

# VocRehab Perspective

Newsletter of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services

Winter 2011

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## Ability Works Award winners honored at ceremony

In celebration of National Disability Employment Awareness Month, the Division of Rehabilitation Services honored six Ability Works Award winners on Oct. 13 at the West Virginia Culture Center Theater at the State Capitol Complex, Charleston. Department of Education and the Arts Cabinet Secretary Kay Goodwin delivered keynote remarks.

"We come together to recognize the accomplishments of six individuals who have achieved their employment goals," said Cabinet Secretary Kay Goodwin. "We honor them for their abilities and their tremendous determination to succeed. They represent the thousands of West Virginians served by the division each year."

### James Cowie III, Charleston District, state winner



James Cowie III, 42, of Charleston is a mechanic and metal fabricator for ALCO Manufacturing in St. Albans and the state winner of the 2010 Ability Works Award.

After a devastating fall damaged his spine and left him unable to walk, Cowie learned that DRS had resources that could help him return to work. Later he met with his DRS vocational rehabilitation counselor to discuss employment options, available resources and his goals. With help from DRS, he had hand controls installed in his truck, so that he could get to and from work.

Cowie is happily and successfully employed at ALCO Manufacturing that makes products to assist people, including those with disabilities. His supervisor describes him as a great employee with a strong work ethic and a positive attitude.

### Michael Carothers, Clarksburg District

Michael Carothers, 23, of Franklin, Pennsylvania is a career counselor with the Venango Training and Development Center and the Clarksburg District Ability Works Award winner. Carothers is a former resident of Bridgeport.



## Ability Works Awards

He first met with his DRS vocational rehabilitation counselor to ask about future employment options, training and resources.

After he and the counselor assessed his interests, talents and abilities, Carothers decided to become a secondary education teacher. After graduating high school, he attended West Virginia Wesleyan College in Buckhannon to earn a Bachelor of Science degree in sociology. DRS provided financial assistance for that, and links to other assistance. Now he is a well-respected professional working with high school students to help them set and achieve their adult employment goals.



**Katrina Blankenship,  
Wheeling District**

**K**atrina Blankenship, 36, of West Union is an office assistant at the Doddridge County Day Report Center and the Wheeling District winner of the 2010 Ability Works Award.

Blankenship has cerebral palsy and sought DRS vocational guidance and job placement assistance to work from her home. However, when an employment specialist became aware of a sheriff's department job opening that appeared to be a good fit, Blankenship embraced the job and impressed her former supervisor, Doddridge County Sheriff Worthy Underwood.

When the federal grant funding her position expired, Sheriff Underwood recommended her for an office assistant job at the Day Report Center. Her supervisor, Tammy Satterfield, speaks highly of Blankenship's punctuality, organizational skills and cooperative attitude.



**Shannon Dunbar,  
Beckley District**

**S**hannon Dunbar, 36, of Gap Mills, Monroe County, is an information specialist at the Greenbrier Valley One Stop in the Fairlea area and the Beckley District winner of the 2010 Ability Works Award.

Dunbar is the survivor of a motor vehicle accident that nearly killed her and caused a traumatic brain injury that threatened to rob her of her ability to work. When she contacted DRS about working toward competitive employment, her DRS vocational rehabilitation counselor provided guidance counseling, testing, résumé assistance and job search help. Dunbar supplied the most important elements for vocational success: persistence and hard work.

According to her rehabilitation counselor, Dunbar is a perfect fit for the information specialist job, because of her strengths that include a proclivity for neatness, people skills, organizational skills and internal motivation for work excellence. Moreover, Dunbar said, she loves the job.

**Krystal Baumann,  
Huntington District**

**K**rystal Baumann, 23, of Huntington is an algebra teacher at Huntington High School and the Huntington District winner of the 2010 Ability Works Award.



As a freshman at Alice Lloyd College in Kentucky, Baumann lost her left foot and lower left leg as a result of a car wreck. Her father, an assistant high school principal, knew about DRS, so he helped his daughter apply.

Baumann persevered through the challenges of recovery while refusing to give up on her goal of becoming a math teacher. Upon returning to college, she took heavy course loads and completed her four-year teaching degree on time. DRS helped along the way with some vocational counseling and assistance with books and supplies.

In August 2009, the Cabell County Board of Education hired Baumann to teach algebra at Huntington High. Later when a vacancy for a coach of the girl volleyball team occurred, she enthusiastically took on the second role to help the school and students.

### Veronica Wilson, Martinsburg District



Veronica Wilson, 38, of Berkeley Springs is a stained glass artist with Frog Valley Artisans and the Martinsburg District winner of the 2010 Ability Works Award.

When multiple sclerosis impaired her endurance, coordination and balance, fellow artisans encouraged Wilson to contact DRS to find ways to continue her job. A DRS rehabilitation counselor worked with Wilson to provide workplace accommodations that empowered Wilson to continue her art career.

DRS purchased Wilson a mobility scooter and lift for her van to help with her mobility challenges and fatigue. Rehabilitation engineers designed and built her a custom work table, as well as a network of decks to connect the cluster of buildings on the seven-acre grounds of Frog Valley Artisans.

## DRS participates in MultiFest

Since 2008, DRS has spearheaded a collaborative to sponsor an exhibit at *MultiFest*. The 21st annual Multicultural Festival of West Virginia occurred Aug. 6-8 on the State Capitol grounds in Charleston. The objective of the informational booth was to expand awareness of festival goers about the rights and potential of people with disabilities.

In addition to DRS, collaborative members include representatives from over one dozen organizations such as the state ADA (Americans with Disabilities Act) Coalition; Fair Shake Network; WV Advocates; State Rehabilitation Council; Statewide Independent Living Council; WV Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Developmental Disabilities Council; WV Mental Health Consumers Association; WVU Center for

Excellence in Disabilities; Appalachian Center for Independent Living; Mountain State Centers for Independent Living; and the Northern WV Center for Independent Living. Participants contributed by providing volunteers to staff the booth and by making available a wealth of information about services and benefits available from their respective organizations.



Although the mission of each entity differs, all partners share a common focus on the history, contributions, shared interests, needs and potential of people with disabilities.

The Multicultural Festival seeks to enrich the community by providing a venue to celebrate diversity

for all citizens through art, music, education, cultural programs and cuisine. Events like this provide an opportunity to assist DRS in its outreach efforts.

## DRS honors Employers of the Year



*Pictured here are Jan Smith of The Op Shop, Clarksburg District; Chuck Wickline of Sweet Springs Valley Water Co., Beckley District; DRS Director Deborah Lovely; Anita West of RPR Industries, Charleston District; Rose Smith of WorkForce West Virginia, Huntington District; and Dennis Engle of Food Lion Supermarkets, Martinsburg District.*

The Division of Rehabilitation Services recognized six employers at an Employer Recognition Banquet at Stonewall Jackson Resort on Sept. 23. One employer from each of the six DRS districts received an award.

"This banquet is a way for us to show our appreciation to the businesses nominated and selected by our vocational rehabilitation professionals for their consideration and contributions to the employment of our clients," said DRS Director Deborah Lovely. "These employers are giving someone a chance to prove their employment capabilities. They are empowering individuals with disabilities by providing them with job opportunities."

The banquet provided DRS an opportunity to thank each of these employers for their service to people with disabilities, to DRS and to the state of West Virginia.

### **RPR Industries, Inc., Charleston District**

RPR Industries, Inc., is a rubber product manufacturing company in Grantsville. This small company is located in an area where employment opportunities are limited and the unemployment rate is very high.

RPR Industries was nominated and selected for going above and beyond in working with DRS to provide an on-the-job training program to allow a client to learn the job of packaging clerk. The company willingly accommodated the client's needs related to his disability. The client's motivation and strong desire to be a productive employee has become an inspiration to others in the company.

### **The Op Shop, Clarksburg District**

The Op Shop is a Community Rehabilitation Program in Fairmont that serves all counties in the Clarksburg District. This CRP has created an environment of integration that values and includes people with and without disabilities in the workplace.

The Op Shop has utilized grant opportunities available through DRS to create jobs by "thinking outside of the box." They have expanded their existing custodial business by purchasing a SaniGlaze franchise to clean and recondition ceramic tile. They have also added outdoor window cleaning equipment, pressure washing equipment, and parking lot striping equipment. Last year, they hired 33 DRS clients to work in a variety of jobs.

### **Fleet Service Company, Inc., Wheeling District**

Fleet Service Company, Inc., located in Wheeling, has been doing business since 1963. It has grown to be one of the largest towing companies in the Ohio Valley, offering complete truck repair, towing and recovery services.

Fleet Service Company has been a valuable and important partner to DRS. The company's leadership is open to giving people a chance to be successful. This partnership allows DRS to refer clients for consideration when the company has employment opportunities. This open-minded approach has become a vital partnership that has led to two DRS clients' employment with Fleet Service Company.

### **Sweet Springs Valley Water Company, Beckley District**

Sweet Springs Valley Water Company was founded in 1990. The company began from an idea to develop and utilize a local natural resource in a "start to finish product" business to employ local residents and bolster the local economy. The idea blossomed into a company that captures, bottles and distributes natural spring water, with the springs and bottling plant in Monroe County and a warehouse and distribution center in Bluefield.

The company has been open to hiring DRS clients for a variety of positions throughout the years, but was nominated and selected for its response to an employee who was injured in an accident on personal time. One of the company's employees had an arm amputated, and was fitted with a prosthesis. Throughout his recovery, the company found ways to accommodate the employee so he could return to work. They adapted his job, bought equipment that was easier for him to use and were flexible and supportive.

### **Huntington WorkForce West Virginia, Huntington District**

The Huntington WorkForce West Virginia office is a one-stop workforce development center that provides beneficial employment-related services for youth, job seekers and businesses.

A long-standing partner with DRS, the Huntington WorkForce office was nominated and selected because they have hired several clients during the

past year to fill vacancies within their agency. They have also made work-related accommodations for these individuals with disabilities. The office contacts DRS when they have a vacancy to see if any qualified candidates are available. They are a valued partner, sharing information about other employment opportunities and accommodating and assisting DRS clients with their job searches or with training opportunities.

### **Food Lion Store #2568, Martinsburg District**

Food Lion Store #2568 is part of one of the largest supermarket chains in the United States.

Food Lion continues to prove its commitment to supporting programs that positively impact the local community by maintaining a long-standing relationship with DRS. The store's management has worked with DRS and has become an enthusiastic site for Community Based Assessments, which provides a short-term job "tryout" with the goal of discovering vocational strengths and weaknesses for clients of the division. At least 20 DRS clients have received Community Based Assessments at this location, with several leading to employment at the store.

"These employers are giving someone a chance to prove their employment capabilities. They are empowering individuals with disabilities by providing them with job opportunities."

## DRS hosts third annual summer camp

The Division of Rehabilitation Services hosted its third annual Summer FUNdamentals Camp Aug. 2-6 at Camp Virgil Tate in Kanawha County. Summer FUNdamentals is a vocationally oriented camp experience for transition-age DRS clients. This summer's camp hosted 17 students, ages 16-21, from across West Virginia.

Transition is a period of time when students begin thinking and planning for the shift from high school to the adult world. Every year, DRS provides vocational rehabilitation services to thousands of students with disabilities in order to assure a seamless transition from school to post-secondary education or employment.

Summer FUNdamentals helps campers develop important life skills, including independence, self-reliance, self-respect and confidence. Small group activities focus on building self-advocacy skills and exploring community resources and work opportunities.

"The students participating in Summer FUNdamentals are typically at two different extremes," said DRS Program Specialist Carla Cleek. "Some students come in having had some work experiences in high school and know what they want to be, while others have no job experience and don't even know where to begin to plan for their future."

Summer FUNdamentals activities focus on helping students from both spectrums plan for their future. Activities included sessions on how to dress for success, how to look for a job and how to develop a résumé or complete a job application.

Business professionals and employers volunteered at the camp by presenting information about careers and interviewing skills. Michelle

Barbour, with Marshall University's Career Services Center, spoke with the students about how to choose a career based on their own interests, skills and preferences.

Summer FUNdamentals also provides activities that promote and develop confidence and working together as a team. Campers acquire interpersonal communications skills and coping skills as a result of learning to work together in a unique atmosphere.



*Summer FUNdamentals helps campers develop important life skills.*

DRS employees responsible for planning the camp indicate the best measure of the camp's success is the testimonial stories from those attending every year. Students and parents express the personal and individual benefits gained from the camp experience.

"The small success stories are the big successes of camp," said Education and Employment Programs Supervisor Susan Weinberger. "One returning camper told other campers about his own experience of going for a job interview. He started to carry a can of soda into the interview and remembered the things he learned from camp activities the previous summer and realized he nearly made a crucial interview mistake."

Campers are exposed to a multitude of new experiences. This year, campers toured the State Capitol and the Governor's Mansion, which included an impromptu meeting and photo opportunity with former First Lady Gayle Manchin. They also attended a West Virginia Power baseball game at Appalachian Power Park.

"Ultimately, we want campers to enjoy their experiences and grow as individuals," said Weinberger. "Our most significant accomplishment is for these students to learn how to make informed choices about their future and to incorporate the things they learn at camp and discover about themselves into their vocational plans."

## Consumer Affairs Conference enhances collaboration

The West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services' Consumer Affairs Program held its annual conference Nov. 4-5, at the South Charleston Ramada Inn. The conference provided an opportunity for DRS employees and citizen volunteers to network and share information about current and planned projects of the local Consumer Affairs Committees. The 90 participants received a diverse array of current and historical information about disability-related issues and about resources available to strengthen the work of local Consumer Affairs Committees.

Presentations supported the conference theme, Partners for Advocacy, and included many illustrations of working partnerships within the community and statewide that enhance the impact of collaborative efforts to advocate for the rights and needs of individuals with disabilities.

Julie Pratt, Ridgeline Consulting, presented the keynote address on the topic of "Living History." She spoke about the treatment of people with disabilities during the last century and how important it is that we not repeat the mistakes of our past. Pratt explained that "witnesses" play crucial roles, which include giving evidence or testimony, being present at transactions and publicly affirming a conviction by word or example. Her message was that all people

-- those with and without disabilities -- can bear witness in ways that protect and advance the rights of people with disabilities.

"It was wonderful having a group together that envisions all individuals, regardless of their disabilities, having the right to live, work, learn, contribute and recreate within their community," said SW Resources Vice President Sammy Burdette

"It was wonderful having a group together that envisions all individuals, regardless of their disabilities, having the right to live, work, learn, contribute and recreate within their community," said SW Resources Vice President Sammy Burdette. "SW Resources is proud of the fact and pleased we can partner with DRS in assuring this happens."

Consumer Affairs Committees support the mission of DRS by working to empower people with disabilities in making informed choices and achieving equality of opportunity, meaningful employment, independent living, and economic and social self-sufficiency.

With local leadership, the Consumer Affairs Committees work independently as concerned citizens. The committees plan and carry out a broad range of activities in cooperation with community leaders, which address shared goals, including public awareness and support for the rights, individual dignity, personal responsibility, full inclusion, equal access, self-determination and community involvement for all people with disabilities.

To learn more about the committee nearest you or to volunteer as a member, please call a local DRS office or the Consumer Affairs Office at 1-800-642-8207 (V/TDD) or 304-766-4845.



Judy Pratt, Ridgeline Consulting presented the keynote address "Living History."

## DRS sponsors annual training conference

**D**RS held its annual State Training Conference Sept. 21-24 at Stonewall Jackson Resort. This agency-sponsored training provides continuing educational opportunities for DRS employees in areas specific to the field of vocational rehabilitation. The conference provides training opportunities for all levels of DRS employees, including rehabilitation counselors, managers and support staff.

The federal Rehabilitation Act requires all state vocational rehabilitation agencies to have a Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD). The CSPD provision of the federal law provides flexibility to each state to define and meet its needs for training, upgrading, recruiting and continuing development of qualified and competent vocational rehabilitation professionals in order to continually improve services to and employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

"This annual training event is just one DRS initiative that enables us to meet federal CSPD requirements for continued development of qualified rehabilitation professionals," said Human Resources Senior Manager Ann Kautz. "It gives our employees the opportunity to stay current in the various specialized areas within vocational rehabilitation and to network with their peers."

A highlight of this year's conference was Milton Anthony's personal, motivational story and presentation, "Successful Clients begin with Successful Rehabilitation Counseling." As a result of a tremendous explosion, Milton is totally blind and severely hard of hearing. During his presentation, he took the audience on his journey of adversity and extreme obstacles. Milton turned his life around with guidance from his rehabilitation counselor, and now he plays a vital role in the rehabilitation counseling process through his consulting business in Huntsville, Alabama.

## DRS participates in national public awareness campaign

**T**he Division of Rehabilitation Services recently participated in a national media campaign, called *Think Beyond the Label*, to promote hiring people with disabilities to West Virginia businesses. The campaign uses humor to change attitudes about hiring people with disabilities, raising awareness of the need for diversity in the workplace and countering stereotypes about people with disabilities.

DRS granted \$45,000 to Health & Disability Advocates, a state and national policy and advocacy organization that promotes income security, enhances work opportunities and improves health care access and services for low income children, people with disabilities and older adults. HDA spearheaded the Think Beyond the Label campaign on behalf of more than 40 states and various national and regional organizations.



As part of the campaign, a unique website was created, *ThinkBeyondtheLabel.com*, with important information about hiring people with disabilities and with links to information about each state for employers to find local resources.

HDA contracted with a national media firm, who negotiated statewide ad purchases for West Virginia and others participating in the campaign.

In West Virginia, the campaign, which began in late Sept. and ran through Dec., utilized radio ads, ads in *The State Journal* and digital flash banner ads to target West Virginia businesses and employers.

The West Virginia state page experienced increased visits throughout the campaign, according to data reported by the national media firm. According to their data, there were 808 West Virginia page visits during the campaign timeframe and the campaign ads were viewed more than 1.9 million times.



## DDS employees receive SSA awards

The Social Security Administration has recognized twelve employees and the Professional Relations Officers Team from the West Virginia Disability Determination Services for exceptional job performance and service to the SSA disability program.

Disability Determination Services processes Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) applications for the Social Security Administration. Case services for West Virginia are managed at offices in Charleston and Clarksburg.

The citations and awards were presented on Nov. 10 at the *SSA Regional Commissioner's Honor Award Ceremony* in Philadelphia, and on a virtual awards website.

### Awards were presented as follows:

*Commissioner's Citation* -- a prestigious award presented by the SSA Commissioner, Michael J. Astrue, to DDS employees who have made superior contributions to the SSA disability program

- Toby McCallister, assistant director -- for outstanding leadership and a spirit of cooperation and teamwork in working with SSA and the DDS community
- Gary Farnsworth, DDS state training coordinator -- for outstanding competence, organization and enthusiasm in the role of training coordinator for the West Virginia DDS

*Group Associate Commissioner Citation* -- presented to the West Virginia DDS Professional Relations Officers Team for superior performance in providing a diverse consultative examinations panel and timely scheduling of examinations for West Virginians

- Melanie McCartney
- Tammy Washington
- Debbie Ashcraft
- Dennis Burnworth
- Paul Oliverio
- Kenneth Lim
- Betty Halstead
- Allyson Pugh

### *Individual Regional Commissioner Citation*

- Celesta Sanders -- for extraordinary leadership skills in setting up the trainee units in the Clarksburg office
- Steve Phillips -- for superior performance in providing and assisting others to provide timely and accurate decisions to West Virginians

### *Individual Quality Service Award*

- Pauline Collins and Patricia Zillifro -- for their tireless effort working with disability evaluation specialist trainees in DDS and for ensuring quality and timely disability decisions
- Ron Hudson -- for his outstanding leadership and contribution to the training, mentoring, supervision and overall performance of Charleston DDS personnel
- David Wibberg -- for his superior performance as a senior disability evaluation specialist

### *Excellence in Service Award*

- Victor Clark -- for sustained superior performance to DDS and West Virginia claimants
- Patricia Dennison and Stefanie Hurst -- for superior performance in providing timely and accurate decisions to West Virginians
- Elizabeth Moore -- for superior performance as a disability evaluation specialist, exceeding established goals and objectives

## DRS awards funding to the West Virginia Humanities Council

The Division of Rehabilitation Services provided a \$34,252 grant to the West Virginia Humanities Council. The Humanities Council will use this funding to make the online version of the West Virginia Encyclopedia (e-WV) fully accessible to those with disabilities.

The Humanities Council published the 927-page print version of West Virginia Encyclopedia on June 20, 2006. They began development of e-WV shortly after the Encyclopedia was published.

The Humanities Council launched e-WV on June 20, 2010, as a comprehensive electronic reference combining the information content of the West Virginia Encyclopedia with a wealth of multimedia resources. In keeping with the Humanities Council's mission of service, e-WV is provided free to the user, with no subscription charges.

The goal is for e-WV to be fully accessible, and the Humanities Council is committed to achieving this important goal. They have a plan in place to meet the accessibility requirements of Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998 and federal Americans with Disabilities Act requirements. Compliance will be validated through a process combining automated testing and human judgment. Testing tools, such as A-Prompt and the Web Accessibility Checker developed by the Adaptive Technology Center at the University of Toronto, will be used to evaluate and eliminate accessibility barriers.

This software development is fairly expensive and DRS funding will allow the West Virginia Encyclopedia to be fully accessible to all potential website visitors.





## DRS supervisor contributes to AccessWorld article

**S**heri L. Koch, program supervisor for DRS Blind and Impaired Services, worked with Editor-in-Chief Lee Huffman on the article, *Insider Tips for Getting the Most from Vocational Rehabilitation*, featured in the October issue of *AccessWorld*. Koch is quoted extensively throughout the article.

### Tips provided by Koch included:

- Investigate vocational rehabilitation options early;
- Check to see if compensatory skills are needed before training and placement;
- Put maximum effort into all phases of the program;
- Communicate with the counselor on a regular basis;
- Be realistic about job planning by researching what jobs are available in what locations; and
- Don't sell yourself short.

The tips article by Lee Huffman and Joe Strechay is available at: <http://afb.org/afbpres/pub.asp?DocID=aw110602>.

*AccessWorld* is an online publication from the American Foundation for the Blind, a national nonprofit that expands possibilities for the more than 25 million people with vision loss in the U.S.

## JAN provides free assistance to employers

**W**hoever coined the old adage “nothing good comes for free” didn't know about the *Job Accommodation Network (JAN)*.

The leading source of expert and confidential guidance on workplace accommodations and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and related legislation, **JAN** has been helping employers capitalize on the value and talent of people with disabilities for more than 25 years—free of charge.

The most comprehensive job accommodation resource available, **JAN** offers assistance via phone at (800) 526-7234 or (877) 781-9403 (TTY) or online at [AskJAN.org](http://AskJAN.org). **JAN's** customers include employers of all sizes, from Fortune 500 companies to entrepreneurs, and its services are particularly valuable to small businesses without a dedicated in-house human resource function or facility manager.

Under the ADA, an accommodation is considered any modification or adjustment to a job or work environment that enables a qualified person with a disability to apply for or perform a job. The term also encompasses alterations

to ensure a qualified individual with a disability has rights and privileges in employment equal to those of employees without disabilities.

Like **JAN**, accommodations themselves are highly cost effective,

with most incurring little or no expense at all. In fact, data collected by **JAN** over the years reveal that more than half of accommodations cost employers nothing. Of those that do cost, the typical one-time expenditure is \$600—an outlay that most employers report pays for itself multiple-fold in the form of reduced insurance and training costs and increased productivity.

JAN has been helping employers capitalize on the value and talent of people with disabilities for more than 25 years—free of charge.

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## Baseball game increases public awareness



The Division of Rehabilitation Services sponsored a West Virginia Power baseball game at Appalachian Power Park on July 2 as part of its ongoing outreach efforts. The sponsorship allowed DRS the opportunity to disseminate information about its services and to promote hiring people with disabilities.

James M. Cowie III, a former DRS client, threw the game's ceremonial first pitch. Vocational assistance from DRS helped Cowie get a job at Alco Manufacturing in St. Albans. He works as a mechanic and fabricator to build custom-designed adaptations for wheelchairs, motorcycles and other devices.

### VocRehab Perspective publication information

The VocRehab Perspective is a publication of the West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services. Questions and comments may be directed to Tracy Carr, senior manager of governmental and public relations.

DRS is a division of the West Virginia Department of Education and the Arts.



West Virginia  
Division of Rehabilitation Services

1-800-642-8207 V/TDD

[www.wvdrs.org](http://www.wvdrs.org)