. “She is willing to try anything!”

While working at CMS, Karlee was accepted into the STAGES (Successful Transition After Graduation for Exceptional Students) program at USF, a transition program on campus. During her STAGES Internship, Karlee worked at the Campus Rec Center.

Karlee continues to work for CMS, and is taking on more and more responsibility. Her duties now include alphabetically sorting new client referrals and inputting them into the confidential CMS system, scheduling conference rooms for meetings, and printing information entered into the system by the three social workers she is assigned to, along with other duties.

A Change in Vision Gives Dennis Lopez a New Career Path



Boca Raton – Dennis Lopez, who has Attention Deficit Disorder, had been working for Publix for 20 years, and although he liked his job, he wasn’t going anywhere in the company and wanted to try something new, something better. After learning about VR from a friend, he shared his goals with VR Counselor Matthew Lane, and his new journey began.

The problem was, Dennis didn’t know what new career path he wanted to take. So Matthew

offered counseling and guidance and a work evaluation to see what jobs Dennis would be qualified to do. In the meantime, Dennis had the opportunity to job shadow at a friend’s optometrist office and really liked the idea of becoming an Optometric Assistant.

But that meant going back to school. He started the Optometric Assistant training program at McFatter Technical College and says going back to school was an interesting experience. “Before, I think I had a learning disability or something because I didn’t do very well, so it was good to go back to school and the school was great. I did really well. I went every day, and I didn’t want to leave. I was determined not to mess this up.”

VR paid for tuition and books and supplies. With the college making accommodations for him, Dennis quickly completed the program. He was then ready to look for a job. Dennis heard about a job at

Pediatric Ophthalmology Consultants of South Florida, so he updated his resume, applied, and got the job. He started training with staff supervisor, Michelle Bats, at their Boca Raton office.

Michelle is very happy with his progress. “He works hard, and he does exactly what he’s supposed to do.” She says that they didn’t need to do any official accommodations for Dennis’ disability but shares some advice for employers who might be leaning toward hiring someone with a disability. “Be patient and make sure they write everything down. Dennis does that, and it’s a big help. He follows his list and gets the task done.”

Matthew is proud of Dennis. “At first, he didn’t know very much about VR, but as he learned what we could do, it gave him more confidence and boosted his self-esteem. He never missed an appointment and never missed a day of class. And a lot of that is why he was successful.”

Dennis has praise for Matthew, too. “It was great working with Matt. He made himself available whenever I needed him. I wanted to do it for Matt, too, because he put so much faith in me. He said he believed that I could do it.”

He continues, “I like to tell people about the VR program. I think it’s great! I want people to see that if I can do it, anybody can do it. If you have good help, you can do it. I see people who are going through the same things I went through, and I tell them that with help, they can do it. They need to get in the program.”

“It was tough leaving my job of 20 years and going to school. But it all lined up for me, like the universe was behind me. It was amazing how everything just fell into place for me, and it’s all because of the program, and my teachers, and my wife.”



***Vocational
Rehabilitation***

For more information, contact:

**Florida Department of Education
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation**

4070 Esplanade Way

Tallahassee, FL 32399-7016

(850) 245-3399

(800) 451-4327

Rehabworks.org