

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES



Division of Services for the Blind

DSB

Taking the Steps for a
Better Tomorrow



2022 Annual Report



Services include, but are not limited to:



*Vocational
Rehabilitation*



*Independent
Living*



*Medical
Eye Care*



*Youth
Services*



*Business
Enterprises*

The NC Division of Services for the Blind (DSB), an agency under the NC Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS), provides services to people who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind to help them reach their goals of independence and employment. This mission is in direct alignment with the mission of the NCDHHS to improve the health, safety, and well-being of all North Carolina citizens.

Functions of the DSB *State Rehabilitation Council*

- Reviews and makes recommendations to DSB about the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program's performance regarding eligibility, scope and effectiveness of services provided and functions performed that affect the ability of individuals served to achieve rehabilitation goals
- In partnership with DSB, develops and reviews the VR program goals and priorities and evaluates the effectiveness of the program
- Prepares and submits an annual report on the status of DSB's vocational rehabilitation program and makes the report available to the public
- Assists the agency in developing the State Plan and amendments and evaluations
- Reviews and analyzes the effectiveness of and level of consumer satisfaction with DSB's VR services and employment outcomes achieved by recipients of services.

Our *2022 Annual Report*

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NC DSB *State Rehabilitation Council Members*

Debra T. Pickens, Chair
Parent Training and Information Center

Cody J. Davis, Vice Chair
At-large/Blind, Recipient of Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Celeste O. Hunt,
Director of a Project carried out under Section 121 of the Rehabilitation Act

Tania M. Bowers,
Client Assistance Program

Willis L. Hatcher III,
Parent of a Disabled Child

Lauren R. Hoffman,
NC Optometric Society

Vacant,
NC Optometric Society

Dr. Ricky Scott,
Statewide Independent Living Council

Tevin S. Price,
Representative of Business/Industry/and Labor

Crystal Patrick,
Department of Public Instruction

Frederick McEachern,
Advocacy Group for Persons with Disabilities

Denise Lyons Puryear,
Community Rehab Program Service Provider

Agreta Limerick,
NC Workforce Development Commission

Dr. Carol A. Johnston,
NC Medical Society

Dr. Christopher Shah,
NC Medical Society

Vacant,
NC Optician Association

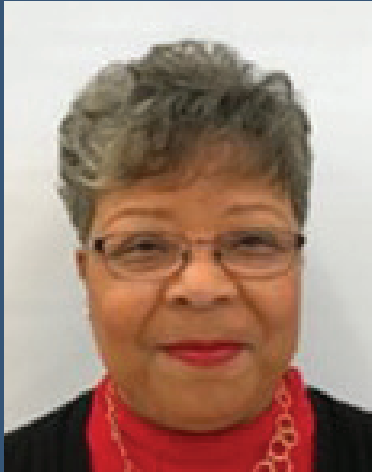
Vacant,
NC Optician Association

Ex-Officio Members

Cynthia Speight, Director
Division of Services for the Blind

Evelis Mason, VR Counselor
Division of Services for the Blind

NC DSB State Rehabilitation Council *Chairperson's Message*



I am honored to present the North Carolina Division of Services for the Blind (DSB) 2021-2022 Annual Report. The theme this year is "Taking the Steps for a Better Tomorrow." First, let's look at what we have accomplished over the past year. DSB provided VR services to 2,541 individuals with blindness or low vision, with 247 individuals achieving successful employment closures. The Independent Living Programs served more than 2,000 eligible individuals.

What are our challenges for tomorrow? We need to continue to educate our consumers about the resources available for individuals with vision and hearing impairments and deafblindness.

We need to continue to educate more organizations and corporations on the abilities of our consumers. We need to continue to recognize our success stories throughout the state and provide peer-to-peer support when needed.

Next, to increase our outreach to consumers at an early age and help them to reach their goals and vision by the time they graduate from high school; and to increase training opportunities for our consumers and monitor their individual outcomes on a regular basis.

Additionally, we must continue to develop customized employment for our consumers. They want to work and add value to their communities and our society as a whole.

I would like to thank each council member for his/her hard work and dedication. I would also like to thank the NC DSB staff members who support the mission and the theme "Taking the Steps for a Better Tomorrow."

May we move forward into tomorrow one step at a time together as a TEAM!

**Debra Pickens,
NC DSB State Rehabilitation Council Chairperson**

2022 Consumer Satisfaction Survey



Background

The consumer satisfaction survey was initiated to meet the mandate of Section 105 (c) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, which states that the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) shall, among performing other required functions:

Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of and client satisfaction with:

- A. the functions performed by the designated State agency.
- B. vocational rehabilitation services provided by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for providing vocational rehabilitation services to individuals with disabilities under this Act.
- C. employment outcomes achieved by eligible individuals receiving services under this title, including the availability of health and other employment benefits in connection with such employment outcomes.

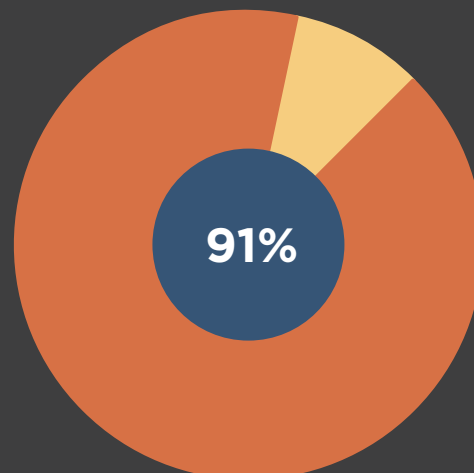
Overview

- Quarterly telephonic interview surveys contracted through North Carolina State University
- 300+ client interviews took place quarterly
- Proportion-to-population stratified random sampling

Satisfaction with VR Counselors and Staff

Compared with the prior year, for SFY 2022 there was no decrease in satisfaction for any of the questions in this section. Overall satisfaction increased from 86% to 91%.

Satisfaction with Overall Experience

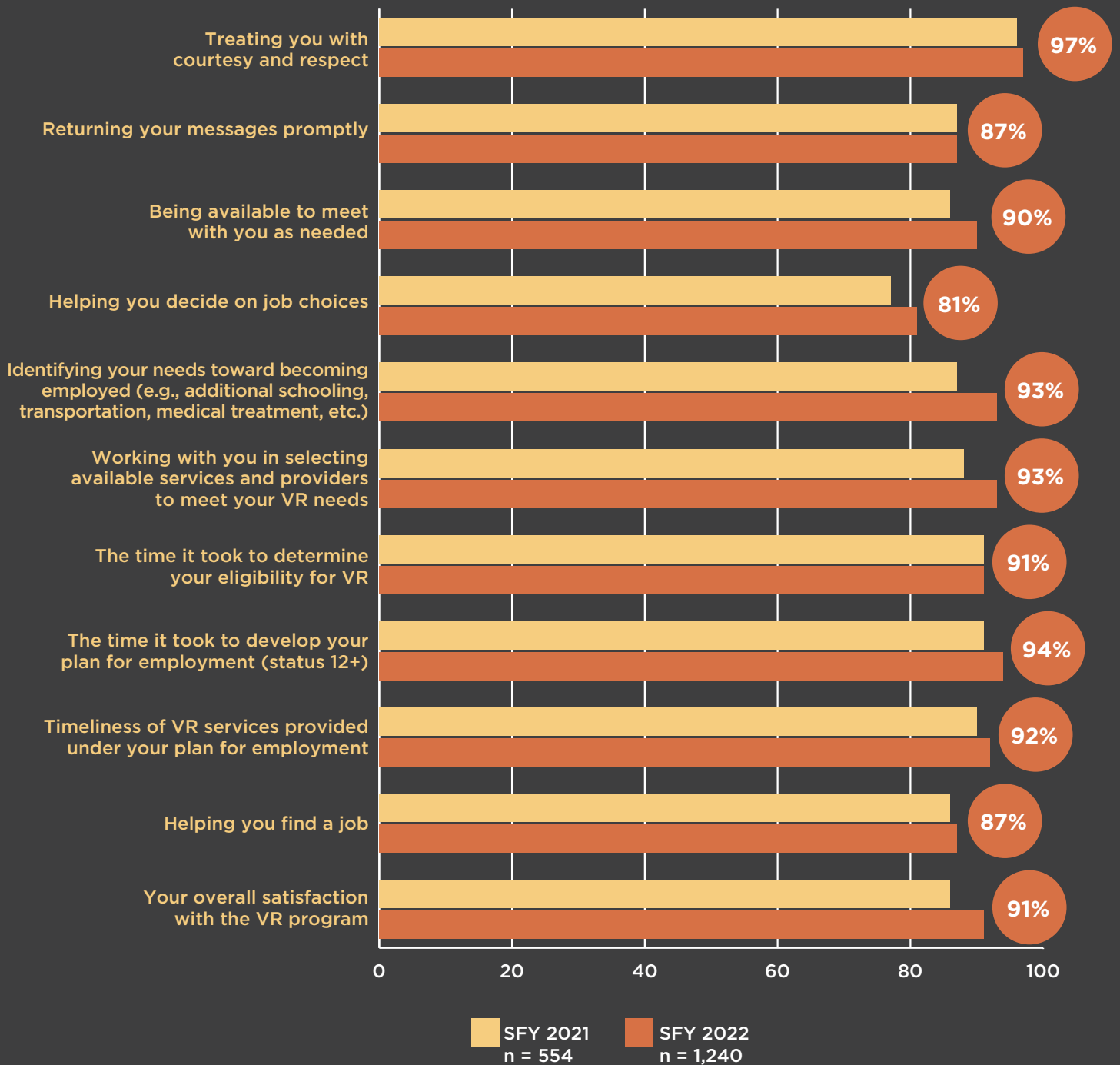


2022 Consumer Satisfaction Survey



Table 1 shows client satisfaction with VR counselors and other program staff.

Table 1: Are you satisfied with your VR counselor and other VR program staff in terms of?



2022 Consumer Satisfaction Survey

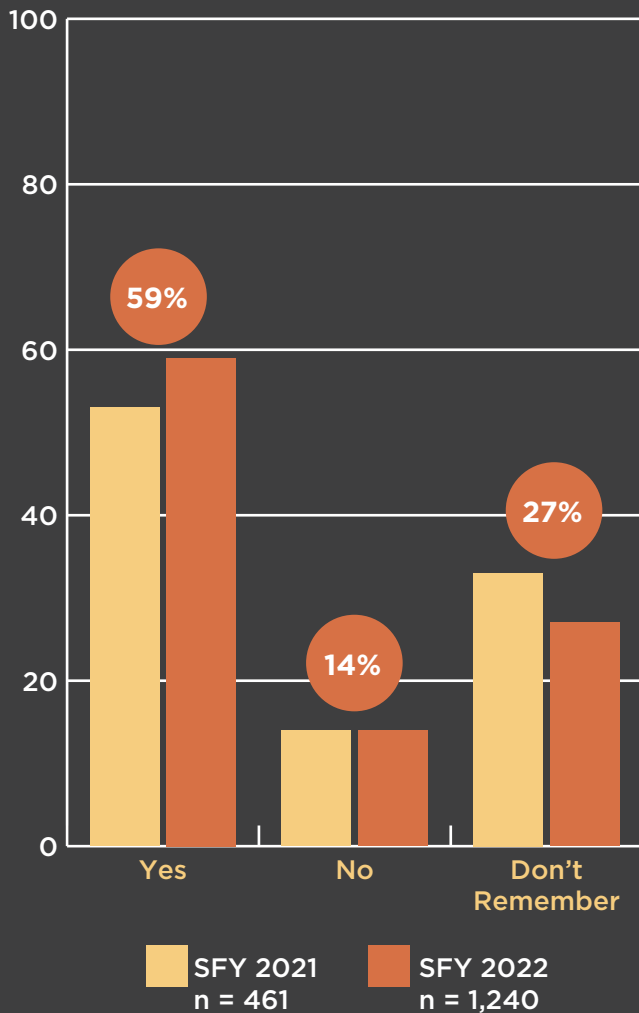


Client Assistance Program Information

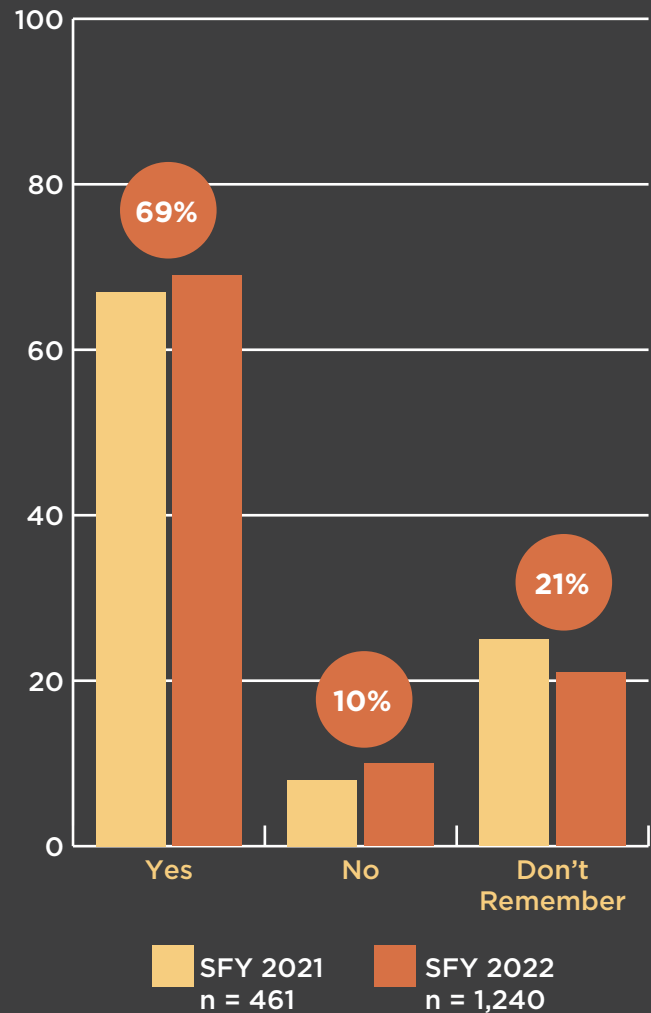
The second section of the survey asks clients if their counselor informed them about the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and their right to appeal agency decisions with which they disagree. For SFY 2022, there was an increase of 2% from the prior year in the percent that responded they were informed about the CAP and a decrease of 1% in the proportion that were informed about their right to appeal agency decisions. These percentages are small enough to be within the margin of error for the sample.

Table 2: Client Assistance Program Questions

Did your counselor inform you about program?



Did your counselor inform you about your right to appeal decisions with which you disagree?



2022 Consumer Satisfaction Survey

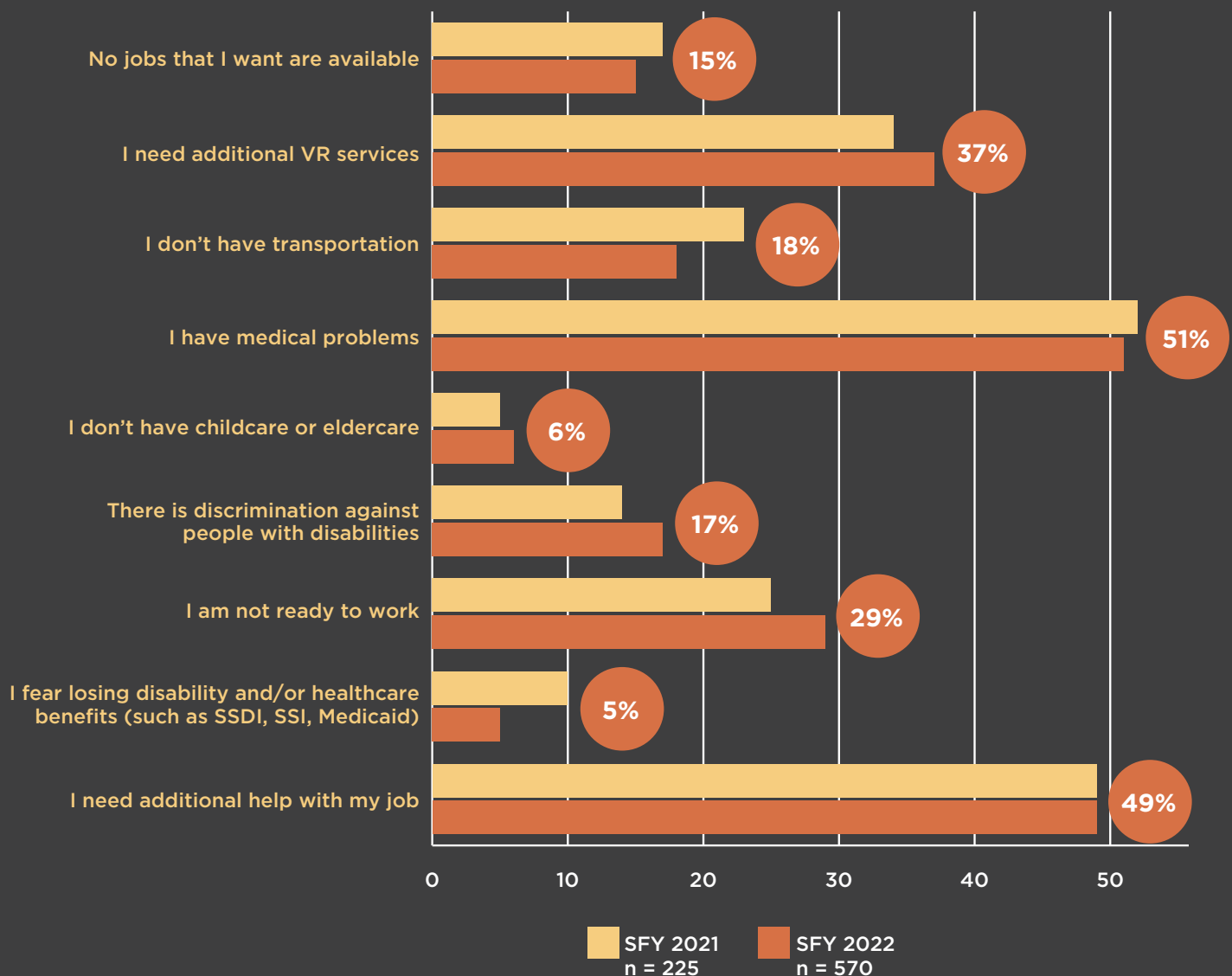


Barriers to Employment

The third section of the survey asks the screening question of whether respondents were currently working. Those that indicated they were not employed were then asked to answer nine sub-questions regarding barriers to employment.

For SFY 2022, the barriers to employment most commonly reported were: (d) I have medical problems: 52%; (i) I need additional help with my job search: 50%; (b) I need additional VR services: 37%; (g) I am not ready to work: 27%; and I don't have transportation: 21%. In comparing the results from SFY 2022 with the prior year, these results were mostly within the margin of error with no differences greater than 3%.

Table 3: Barriers to Employment (Currently unemployed: 570 / 46%)



State Rehabilitation Council



Goals and Progress

Competitive Integrated Employment

<p><i>Goal</i></p>	<p>1. Increase competitive integrated employment opportunities and outcomes for individuals with visual disabilities, particularly those with most significant disabilities, underserved populations, and individuals with additional barriers to employment.</p>
<p><i>Progress</i></p>	<p>In FFY 2022, Division of Services for the Blind Vocational Rehabilitation Services provided services to 826 consumers with the most significant disabilities. DSB sponsored 23 unpaid work experiences, two internships and one on-the-job training. During the mandatory Best Practices for New Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors training, a presentation educated counselors on how to utilize pre-vocational services (work experiences, internships, apprenticeships, and on-the-job training opportunities) to assist consumers with obtaining their employment goal.</p> <p>Self-employment is an increasing trend, in part due to the rise of the gig economy. DSB is in the process of working with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services to revise our self-employment policy because we feel this process should be achievable and better accommodate our consumers by meeting their goals of self-employment. Once policy is updated, DSB staff will be provided guidance and training on the changes made. DSB staff continued to provide resources to consumers who are interested in pursuing self-employment. One of those resources is information on the small business centers that are located throughout North Carolina communities. The small business centers specialize in assisting startups and early-stage businesses by helping to guide consumers through the process and steps that will help their businesses to be successful.</p> <p>A training was provided by the Department of Commerce to all DSB Staff for the overview of labor market information (LMI). This training assists staff with understanding what the LMI is, where to access information for their service area, and how it can be used to help consumers identify and then prepare for occupations that suit their needs, interests, and desires.</p> <p>DSB staff continued to provide one-on-one soft skills training to consumers. Career and Training Center staff focus on providing soft skills training as well when consumers attend (Adapting to Blindness in a Learning Environment (ABLE)). DSB staff continued to hold job clubs and various group trainings to assist consumers with increasing their, soft skills which will result in a successful job placement.</p>

State Rehabilitation Council *Goals and Progress*



<p><i>Progress continued</i></p>	<p>DSB VR staff continued to refer consumers that require and are eligible to the Independent Living Programs to assist with the delivery of training on independent living skills such as cooking, cleaning, self-advocacy, etc. The Career and Training Center provided independent living skills to consumers as well when they attended ABLE. DSB staff made appropriate referrals to assistive technology (AT) specialists and the career and training staff for AT training as needed.</p> <p>DSB staff provided information to consumers concerning the Ticket to Work program as well as contact information to benefits counselors across the state so that consumers could learn about work incentives and the effects that work will have on their benefits. During FFY 2022, DSB sponsored training for a staff member to become certified as a Community Partner Work Incentives Counselor. This training was sponsored to increase access to Benefits Counseling for DSB consumers.</p> <p>The mandatory Best Practices for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors training focused on Customized Employment. Information was provided to all new counselors on what Customized Employment entails and how it can be a benefit to consumers to reach their goal of employment.</p>
<p><i>Goal</i></p>	<p>2. Increase opportunities for training and employment services for adults with visual disabilities, particularly those with most significant disabilities, and underserved populations.</p>
<p><i>Progress</i></p>	<p>In FFY 2022, DSB sponsored 183 consumers for post-secondary training. Of those, 66 consumers were minorities. In FFY 2022, 82 consumers with the most significant disabilities were closed successfully in competitive integrated employment.</p> <p>DSB’s measurable skill gains rate for program year (PY) 2021 in Q4: 41.4%, which was a major increase from what was reported in PY2020 Q4: 25.7%. Leadership has made it a focus to provide adequate training to staff concerning the reporting of measurable skills gains. A monthly training is provided to DSB staff known as “Coffee Talk with WIOA”, which provides support and education on Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) along with the importance of accurate reporting.</p> <p>DSB Staff monitor employment trends and are actively engaged in adapting service methods to enable the consumers we serve to be successful in</p>

State Rehabilitation Council *Goals and Progress*



Progress continued

today’s market. We are engaged in strategic collaboration and partnerships with organizations such as ABLR, NSITE, and Stiegler EdTech (formerly known as Carolina Fintech) to provide training for consumers in high demand occupations to create additional avenues to competitive integrated employment. A lunch and learn is being scheduled with Stiegler EdTech to educate DSB staff about the program and training opportunities.

During FFY 2022, DSB had one consumer enrolled in the customized training through NSITE known as the Cisco Academy. The other consumer has successfully completed the customized training known as Sourcing through NSITE and is working toward obtaining employment in the field. The contract for ABLR was approved and the first cohort began its assessments for the customized training to become an accessibility analyst. Twelve consumers started the assessment phase of the customized training.

Effective use of assistive technology is an essential part of success in many careers in today’s labor market. Assistive technology is constantly evolving, which requires our staff to stay abreast of changes to effectively serve clients. In FFY 2022, training was provided to staff on advanced iPad accessibility features including voice over commands and gestures, app switcher, magnifier, zoom controller, and spoken content; Zoom Text customization including a camera with ZT, touch screen with ZT, and multiple monitors; assistive technology for multiple disabilities such as Natural Point with smart navigation mouse using head movements to navigate, Eye Gaze, and Smart Pen; and North Carolina Assistive Technology Program resources. DSB also implemented a new policy and procedure for hiring AT instructor vendors to expand the network of individuals available to provide instruction to our consumers. We currently have seven ATI vendors that have been approved to be utilized by the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.

Youth and students with disabilities

<i>Goal</i>	1. Increase opportunities for training and employment services for youth with visual disabilities.
<i>Progress</i>	During FFY 2022, 410 students ages 14-24 were served by DSB’s transition program. DSB staff continue to provide one-on-one soft skills training to youth and students with disabilities. Career and Training Center staff focuses

State Rehabilitation Council *Goals and Progress*



Progress continued

on providing soft skills training to the youth and students with disabilities during the youth summer program, Summer Adapting to Blindness Vital to Visually Impaired Youth (SAVVY). DSB transition staff have held youth summer programs in the local communities that focused on work readiness such as soft skills training, independent living skills, and/or assistive technology training, etc. DSB VR staff continue to refer youth and students with disabilities to the Independent Living Programs to assist with the delivery of training on independent living skills (such as cooking, cleaning, etc.). The Career and Training provides assistive technology training and independent living skills to youth and students with disabilities during the SAVVY program. DSB staff made appropriate referrals to assistive technology specialists in the field that assisted with the delivery of AT training as needed for youth and students with disabilities. DSB VR staff continues to utilize a variety of sources to deliver services to the youth and students with disabilities. Activities are individualized or in small groups. Some of the activities come from the following resources: American Printing House (APH) Tote system, Career Connect, Explore Work, T-Folio, and other online platforms.

Goal **2. Increase the provision of pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) for students with visual disabilities.**

Progress

In PY 2021, 106 students with visual disabilities received Pre-ETS services by DSB staff. Also, 5 new students with visual disabilities were presumed eligible during PY 2021. Outreach and community awareness of available resources for Pre-ETS students and youth with visual impairments and blindness continued to be a priority for DSB staff. DSB’s director, chief of rehabilitation field services and the program specialist for transition services met monthly with the consultant for visual impairment state coordinator and consultant for visual impairment and co-director, NC DeafBlind Project from the Department of Public Instruction. These meetings build a better relationship and enhance services for the students.

The two agencies meet monthly to discuss joint opportunities, issues, and to conduct strategic planning, including developing combined training for staff. The chief of rehabilitation field services and the transition program specialist have been invited and will be presenting at the 71st Exceptional Children’s Conference in November on DSB Pre-ETS services. DSB had six pre-employment transition services associates on staff across the state that assist with identifying potentially eligible students and increasing the

State Rehabilitation Council *Goals and Progress*



Progress continued

provision of pre-employment transition services. DSB staff along with the Pre-ETS associates, continued to a variety of sources to deliver pre-employment transition services for students who are blind, visually impaired, or deafblind. These activities are individualized and/or take place in small groups. Some of the activities come from the following resources: APH Tote system, Career Connect, Explore Work, T-Folio, and other online platforms. Leadership continues to evaluate and research other resources that can be used to increase the provision of pre-employment transition services.

Business engagement

Goal

1. Build stronger relationships and partnerships with businesses and government agencies to develop or expand work experiences, internships, and employment opportunities for adults and youth who are blind, visually impaired or deafblind.

Progress

Amazon is one company that is dominating the labor market. DSB staff have collaborated and partnered with Amazon to assist them with fulfilling their need for employees. DSB staff have provided multiple services to consumers along with sensitivity training for employees that included information on orientation and mobility and sighted guide techniques. Several DSB consumers have obtained employment in many of the Amazon warehouses across the state. DSB staff continues to have a presence at the local chambers of commerce and NCWORKS Centers. During the mandatory Best Practices for New Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors training, a staff member from NCWORKS presented on the services that are provided, and the importance of collaboration between the two entities. DSB staff were provided training by the Department of Commerce on the NC Careers.org website to be able to use this website for collaboration with businesses and to determine the hiring needs of employers in their local areas. DSB leadership is currently in collaboration with Mississippi State University to set up a business development training for counselors and other VR placement staff. This training will entail evidence-based best practices pertaining to business engagement. DSB Staff provided the following services to local businesses in the communities: talent pipeline/recruitment assistance, recruitment assistance, job applicant screening, information on tax credits, and federal bonding related to hiring.

State Rehabilitation Council *Goals and Progress*



Capacity building

<i>Goal</i>	1. Increase internal capacity and develop the program infrastructure needed to improve service delivery for VR participants and employers.
<i>Progress</i>	<p>DSB leadership continued to evaluate current VR service delivery models and focused on researching other innovative and effective VR service models as needed. DSB continues to work collaboratively with other entities serving people who are deafblind, including the Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH), the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) Deaf-Blind Project with the Exceptional Children Assistance Center (ECAC), the non-profit North Carolina Deaf-Blind Associates, the Deaf-Blind Advisory Council, the Statewide Interagency Team and Regional Interagency Teams which are comprised of staff from DSDHH, the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities and Substance Abuse Services, and the Exceptional Children Division of DPI. In addition, the Division of Services for the Blind is a member of the National Community of Partners (NCOP) sponsored by the Helen Keller National Center (HKNC).</p> <p>DSB’s Deaf Blind Assistive Technology Program Specialist (DBATPS) presented at the NC Deaf Blind 2022 Deafblind Family Institute Conference that took place from August 12 to August 14, 2022. This conference entailed collaborating with not only other partners but also with families and consumers at the DB Family Institute sponsored by a grant from the Department of Public Instruction DeafBlind Project, Exceptional Children’s Assistance Center, and East Carolina University.</p> <p>DSB staff have been invited by East Carolina University to attend the DPI Institute in Greensboro, NC in November 2022. This will give DSB staff the opportunity to learn about person-centered planning and the discovery process. DSB staff uses the ECAC to obtain resources that are shared with transition students/youth with disabilities and their families. Leadership continued to share training/webinars that are being delivered through the ECAC to increase staff’s knowledge of deafblindness and other topics. The deafblind and AT program specialist with DSB attended the quarterly meetings for the North Carolina Council for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing. DSB staff have increased collaboration with the NC Department of Public Instruction to build a better relationship and enhance services for the students. The two agencies meet monthly to discuss joint opportunities, issues, and to conduct strategic planning, including</p>

State Rehabilitation Council *Goals and Progress*



Progress continued developing combined training for staff. DSB staff is working with the NC Department of Public Instruction to provide training on DSB services for Exceptional Children Directors and staff across the state to assist with increasing referrals and identifying those youth who may need services through DSB to meet their goal of employment. Leadership is scheduled to present at the 71st Conference for Exceptional Children in October 2022. This is another way to assist DSB staff with increasing collaboration with the NC Department of Public Instruction and provide outreach on transition and Pre ETS services to teachers and leadership across the state.

Goal **2. Increase collaboration with core Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and required program partners and community stakeholders to integrate and expand services for individuals with visual disabilities.**

Progress Collaboration continued to be a priority for DSB staff during FFY 2022. The DSB director served as an NCWorks Commission member on the Workforce Development Board. DSB staff attended monthly partnership meetings in their service area to collaborate with NCWorks and other community partners. At these partnership meetings, DSB staff can obtain information on the resources in the community for consumers as well as provide information on services that DSB can provide to those who are visually impaired, blind, or deafblind. NCWORKS provided a presentation during the mandatory Best Practices for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors training to increase the counselors' knowledge of services provided by NCWorks and to emphasize the importance of collaboration between the two agencies.

Supported Employment

Goal **1. Increase outreach to identify individuals who are most significantly disabled and require supported employment services to achieve a successful competitive integrated employment outcome including outreach to consumers who reside in rural areas who may also be underserved.**

Progress In FFY 2022, DSB had 49 approved vendors available to provide Supported Employment to consumers who are most significantly disabled.

State Rehabilitation Council *Goals and Progress*



<i>Goal</i>	2. Provide supported employment training for new counselors.
<i>Progress</i>	Mandatory best practices training has been provided for new counselors. This training is largely focused on assisting consumers to address and overcome barriers to employment and identifying career-based employment. A specific component pertaining to supported employment is included in the training.
<i>Goal</i>	3. Continue efforts to identify and expand the number of community rehabilitation program providers focusing on areas across that state that have limited resources.
<i>Progress</i>	During FFY 2022, DSB had 49 approved vendors that are available to provide supported employment services to consumers who are most significantly disabled. The Rehabilitation Program specialist for employment services along with other DSB staff continue their efforts to increase the number of approved vendors. DSB continued to provide sensitivity and awareness training for community rehabilitation program staff and supported employment service providers pertaining to working with individuals who are blind or have visual impairments, including exposure to AT and adaptive devices. The training is known as New Employee Sensitivity Training (NEST) and takes place twice a year at the DSB Career and Training Center. In addition, our DSB specialists and counselors offer training to the community rehabilitation program staff and supported employment providers in order to increase their knowledge of working with consumers with those who are blind, visually impaired, or deaf/blind. Some examples of the training topics are sighted guide, AT and adaptive devices.

DSB *Vocational Rehabilitation* Program



The NC Division of Services for the Blind's (NCDSB) VR program serves individuals who are visually impaired, blind or deafblind to help them obtain, regain, maintain, or advance in employment. Services offered through our VR program assist with reducing or removing barriers to employment.

DSB is comprised of a strong team of case managers, counselors, and specialists that can assist an eligible individual with vision loss to be successful in the workplace and continue to live independently. Those specialists include business services representatives, community employment specialists, orientation and mobility specialists, nursing eye care consultants, a rehabilitation engineer, AT consultants, AT instructors, the DSB Career and Training Center staff, including a vocational evaluator, as well as deafblind specialists. These services are coordinated through our VR counselors, independent living rehabilitation counselors and social workers for the blind. In addition to the above, all support staff in the area and district offices, as well as the team of administrators in the state office, strive to find ways to assist people to achieve competitive integrated employment outcomes.

DSB VR Program Highlights for FFY 2022

- *DSB VR services were provided to **2,541** individuals with blindness or low vision.*
- *DSB VR services created an individualized plan for employment with **851** consumers with blindness or low vision.*
- *DSB VR provided services to **826** consumers with the most significant disabilities.*
- *DSB VR assisted **247** consumers in achieving competitive integrated employment.*
- *The average hourly earnings/wages for those consumers exited in competitive integrated employment was **\$15.48**.*
- *DSB VR served **410** transition students. (Ages 14-24).*

Success Story: **Christie, from diagnosis to AT instructor**

Christie was first diagnosed with Retinitis Pigmentosa in 1998 but was told she had many years of good vision ahead of her. It wasn't until 2014 that she experienced a decrease in vision. In 2016 she was told she had to discontinue driving and her life came to a halt. Working with her vocational counselor from Services for the Blind in 2017, things started moving forward for her. DSB provided her with independent living services, low vision services and AT services. DSB sponsored post-secondary training, maintenance and glasses.

college student. Upon completion of ABLE, she finished a second undergraduate degree in 2019, after having already obtained a degree in education. She began the Teacher of Student with Visual Impairment master's degree program at NC Central University. She was invited by her professor to take courses in teaching AT to individuals who are blind and visually impaired and went on to be the first graduate of the visual impairment master's program with a concentration in AT for individuals with visual impairments.



While in school, Christie underwent multiple eye surgeries and had a decrease in vision. She relied on AT, which included a laptop with Jaws, a Magnilink tab video magnifier, an iPad and an iPhone to help her become successful in her education and enjoys introducing and teaching others to use these technologies.

In May 2022, Christie graduated with a 4.0. She received her professional educator's license as a Teacher of Students with Visual Impairments and became North Carolina's seventh certified AT instructional specialist for individuals with visual impairments. Christie is now employed with the Governor Morehead School as an AT instructor.

Christie stands with diploma from North Carolina Central University.

Success Story: **Assistive Technology Saved JV's Job**

JV is a woman in her early 50's with Stargardt disease resulting in vision loss with a hazy spot in the center of her vision. This progressive eye disease was causing a challenge for JV to maintain her livelihood.

Her job description includes placing and pulling purchase orders for clients along with providing monthly reports to her supervisor. The problem was she could no longer see to read the paperwork. This visual challenge was going to need to be addressed to maintain her positive employment outcome.

Several years ago, JV received services through her local AT consultant, Joe Biberman. She received a handheld video magnifier as well as assistance with getting her tabletop video magnifier repaired. All went well until April of this year when JV

reached out to Joe about more problems with her tabletop magnifier. Her lack of access to this AT prevented her from performing the essential functions of her job. Joe tried to assist again, but this time her device was so old that a needed repair part was no longer available. Her work productivity was in jeopardy. She needed a new VR case.

Joe had one demo video magnifier in his district office, so he received permission from administration to lend it to her until DSB could provide a new one. In the meanwhile, a local vendor came to Joe's office a few weeks later to demonstrate some video magnifiers to JV. She chose the one she wanted, and DSB purchased it for her. Joe delivered it and set it up for her on the job site. Thanks to AT and Joe's help, JV can maintain her job for years to come.

DSB *Transition Services* for Youth



The Transition Team provided numerous group activities throughout the year.

The Wilmington and Greenville district office Transition Team collaborated to engage our 9th- through 12th-grade students in the Career Exploration Virtual Jobs Club and led monthly meetings targeting college students called Career Club: College and Beyond. Topics varied from School Beyond High School, What Does It Mean? to Workplace Readiness such as “Do you know what it takes to live on your own and to be successful in your workplace and community?”

The Charlotte Transition Team had its first virtual meeting called Hip Pocket Training focusing on Work Readiness Skills.

The Winston Salem District Office staff offered a new group training specifically for high school seniors and college freshmen called Crash Course: Transitioning to College. A one-week virtual training to help guide the students from high school to college with a big emphasis on self-advocacy and communication.

The Raleigh District Office served students through a hybrid model called DSB Reality Check: Let’s Get Practical! Lots of hands-on activities, such as cooking and AT. Participants practiced interviewing skills, and heard from speakers, included a representative of the State Employees Credit Union, and a career panel.

The Greenville and Wilmington district offices staff collaborated and offered

PATHWAYS TO SUCCESS virtual training. Helpful information was shared by guest speakers from schools, colleges, NCWorks, and specialists.

The Fayetteville and Charlotte district offices collaborated and offered a Virtual Mini Center to students and shared information on applying, paying for, and tips for success in college as well as job exploration.

The Asheville District Office staff offered its first training – Getting Ready to Move Beyond High School – to the students in the west. The training included discussion on accommodations, AT, and career exploration.

The district office staff worked hard to provide meaningful activities, using outside resources and speakers as well as DSB specialists/staff. The trainings enabled the students to increase their ability to self-advocate, explore careers, build workplace readiness skills as well as receive information on training opportunities after high school. It also provided a great platform for students to meet and socialize.

In December 2021, we launched a Youth Empowerment platform targeted to DSB youth ages 18-24 to create an online environment for young adults who are involved with DSB to connect and share resources while building a community. The meetings have been very successful. The youth have received resources, shared accomplishments, voiced concerns, shared experiences, and connected with each

other. We are excited to see the further growth and development of this group.

Pre-Employment Transition Services

The Pre-ETS Associates offered a variety of individualized activities providing pre-employment transition services, for example introducing the use of O*Net Online which enables the students to identify critical information for researching careers, looking at Bright Outlook, understanding Career Clusters and relating such to their personal interests, skills, and abilities. Post-secondary counseling activities such as preparing the student for some of the unfamiliar aspects

of college, program accreditations, handling difficult situations with professors and advisors, and understanding transportation and disability services. For work readiness activities, the Pre-ETS Associates worked on interviewing skills, thank you letters, and informational interviews. Activities were aimed at increasing independent living skills, such as financial literacy and increasing their understanding on money management, with an introduction on how to use Microsoft Excel to keep track of monthly income and spending. The Pre-ETS Associates used a variety of tools, for example, Reality Check, Career Connect and T-Folio to enhance individualized activities.

Success Story: **Brandon completes post-secondary training with the assistance of PRE-ETS services**

This past summer Brandon, one of our high school students who actively participated in Pre-ETS activities with our Pre-ETS Associates, received resources on possible scholarships and grants. He was selected for the Lighthouse Guild scholarship, received a State Employees Credit Union People Helping People scholarship, and another scholarship from the American Council of the Blind (ACB). As part of the ACB scholarship award, he received an all-expense paid trip to the ACB Convention in Omaha, Nebraska. While there, “I learned a lot about what I am capable of doing by simply observing other blind people get around the convention building, the hotel, and restaurants. I had never felt more capable of being independent than I did during the week I spent in Nebraska with people like me,” he said. Brandon was able to look at and explore new technology,



Brandon holds his degree from Richmond Community College

make a few friends, shop, dine, and increase his independence. He graduated high school and received his associate's degree at the same time and now attends UNC Pembroke with a goal of obtaining a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science Cyber Security Track, with a minor in business administration. He continues to participate in Pre-ETS activities relevant to exploring specific careers in his field of interest and self-advocacy activities to support his transition into post-secondary training.

Other Transition Staff Activities:

Continued learning and engagement opportunities have been provided to our team to increase knowledge for growing youth engagement and providing meaningful services that will lead to success in the workplace. The Transition Team staff learned about youth apprenticeship opportunities via an online meeting with a youth apprenticeship coordinator from northeastern North Carolina who spoke on the development of apprenticeships in North Carolina targeting youth.

Staff members completed an informative and interesting staff development activity while participating in a live webinar hosted by APH called "Can't Touch This: Virtual Transition Programming for Students with Visual Impairments." This was followed up the next day with a meeting to discuss the webinar and how to apply some of the ideas and concepts that had been shared to make it relevant for our students.

The transition staff had the opportunity to engage with the Department of Public Instructions (DPI) consultants for visual impairment at one of our monthly meetings on increasing our collaborations with the school staff throughout the state. We have planned a presentation at the Annual Exceptional Children Conference to educate school staff on services that are provided by DSB and are looking forward to increasing collaboration with educational staff.

DSB continues the partnership with DVRS on Pre-ETS contract services and added new providers. Meet and Greet for DSB staff were planned to introduce staff to the new Pre-ETS providers that will be available to our students.

Collaboration within DSB continues to be a high priority and the Transition Team sends out a quarterly newsletter to all DSB employees to update everyone on happenings. The transition specialist was part of the Deaf-Blind training and educates the deafblind specialists on Pre-ETS. The transition specialist continued to be involved in educating and training other DSB staff on WIOA reporting.

DSB *Business Enterprises* Program



The Division's Business Enterprises Program, authorized by the federal Randolph Sheppard Act, provides training and employment opportunities for legally blind individuals who wish to pursue a career in vending and food services. Currently, there are three students enrolled in the training program and two consumers have been evaluated for the next training cycle. North Carolina Business Enterprises (NC BEP) has 45 operators who manage 172 facilities on state, federal, and private properties.

Although, NC BEP operators have experienced negative impacts on their businesses due to the pandemic as state and federal facilities operated on hybrid schedules, there has been some increase in patronizations. During FY 2022, total gross sales from all NC BEP food service and vending facilities amounted to \$8,205,145 in comparison to \$7,345,680 in FY 2021.

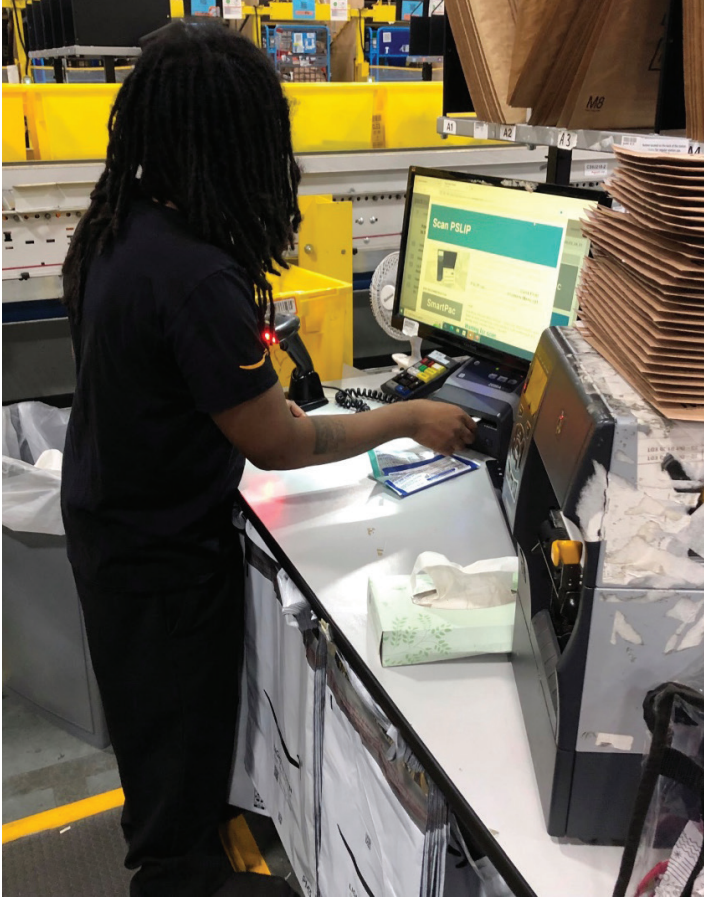
DSB *Business Services*



During FFY 2022, DSB continued to focus on establishing a cooperative, long-term, mutually beneficial relationship with employers.

This year, DSB would like to highlight the powerful partnership that is emerging between Amazon Distribution Center in Garner, North Carolina and DSB. Amazon has a Diversity, Equity, Inclusion program called All Abilities for employees and applicants with disabilities. This employer has proven their commitment to hiring and welcoming employees with disabilities in many ways. One example of that is upon entry to the Amazon recruitment center, all applicants are offered live ASL interpreters on a laptop through an app called Purple P3. If that is utilized, a live interpreter appears on the screen and provides ASL interpreting for the application and onboarding processes.

During FY 2022, the Garner distribution center employed 35 individuals who identify as blind or visually impaired. When employees with disabilities request accommodations, Amazon has an accommodations team that receives and quickly fulfills accommodation requests. Additionally, Amazon has employees within their organization that serve as ambassadors to new employees that may need some extra mentoring and assistance to become independent. They have also hosted groups of transition age youth to come and tour the facility and implemented many environmental accommodations such as tactile tape in hallways and common areas leading to bathrooms and break rooms. During FFY 2022, bi-weekly meetings took place between Amazon Human Resources and DSB staff to discuss accommodations and future needs.



Joseph at his workstation in the single path department at the Amazon Distribution Center in Garner

DSB provided job coaching services to eligible consumers in their initial stages of employment, and sighted guide training to many Amazon managers, ambassadors, and the site safety coordinator. DSB has also consulted on many of the onsite accommodations such as tactile tape on the floor and is in the process of assisting with braille labels in the employee break room on the drink and snack machines. We value our partnership with Amazon and look forward to continuing to build upon it to provide more services to Amazon and our DSB consumers.

DSB Pre-Vocational Services



During FFY 2022, DSB sponsored 23 unpaid work experiences with a stipend for 16 different consumers. These experiences were in a variety of workplace settings, such as an events center, a disability resource center, a hardware store, a chamber of commerce, and a county health department. Consumers worked in a variety of roles to learn skills ranging

from engineering planning, case management, administrative work, pet care, and quality assurance (QA) testing. We sponsored two internships in the fields of marketing and healthcare research and one on-the-job training (OJT) with a non-profit organization in the field of data collection and analysis.

Success Story: **DSB services provided Nicole with an OJT to assist in food insecurity**

Nicole Askins was sponsored by DSB to attend graduate school at private, online Walden University studying Public Health concentration in epidemiology. She began an internship at Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays to complete her degree. During her internship, staff at the organization were impressed with Nicole's intelligence, attention to detail, ability to pick up on things quickly, and that she had a passion for research, statistics, and data analysis. They needed a data analyst; however, Nicole, being a public health major, needed more training in this area to be hired.

As a result, DSB stepped in and offered Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays the opportunity to partner with Nicole and her vocational rehabilitation counselor in an OJT.

As the first full-time data analyst ever at Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays, Nicole works a hybrid schedule that is partially remote and partially in the office headquarters. Thus far, she has completed projects in research and is continuing to work on a project focused on reducing food insecurity via a home grocery delivery program offered by Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays. She has developed tools for isolating zip codes for grant purposes. She learned about metrics and Microsoft Office. She has utilized Fusion software for the Blind to access Excel analytic tools to collect data and this creates statistics that she uses while doing her OJT.

The OJT has leveled the playing field for Nicole by allowing her the opportunity to learn programs such as Fusion and other accessibility tools without the pressure to immediately perform at maximum productivity. The OJT agreement often makes employers feel more comfortable about the learning curve that often happens for a new employee that must use new accessibility tools to do their job by offsetting some of that cost. DSB also provided Nicole a desk table, office chair, laptop with an external keyboard, mouse and docking station, CCTV, floor lamp, desk lamp, shaded glasses, and Max TV glasses. We wish Nicole and Loaves & Fishes/Friendship Trays much success together for many years to come.



Nicole holds a box of groceries to be loaded into a car at Loaves and Fishes/Friendship Trays.

DSB Career and Training Center



In their first full year back in-person since the pandemic, the DSB Career and Training Center made great strides in serving the many individuals in need of their services. In the fall of 2021, three-week sessions were held which allowed many individuals waiting for face-to-face services to gain valuable training time at the center. In 2022, students, their referring counselors and center staff worked to identify the most essential services needed at the center for the individual to move toward vocational success whether in the near- or long-term. At the same time, as in-person services resumed, remote services continued where needed. The center remains committed to providing comprehensive, onsite services to the fullest extent possible, but has also continued to offer remote classes when services would otherwise be halted due to severe weather as well as for individuals who are unable to attend onsite in Raleigh. Below are some of the highlights from the year.

Assistive Technology

Assistive Technology “Bootcamp”

The Career and Training Center held its first one-week AT boot camp in June 2022. During the training week, participants received four hours of targeted instruction on AT and one hour of an elective or motivational topic. Five students attended. Most of the students had beginning skills so they worked on keyboarding. This skills training was supplemented by training on their mobile devices. Participants with usable vision also received low vision services during this week. One student was interested in learning how to use magnification on their Mac computer

and another needed JAWS training. This boot camp provided a vehicle to get the students on the road to success. Although this program was developed in response to a pandemic-generated backlog, the response was very positive, and plans are already in the works for 2023 session.

Equipment Updates and Training

The low vision program specialist (LVPS) collaborated with the Career and Training Center specialized technology teacher to facilitate virtual demonstrations of head-borne technologies for staff across the state. In addition, the LVPS obtained demo units of the e-Sight 4 and Envision Glasses (adding to the OrCam Read demo unit already on site) for assessing consumers with specific goals and skills. The center also obtained two Braille Note Touch Plus 32's, and two new Mac laptops. Staff also work collaboratively with vendors to obtain loaner equipment for students when permanent equipment is not available. These strategies and products help keep DSB current with new and emerging technology so the people we serve can have the best possible vocational success.

Community College Partnership

This year, two center instructors formed a partnership with Wake Technical Community College. This partnership will enable ABLE students who take classes at the center during the day to pursue their GED or adult high school diploma by taking classes at the Wake Tech campus at night. The prospective students will use

skills learned at the center such as test-taking skills and use of AT to complete the community college courses.

Interns

This year, the center hosted two psychology interns, one of whom has since been hired as a VR counselor. Additionally, they hosted an AT instructor intern who has since become a certified AT instructional specialist through ACVREP, the Academy for Certification of Vision Rehabilitation and Education Professionals.

SAVVY

The SAVVY program in the summer of 2022 was designed differently than in the past. Our program, specifically the Leadership Class, focused on leadership skills, public speaking, and career and college readiness skills. SAVVY consists of three tracks:

1. College Prep (CP) which focuses on the skills and behaviors needed for students to be successful in college. Three students participated this year.
2. Youth in Transition (YIT) which focuses on an assortment of independent living skills, career readiness skills, leadership, and public speaking skills. Ten students participated this year.
3. The World of Work (WOW) program provides real-life work experiences for students. One student participated this year, due to ongoing challenges with finding willing host sites post-pandemic.

All SAVVY participants attended a Leadership Class each day. Students identified their career choice and then designed business names, logos and identified facts about their career choices. The students participated in a Career Fair on the final day. Parents and friends rotated around to the various student booths listening to the career goals of the students while each student presented their business plans. The parents and friends kept evaluation forms for all the students and provided the SAVVY students with relevant, focused feedback. This experience gave the participants an opportunity to research a potential career goal, create a physical presentation and to not only create and memorize details about their “business” but also to interact in an ad hoc manner with individuals who visited their booth.

One of the YIT participants was Dylan, whose career goal is to be a country music producer. He named his business Country Music Jam Production Studios. Below is a photo of his booth.



Dylan at his booth.

DSB Career and Training Center Highlights for SFY 2022

- **4,923** hours of instruction were provided
- **26** ABLÉ assessments were completed
- **45** individuals were served in the ABLÉ program
- **73** low vision evaluations were provided
- **67** individuals were served by the Evaluation Unit
- **54** staff received NEST training

Success Story: **Cross-Program Feature Sherri**

In her Independent Living Counselor's (ILRC's) words:

Sherri originally received services with the social worker for the blind who referred her to me for more extensive skills training. Although she had low vision when the referral was created, by the time this counselor met with the consumer she had lost her remaining vision.

She lives in a rural area and caring for her indoor and outdoor animals has been especially important to her. Her family created a system of ropes to assist her with traveling the property and she also received orientation and mobility training as referred by the social worker and later through the VR program.

Her case with the ILRC was opened and she attended two weeks of in-person training before the pandemic. She attended a remote self-advocacy and community resources class that summer

and attended a virtual techniques of daily living skills class with the use of an iPad and some training provided by the IL program. She seemed determined to learn every technique she could and actively participated in every lesson. During the class she learned about the Hadley Program and had a lesson in braille. She enrolled in Hadley's program and was even spotlighted by them because of her achievement and proficiency.

After the completion of this class, she was willing to speak with the VR counselor. This counselor believes during this time she began to accept her sudden vision loss as permanent and her determination to live alone without constant visitors and/or her family was clear.

Sherri also participated in some small group remote lessons with adaptive aids like the Colorino talking color identifier and Pen Friend and began to make strides to label more items around her home. She

completed the ABLE program at the DSB Career and Training Center and has received adaptive kitchen equipment, braille writing tools and various other adaptive aids to improve her level of independence.

She has continued to learn braille and reads and writes braille well enough to now use it as her main reading and writing medium. She still has her large and small animals in around her home. Moreover, she is currently enrolled in a virtual program to earn a certification related to accessibility and accommodations. She has met friends and travels independently to spend time with them and genuinely seems to be in a good place.

Her braille instructor at the DSB Career and Training Center, Miriam Dixon, stated: Sherri was one of the fastest students in braille I have ever had in my career. She started reading braille before she even finished all the contractions. She was so eager and hungry to use it. As she told me she can now curl up in bed and read a book. She just prefers to use braille technology. One day she stated that she is faster writing braille than keyboarding. It takes many months of using braille before most people can get to the level that Sherri has.

In Sherri's own words: In December of 2019, I suddenly and unexpectedly lost my vision. It was devastating. However, my sisters wouldn't let me wallow in self-pity. They immediately jumped into action and found a social worker for me. Joan Hamilton talked to me and told me about all the wonderful things that were out there for me. I wasn't sure I believed her at first. She was able to connect me with Shannon Kalu, who is an independent living rehabilitation counselor. Shannon and her team of



Sherri, with her horse

instructors really helped me out. One of the instructors taught me how to use VoiceOver on my phone. If he hadn't, then I surely would have destroyed my phone. From there, I was introduced to Danielle Omori, a VR counselor. I was ready to get back to some form of work. I had no idea what I could do. After an evaluation and assessment, I was invited to attend the DSB Career and Training Center. In February of 2022, I started to attend classes. I started out very unsure of myself. It was a scary time for me. However, I learned a lot of things there. I was surrounded by very capable and experienced instructors. I will not list them because I don't want to leave anyone out. I became excited with everything I was taught. I was especially

excited to learn braille as I had been an avid print reader. I am now reading books in braille and have labels all over my house. I prefer braille to technology. To me, it's just easier. I am still learning about the braille technology but am very happy to curl up and read my books. My orientation and mobility instructor showed me many ways to get around, thus giving me freedom. After taking the cooking class, I know that I won't starve. My biggest hurdle is the AT. I

was never very good with computers, but I am learning. I am now in a training program with Ablr to become an accessibility analyst. Frustrating, yes, but so worth it. I am excited about my future once again. I have my family and DSB to thank for it.

Sherri has done an amazing job of maximizing her abilities, learning how to navigate her new reality, and is making her own choices for her future.

DSB *Independent Living* Program



DSB offers comprehensive services to assist eligible individuals with achieving their goals of independence at home, in the community and at work as well as to assist with preventing institutional care, adjusting to blindness and securing health services. In some cases, independent living services allow individuals to begin exploring what is possible with vision loss which later results in a realization that employment may also be possible. Depending upon the types of needs, services are either accessed through social workers for the blind (SWB), independent living rehabilitation counselors (ILRC), or both.

This past year, SWBs served 2,097 individuals who received services including counseling, basic instruction on adaptive techniques and devices and assistance with accessing health services. DSB social workers are also experts on their local communities and resources. One resource they work closely with is their local NC Lions Clubs. Lions Clubs often work with

people who are visually impaired and blind. Many clubs also assist social workers in providing eye exams and/or glasses for North Carolina citizens with limited incomes. Social workers coordinate with NC Lions Clubs to support all aspects of the annual NC Lions VIP (visually impaired persons) Fishing Tournament.

After being canceled in 2020 and 2021 due to the COVID pandemic, the 2022 NC VIP Fishing tournament took place at the Outer Banks on October 17-19. The social workers, consumers and volunteers were ecstatic about the return of this tournament. The theme was Think Pink. There were more than 340 participants and over 300 volunteers. The tournament is the largest service project of its kind in the world. More than just a fishing tournament, the participants engage in educational and recreational activities, are introduced to the latest adaptive technologies, and socialize with VIP's from around the state. During the summer,

many consumers across the state attend Camp Dogwood, located in Sherrills Ford, NC. They fellowship and experience fun activities such as water sports, crafting, dancing, and performing or simply enjoy the rocking chairs on the lakefront porch. With the help of the SWBs, individuals who might otherwise become isolated due to vision loss are able to interact with others in a support group setting across the state. They learn to function more independently by taking on roles of responsibility within a group setting and establish long-lasting friendships with others who are experiencing some of the same challenges. During the group process, teaching, and learning take place by sharing their successes in their daily lives regarding new accomplishments and overcoming barriers.

DSB ILRCs continued providing comprehensive training through group classes and one-on-one home or community-based instruction. In-person

classes are held around the state in local communities and use community resources as much as possible. Although one-on-one, in-person instruction was able to fully resume this year, our ILRCs continue to face a number of obstacles for in-person group classes including difficulty gaining access to meeting space, transportation and staffing concerns. Prior to the pandemic, group classes were 100 percent in-person and after the pandemic began they temporarily changed to 100 percent online. Currently, a hybrid model of in-person and/or virtual is emerging which will allow counselors to best utilize limited resources and vary methods of instruction delivery according to individual and community parameters.

DSB's independent living programs yield many success stories. Below are just a few examples where eligible individuals' successes were built on the receipt of services across multiple DSB programs.

Here are a few highlights from the ILRC's accomplishments in FFY 2022:

- **21 Remote Daily Living Skills classes - 170 attending**
- **4 In-person cooking classes - 33 attending**
- **3 Remote iPad/Tech trainings - 17 attending**
- **256 new cases opened**

Success Story: **Marta, Vocational Rehabilitation, and Independent Living Rehabilitation Case, in her ILRC's words:**

Marta had a DSB VR case and was completing her bachelor's in social work when we first met. She was extremely nervous about graduating from college because she had never lived independently. She is from Africa and lost her eyesight as a small child due to smallpox which left her with NLP OD and LP OS. At age 19 she moved to Canada to increase her English proficiency before beginning college in the U.S.

When we met, Marta spoke great English, was highly intelligent, and fluent in braille. She was a fast learner and eager to absorb as much information about independence as she could. We started off with labeling her dorm room so she could operate her microwave, air conditioning and the community washer and dryer. She was very fashionable and had trouble telling her clothes apart, so I purchased her a Colorino color identifier. I also purchased a braille label wand to further label her clothes and items in her dorm room. Marta liked

to read books in braille but did not have much access to them at college. I helped her apply for the State Library for the Blind Accessible Books and Library Services and BARD Mobile reading app. She receives audio books and braille books to this day and very much enjoys reading.

Marta completed her practicum by shadowing a DSB SWB. During her practicum, she attended several sessions of my daily living skills class and Marta contributed to the training by discussing advocacy and serving as a peer mentor for several participants. After Marta graduated, she moved to a new home where I labeled her appliances and provided kitchen aids and appliances to assist her with preparing meals. I also taught her how to use her smart thermostat and smart alarm apps for her home. Marta successfully gained a strong foundation with independent living skills and is continuing to pursue her vocational rehabilitation goals.

Success Story: **Mary, Social Worker for the Blind and Independent Living Rehabilitation Counselor Case**

Mary, who is deafblind, recently relocated to Burke County, where she met SWB, Sandy Freeman. The consumer had no family or local support in the area. She had no means of transportation. The SWB began to work on the immediate needs of Mary, such as tactually marking appliances with training, support group referrals, assistive technology instruction and orientation and mobility referrals. She also referred to the ILRC, Paula Springer, to tackle Mary's long-term goals.

The SWB and the ILRC have been working jointly as well as in conjunction with local resources to ensure the Mary's ability to use local public transportation for essential shopping and appointments as well as

to enrich Mary's life. The consumer is continuing to learn to cook complicated meals independently and safely, with her latest success being a made-from-scratch meatloaf. Mary has not only lived independently but has thrived in her new home. The success of this lady is because of the SWB and the ILRC who have worked hand-in-hand to ensure that the short-term and long-term goals were achieved. The two programs shared resources and information to ensure that this consumer had a chance to succeed, and the consumer showed perseverance and patience as she learned to live in a new area with different resources. The consumer is currently learning braille and perfecting her culinary skills with more advanced recipes.

Success Story: **Angela, Life After Prison Sentence**

While in her mid-40's, Angela was released from a correctional facility in western North Carolina after serving a three-year sentence. A few months prior to her release, the SWB received a call from the corrections social worker with the referral and plans were made to meet and assess her low vision needs when she returned home. She was legally blind due to conditions with her retina and cataracts. Upon her release, the SWB met with Angela and referred her to the nursing eye care consultant for a low vision evaluation. The SWB delivered the recommended items to Angela which included a task lamp, lighted magnifiers, a flashlight, TV glasses and sunglasses. She was able to use each of these items and was excited to be able to read again as this was something she struggled with for years.

During this visit, Angela mentioned that she had an untreated eye infection while in prison and was having trouble getting the

prescription filled. The SWB assisted with completing an application for the Medical Eye Care Program so that she could receive financial assistance for an eye exam and treatment for her eye infection. Once her infection cleared, she had her cataracts removed. The doctor told her that he had never seen such dense cataracts and assured her that her vision would improve significantly. Throughout Angela's life, she had always been told that she would eventually lose her vision and had resolved herself to accepting that.

The surgery was successful, and her vision has been restored to 20/30 and 20/150. She recently obtained her driver's license with no restrictions. She has started a full-time job and has been clean and sober for three years. She is thankful for the Division of Services for the Blind and the help she received through them. She also credits her supportive family, friends, and church.

DSB *Medical Eye Care* Program



The Medical Eye Care Program's goal is to provide services to help save or restore sight and prevent blindness. The program offers financial assistance as a means of last resort for individuals who have no comparable benefits and limited resources to pay for medication, eye treatments and surgeries. During SFY 2022, 2,880 Medical Eye Care services were authorized for eligible North Carolinians. Only state funds are used for this program. The nursing eye care consultants also provide additional services that are not based on income eligibility. The services include, but are not limited to, low vision screenings, evaluations for video magnification systems, and diabetes education. Other program achievements are listed below.

DSB Medical Eye Care Program SFY 2022 Outcomes:

- **1,627** *individuals were provided low vision services*
- **2,880** *Eye Exams and Treatments and/or Surgeries sponsored*
- **512** *Medications purchased*
- **33** *Eyeglasses Purchased*
- **305** *Diabetic Education sessions provided*

Staff and Agency Achievements



The 2022 Superstar Awards recognize employees who make a positive impact on the lives and communities of the people we serve by exemplifying NCDHHS values. Superstar award categories include:

Proactive Communication: Nominees in this category are open, inclusive and honest communicators who consistently share information and seek feedback from their team, other stakeholders and the people we serve. Nominees for Proactive Communication Superstar build trusting relationships that promote continuous improvement, increase team morale and enable joy at work.

People-Focused: Nominees for this category focus on delivering value to and making a positive impact on the people we serve. As they carry out their work with internal and external stakeholders, nominees for People-Focused Superstar are dedicated to improving the lived experience of the North Carolinians who depend on our services.

Teamwork: Nominees for this category made significant contribution to a team effort to improve the well-being of people we serve. Nominees for Teamwork Superstar should be an individual who was key to the success of a team effort and will be recognized for having an outsized impact on the overall success of a team project, program, or activity.

DSB Superstar Winners

REGION/AREA, PEOPLE-FOCUSED

- DSB Area I, Michele Pitcavage
- DSB Area II, Susan Campbell
- DSB Area III, Roxane Soucy
- DSB Area IV, Summer Sink

REGION/AREA, PROACTIVE COMMUNICATION

- DSB Area III, Carole Lovitt

REGION/AREA, TEAMWORK

- DSB Area I, Amanda Shumate
- DSB Area II, Andrea Derflinger
- DSB Area III, Carole Lovitt
- DSB Area IV, Krista Kelly

All Star Winners

- **People-Focused All-Star:** Roxanne Soucy
- **Proactive Communication All-Star:** Carole Lovitt
- **Teamwork All-Star:** Carole Lovitt

Division Director's Award

- Karen Blake, DSB Career and Training Center Assistive Technology and College Prep Instructor

Certifications and Licenses Earned:

- Roxane Soucy, ACVREP Certified Low Vision Therapist

Staff and Agency Achievements continued



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Accessibility Council (DEI&A)

The DSB DEI&A Council serves as an advisory body to the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (NCDHHS) and DSB Administration. The DEI&A Council will provide research, recommendations, event support, and policy guidance to the NCDHHS and DSB Administration as requested and as outlined in the DEIC work plan.

Progress: The DEI&A Council met monthly. In FFY 2022, the DEI&A Council provided all DSB employees with a monthly calendar in recognition of the richness and abundance of diversity within our division, as well as within the communities and people we serve. This calendar is not intended to cover all possible celebrations or events, but to capture those that are particularly relevant to the purpose and mission of the DEI&A and NC Services for the Blind. Through these newsletters, the council encourages all DSB staff to challenge themselves to discover new areas of awareness and insight that build their knowledge and understanding of others. The council was involved in observances, holidays and celebrations. The council sent volunteers for the Juneteenth celebration on The Dorothea Dix Campus in Raleigh.

Staff Development Activities



October 2021

- Southeast Regional Institute on Deafness (SERID)
- Assistive Technology Staff In-Service

November 2021

- Association of Vision Rehabilitation Therapists (AVRT) Conference
- New Employee Sensitivity Training

March 2022

- Digital Apex Training in Using Training Ware

April 2022

- CSAVR (Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation) Spring Conference
- New Employee Low Vision Training

June 2022

- Labor Market Information Training
- Career & Training Annual In-Service
- Client Engagement: Working Alliance / SVRI

July 2022

- NCCAP Training
- New Employee Low Vision Training

August 2022

- New Employee Sensitivity Training
- ENCORE Trainer Presentation Skills Training
- The NET Summit

September 2022

- Best Practices for New Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors
- NCRA Conference

Outreach Events



DSB staff member presenting a sensitivity training to business advisory council.



DSB Staff at outreach booth for the division at the The McKimmon Conference and Training Center in July 2022.

DSB District Offices

Asheville District Office:	1-800-422-1881
Charlotte District Office:	1-800-422-1895
Fayetteville District Office:	1-800-422-1897
Greenville District Office:	1-800-422-1877
Raleigh District Office:	1-800-422-1871
Wilmington District Office:	1-800-422-1884
Winston Salem District Office:	1-800-422-0373

in Spanish 1-800-662-7030

www.ncdhhs.gov/divisions/dsb



NC Division of Services for the Blind's Fisher Building and Administrative Office



NC DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Division of Services for the Blind

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NCDHHS is an equal opportunity employer and provider.

NC DSB's vocational rehabilitation program receives 78.7 percent of its funding through a grant from the U.S. Department of Education. For federal fiscal year 2022, the total amount of grant funds awarded was \$15,927,657. The remaining 21.3 percent of the costs, \$4,310,789, was funded by state appropriations and non-federal receipts.