

Rep. Jesse Danielson, Chair  
Rep. Dianne Primavera  
Rep. Joann Windholz

Sen. David Balmer, Vice-Chair  
Sen. Irene Aguilar  
Sen. Kevin Lundberg



**Vocational Rehabilitation  
Services for the Blind  
Interim Study Committee**  
State Capitol Building, Room 029  
Denver, Colorado 80203-1784  
(303) 866-3521



October 28, 2015

To: Senate Business, Labor, and Technology Committee  
Senate Health and Human Services Committee  
House Business Affairs and Labor Committee  
House Public Health and Human Services Committee  
Joint Budget Committee

Dear committee members:

During the 2015 interim, the Vocational Rehabilitation Services for the Blind Interim Study Committee has examined a number of issues relating to Colorado's Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and how it prepares persons with disabilities, including persons who are blind or visually impaired, to find and maintain employment. Several areas of concern were identified by our interim committee that we feel deserve additional scrutiny and oversight.

Therefore, we encourage your committees to examine the issues listed below as part of your annual oversight hearings under the State Measurements for Accountable, Responsive and Transparent (SMART) Government Act and during any additional hearings you may hold concerning the upcoming transfer of the DVR from the Colorado Department of Human Services (DHS) to the Colorado Department of Labor and Employment (CDLE) pursuant to Senate Bill 15-239. While some of these issues focus specifically on services for clients who are blind, many of these concerns also address the overall effectiveness of the program for all disability populations.

**Program Operations**

- Does DVR counseling focus on individual client needs and are counselors allowing clients to set their own goals?
- Is appropriate training available to ensure counselors have the tools necessary for serving blind and visually impaired clients?
- Is the fee and incentive structure for DVR vendors optimal to encourage successful job placement and outcomes for program participants?
- What progress has the DVR made in complying with the 2013 recommendations by the State Auditor? Are there any outstanding issues?

## Funding

- Is the DVR maximizing available federal funding for vocational rehabilitation services? Are program funds being spent effectively?
- Does the Vocational Rehabilitation Program comply with the federal requirement that 15 percent of funding go towards providing youth transition services?

## Waitlist for Services

- Does DVR have policies and procedures to implement and manage a program waitlist if a waitlist becomes necessary?
- Is DVR following federal guidelines related to waitlist management?
- Were clients moved off of the recent waitlist provided with adequate, individualized services?

## Youth Services

- How does the DVR ensure that proper services are available to young people with disabilities beginning at age 16?
- Does the DVR follow best practices for youths transitioning to employment and collaborate with school districts and the Colorado Department of Education to clearly define each department's responsibilities?

Thank you for your attention to these important issues. While our interim committee is concluding its work soon, we look forward to continuing to work with your committees, the DHS, the CDLE, and stakeholders to ensure that Colorado's Vocation Rehabilitation Program is successful and that persons who are blind or have other disabilities are able to work and live independently.

Sincerely,

Representative Jesse Danielson, Chair  
Senator David Balmer, Vice Chair  
Senator Irene Aguilar  
Senator Kevin Lundberg  
Representative Dianne Primavera  
Representative Joann Windholz

c: Reggie Bicha, Executive Director, Department of Human Services  
Ellen Golombek, Executive Director, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment  
Kristina Mueller, Interim Legislative Liaison, Department of Human Services  
Patrick Teegarden, Director of Policy and Legislation, Colorado Department of Labor and Employment