

State Rehabilitation
Council for the Blind

ANNUAL REPORT

PROGRAM YEAR 2023

Providing individuals who
have visual disabilities with
valuable services that
effectively address common
barriers to employment.

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 YOU CAN “QUOTE” ME

RSB's services have been a game-changer for me. Without RSB's help, I would not have been able to go back to school and complete my degree. I also would not have been as successful in my career without aid of the equipment provided through RSB. Thank You!

RSB Client 

LETTER FROM THE CHAIRMAN, MSRCB

Geoffrey Q. Barney, Chairman, Missouri State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind

As Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind (SRC), it is my honor to submit the Program Year 2023 Annual Report, sharing the status of services, in accordance with Section 105(5) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by Congress in 1998. The SRC was created by Missouri Executive Order 93-01 and is responsible for reviewing, analyzing and advising Missouri Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB), an agency in the Missouri Family Support Division (FSD), on its policies and provision of rehabilitation services to Missourians who are blind or visually impaired. The SRC is made up of a group of individuals who serve or advocate for people who are visually impaired or blind.

RSB provides services that are critical to this growing segment of our population. The CDC reports that during the next three decades, the population of adults with vision impairment and age-related eye diseases is estimated to double because of the rapidly aging U.S. population. In addition, the epidemic of diabetes as well as other chronic diseases will contribute to an increasing population of people who experience vision loss. RSB works to help all of these people become or continue to be independent through employment or self-employment.

The SRC is dedicated to working with RSB with their goals to assist blind and visually impaired Missourians become self-supporting and fully participating members of society. Missourians with vision loss can share their experiences both positive and challenging through the SRC, our quarterly reviews of agency policies, procedures and operations, along with public forums and our "customer satisfaction survey". The SRC uses this information to work with RSB and to advise them with expertise in the different areas.

The SRC is committed to its purpose and is rising to meet the growing challenges facing people with vision loss. We feel this report provides an informative overview of RSB and the activities of the SRC. We would be pleased to answer any questions about this report, the operations of RSB, or the work of the State Rehabilitation Council.

Respectfully Submitted,

Geoffrey Q. Barney

Superintendent, Missouri School for the Blind

PROGRAM YEAR 2023

Economic Impact

Federal and State dollars allowed RSB to provide effective, high quality services to blind and visually impaired Missourians.

\$14 million

Successful services and employment outcomes between the Vocational Rehabilitation Program, as well as the Business Enterprise Program.

\$56 million

This Annual Report outlines these successful services provided by RSB, as well as shares personal success stories by RSB clients.



YOU CAN “QUOTE” ME

I feel that my rehab counselor listened to me and let me take some time to explore different types of employment options. I was interested in working from home, self-employment or owning a small business. She allowed me to take time and research the advantages and disadvantages of each. I appreciated her encouraging me to research and find a good fit. I was able to take the time to find a self-employment opportunity that is a good fit for my skill set and works in my location. I also received some orientation and mobility training and brushed upon my computer skills during this time.



RSB Client

LETTER FROM THE DEPUTY DIRECTOR of RSB

Keith Roderick, Deputy Director, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

Dear Fellow Missourians,

This annual report, presented to you from the Missouri State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind for Program Year 2023, provides information on the Missouri Department of Social Services, Family Support Division, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind vocational rehabilitation employment program for individuals with visual disabilities.

The Department of Social Service's mission is "Empower Missourians to live safe, healthy, productive lives". RSB completed another successful year in meeting this mission by providing vocational rehabilitation services to 1,155 clients with 153 obtaining or retaining competitive integrated employment. Successful services in PY23 resulted in a \$56 million economic impact on Missouri.

RSB has consistently been a national leader in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. For the past 6 years, RSB has been one of the highest performing agencies in the nation compared to other blind agencies. RSB has steadily maintained a national ranking of 1st or 2nd in one or more performance measures, indicative of the high-quality services and success of the individuals served. Performance has consistently been well above the national average across all Vocational Rehabilitation agencies. RSB's national ranking among blind agencies in three federal performance measures for PY23 includes:

- 1st in the nation for clients maintaining employment two quarters after case closure
- 1st in the nation for clients maintaining employment four quarters after case closure
- 3rd in the nation for clients in educational programs obtaining measurable skill gains

RSB will continue to streamline processes and embrace new technologies in the provision of client services. I offer my sincere appreciation for your interest and support in serving Missourians who are blind or visually impaired.

Sincerely,

Keith Roderick,

Deputy Director, Department of Social Services, Family Support Division, Rehabilitation Services for the Blind

HIGHLIGHTS of PY23

Individuals Served

Individuals with blindness/visual impairments served in Program Year 2023 3,857

Older Blind Independent Living Program

Individuals served in the Older Blind Independent Living Program 1,158

Individuals' cases were closed successfully rehabilitated 496

Prevention of Blindness Program

Individuals received case management services in the Prevention of Blindness Program 689

Vocational Rehabilitation Program

Individuals served in the Vocational Rehabilitation Program 1,155

Closing in successful employment 153

Children's Services Program

Children received services in the Children's Services Program 637

Independent Living Program

Individuals were served in the Independent Living Program 218

Closed successfully rehabilitated 65

Business Enterprise Program

Business Enterprise Program facilities 29

Military installations 1

People employed 861

Gross sales \$50,854,731

FUNCTIONS

The SRC's functions include, but are not limited to, acting in partnership with RSB to:

- Review, analyze, and advise RSB regarding RSB's performance of responsibilities under Title I of the ACT, relating especially to eligibility for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services; the extent, scope and effectiveness of VR services that RSB provides; and functions performed by State agencies that potentially affect the ability of blind individuals to achieve rehabilitation goals and objectives.
- Assist RSB with the development and review of the State goals and priorities; assist in the preparation of the State plan.
- Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with, VR services and other functions performed by State agencies and other public and private entities responsible for performing functions for blind individuals.
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor of the State of Missouri, to the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration of the U. S. Department of Education, and to the Director of FSD.
- Coordinate with other councils within the State.
- Provide for coordination and the establishment of working relationships between FSD, RSB and the Statewide Independent Living Council and Centers for Independent Living in Missouri.
- Select a pool of individuals to serve as impartial hearing officers for VR applicants and recipients who wish to appeal a decision of RSB.

YOU CAN “QUOTE” ME

I work in a very competitive environment. Without RSB, I wouldn't even have a job. I simply could not compete without the aid and accommodations they've helped me with. Now, I am not just employable, I am invaluable. Thank you!

RSB Client

COUNCIL MEMBERS

The membership of the Council is comprised of no more than 21 individuals appointed by the Governor, with the following representation mandated by the Rehabilitation Act.

At least one representative from each of the following:

- Statewide Independent Living Council,
- Parent Training and Information Center,
- Client Assistance Program,
- RSB Vocational Counselor,
- Community Rehabilitation Program service provider,
- State education agency responsible for the public education of students with disabilities,
- State Workforce Investment Board,
- Disabilities group representing individuals who are blind,
- Representative of individuals who have blindness, have multiple disabilities, and have difficulty representing themselves due to disability,
- Business, labor and industry,
- Advocacy groups for individuals with blindness or other authorized representatives of individuals with blindness who are unable to represent themselves,
- Current or former recipients of VR services,
- And the Deputy Director of FSD/RSB as an ex-officio member.

YOU CAN “QUOTE” ME

RSB's staff, vendors and services are fantastic. RSB, staff, or friendly, timely, and professional. RSB's vendors were also very good. The services that RSB provided me were essential to my employment success. I am extremely thankful and extraordinarily pleased with RSB.

RSB Client

Success Story



Mark Davis

Mark Davis is in his late 30s, lives in the Kansas City area, and carries with him a plethora of work experience, of which mainly took place before his visual impairment occurred. Mark sustained a gunshot wound to the head in 2014 of which led to severe vision loss (no vision in his left eye and a visual acuity of 20/400 in his right eye).

From 2019 to February 2024, Mark thrived as a Production Worker at Alphapointe, where he diligently improved new job skills, consistently demonstrated exceptional performance, and gained invaluable work

experience through various challenging tasks and responsibilities. On February 19th, 2024, Mark became employed at McKesson as a Packer and has done a wonderful job since!

This was a complex transition that required a true team approach to arrive at a successful outcome. Extensive services were provided by the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Job Development Unit, Orientation and Mobility Specialist and Rehabilitation Teacher throughout case. Services included counseling and guidance, assessment, job search assistance, rehabilitation technology and extensive blindness foundational skills training to prepare for job placement.

RSB team members met with the McKesson team on several occasions from September through November 2023. Initially, the McKesson team was a bit nervous in regard to hiring an individual with a severe visual impairment. However, as the RSB team continued our work with the McKesson team, coupled with this employer's interactions with Mark along the way, nervousness from the McKesson team diminished with time.

DS (Doug Anzlovar), JDC (Jeff La Montia), VRC (Linda Johnson), RT (Jerry Breault), JDS (Genny Asher), and O&M Specialist (Brenda Manasco) took turns providing direct, hands-on training to Mark Davis AND the McKesson team onsite at the employer February through March 2024. This included, but was not limited to, training revolving around assistive technology, blindness foundational skills training, awareness training,

job task analysis, assessments, and job coaching. The goal was to take a team approach to ease both the employer and RSB's participant through onboarding and the initial training period while developing a sustainable platform for future success (not only for Mark, but for future visually impaired/blind employees of McKesson).

While providing assistance/guidance in the area of assistive technology, something very neat happened that positively impacted not only Mark, but the McKesson team as a whole. Mark initially struggled with peeling back labels from plastic bins that would then need to be applied to specific boxes. Through research, the RSB team arrived at the conclusion that a plastic label scraper attached to a retractable key holder would be of great assistance to Mark. The lead trainer for McKesson thought that this improvement would benefit their entire team. That being the case, Mark AND the rest of his team now utilize these two items in tandem of which has led to less wear and tear on skin surfaces of fingers, while allowing for slightly increased processing times.

The McKesson team has reached out to JDC (Jeff La Montia) on various occasions after Mark was hired regarding additional accessibility guidance as it relates to those with visual impairments. McKesson will soon be constructing a new, more modern facility near their current facility. The McKesson team has leaned on JDC for guidance during the plan development phase such that key features are incorporated from the ground up.

Employment at McKesson resulted from the combination of hard work committed from the RSB team, Mark Davis, and the McKesson team. Mark set a goal for moving into employment that allowed him to earn a higher income and meet his vocational goal.

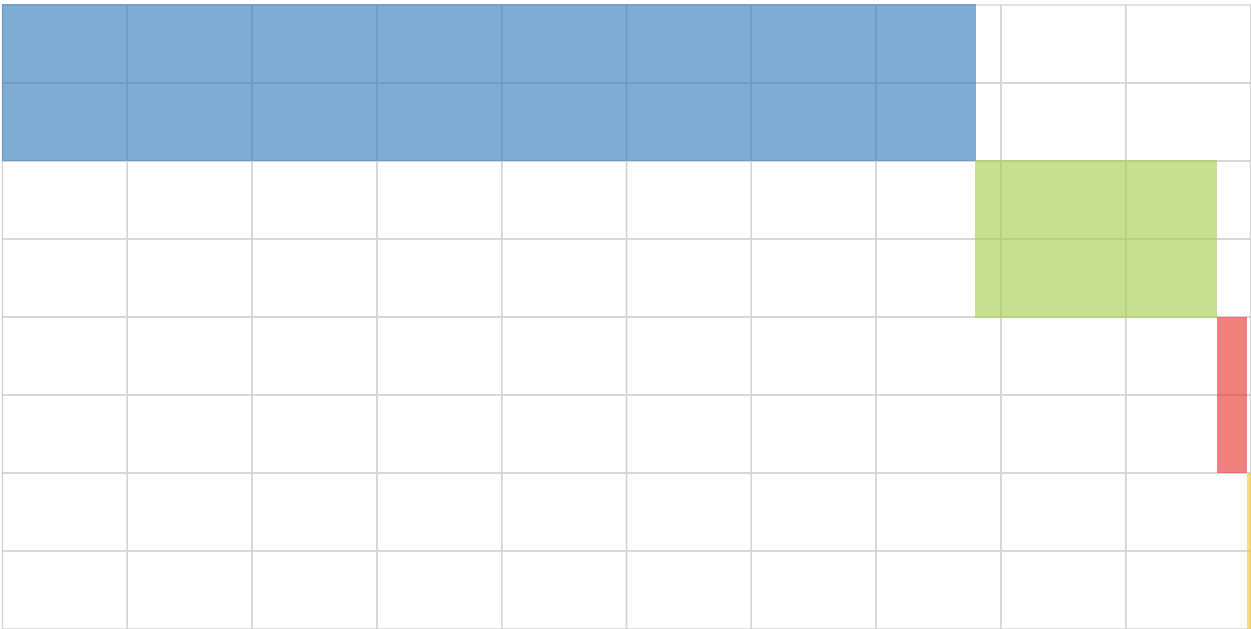
Here is what Mark has to say:

“I feel very happy with RSB because they helped me reach my goal. It feels nice to be listened to and appreciated.”



MISSOURI FUNDING SOURCES

State Fiscal Year 2024



Federal Funds 78%

General Revenue Funds 18.92%

Blindness Education Screening
and Treatment Fund 2.4%

Donations .71%



Success Story Deborah Brown

her vision issues and to Rehab Services for the Blind. Over time, she realized that people like herself were pursuing employment goals and achieving them.

Deborah highlights her work with Rehab Services for the Blind as what helped develop her confidence. Through assessments with staff, Deborah was able to identify needs and learned to advocate for herself and what she would need in an office job. "For the first time, I was beginning to feel confident in my abilities to perform office work and utilize my training and skills," Deborah added.

Most recently, Deborah secured a job in insurance in Joplin, where she has maintained her employment for several years. She oversees the office and much of the day-to-day work. The SW RSB staff looked forward to office visits, where she took great pride in beautifully decorating the office space for each season. She worked with staff to get a CCTV to better assist with her office work and was willing to try different magnifiers to see which would help her in a variety of settings. Deborah also was open to hearing about tips and techniques she could use to reduce eye strain and strengthen her ability to complete tasks without using her vision, including assistive tech skills with her personal and professional devices. She met with an eye specialist who helped get her better glasses, and most importantly, she learned to advocate for herself when she sensed her vision worsening.

She had strong counseling and guidance as well as information and referral from the staff in the southwest office because she does have fears about her vision issues progressing and how could that impact her ability to work. "I honestly don't believe that I could have been as successful and happy as I am now... All of this was possible in part to my not giving up on myself but to the incredible services and caring support and services of Rehab Services for the Blind... I am eternally grateful."

When Deborah closed her case, she was a confident office manager, working in insurance, who felt good about her employment outlook and abilities.

Deborah Brown is a 59 year-old woman from southwest Missouri who struggled with low vision for as long as she could remember. At the age of 3, she was diagnosed with a severe astigmatism. Even with multiple surgeries to correct her vision, she struggled most of her life with vision issues. "I believed with such low vision, my opportunities were limited and at times very depressing and frustrating," she explained.

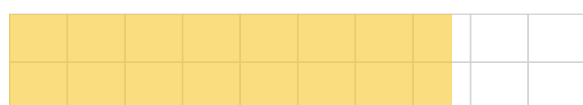
Deborah didn't let her vision slow her down as she maintained her ambition to work and put herself through college which she assures people, "wasn't easy for a blind girl". She explained that over the years she always had a variety of jobs but never the career she wanted. Deborah always dreamt of being a secretary in a big office. It wasn't until she was older that she started seeking organizations that would help her achieve her goals. Her research led her to realize she wasn't alone with

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION: SUCCESSFULLY REHABILITATED MISSOURIANS

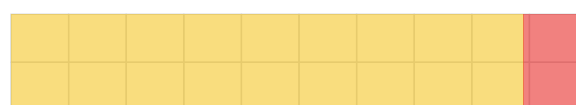
Individuals who have a severe visual disability encounter some common barriers to employment. Common barriers recognized are access to print information, transportation, negative attitudes regarding the skills and abilities of the blind as well as marketable 21st century job skills. Rehabilitation Services for the Blind provides valuable services that effectively address these barriers and others.

In PY 2023, RSB successfully rehabilitated 153 Missourians in pursuit of their employment goal. The following data profiles show those successful closures:

Successfully rehabilitated Missourians in pursuit of their employment goal 153



Rehabilitation Rate
75.74%



Employed as an Employee
88.24%

Self-Employed
11.76%

In PY 2023, through the services of RSB, 153 individuals have been able to gain or retain employment. Their occupations are as follows:

Healthcare Support	12
Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports and Media . . .	1
Installation, Maintenance and Repair	2
Building and Grounds Cleaning	7
Legal Occupations.	3
Business and Financial Operations	9
Architecture and Engineering	2
Community and Social Service	12
Management	10
Computer and Mathematical.	7

Office and Administrative.	31
Construction and Extraction Occupations	3
Personal Care and Service	9
Educational Instruction and Library	12
Production.	6
Sales and Related	7
Food Preparation and Serving	4
Transportation and Material Moving	5
Healthcare Practitioners and Technical	7
RSA Special Occupations & Miscellaneous	4

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION: EARNINGS

PY23 Earnings

New VR cases opened

302

Clients served

1,155

Average Annual Earnings Per
Rehabilitated Client

\$34,311

The following information is based on the above amount.

PY23 Total Annual Wages

\$5,249,625

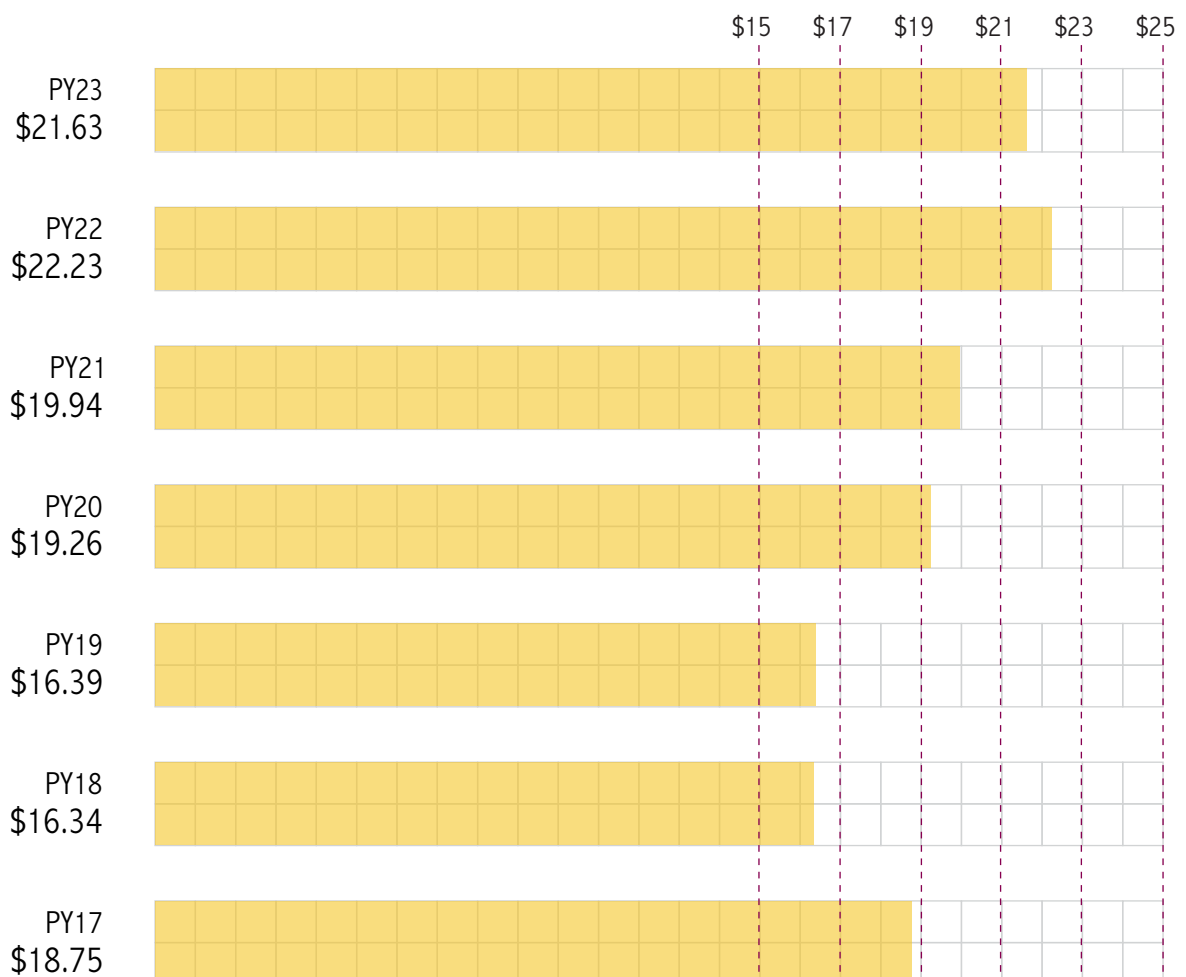
PY23 Average Weekly Wage

\$660

PY23 Average Hourly Wage
at Closure

\$21.63

PY23 Average Hourly Wage at Closure



SUMMARY OF RSB PERFORMANCE PY23

There are a total of 78 State vocational rehabilitation agencies or commissions that provide rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities in the United States and associated territories.

Currently, 22 states have a separate vocational rehabilitation agency or commission that provides services exclusively for consumers who are blind or visually impaired. The alternative skills of blindness are markedly different from the skills required by other disabled persons. The methodology of instructing the blind and confronting the issues of blindness in our society require the development of specialized service programs, with service delivery by specialized personnel.

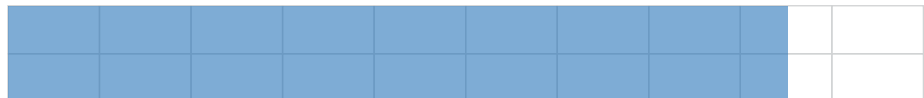
Served in VR Program 1,155

Achieved Employment 153

Total Annual Wages after Services for Employed
Vocational Rehabilitation Clients \$5,249,625

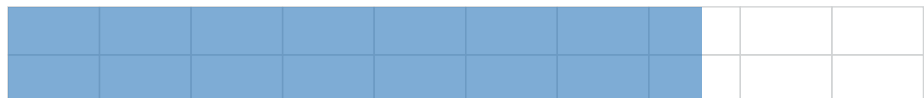
Percentage of Individuals Achieving Self-Sufficiency (Relying Primarily on Their Own Income)
After Successfully Completing the Program – 85.6%

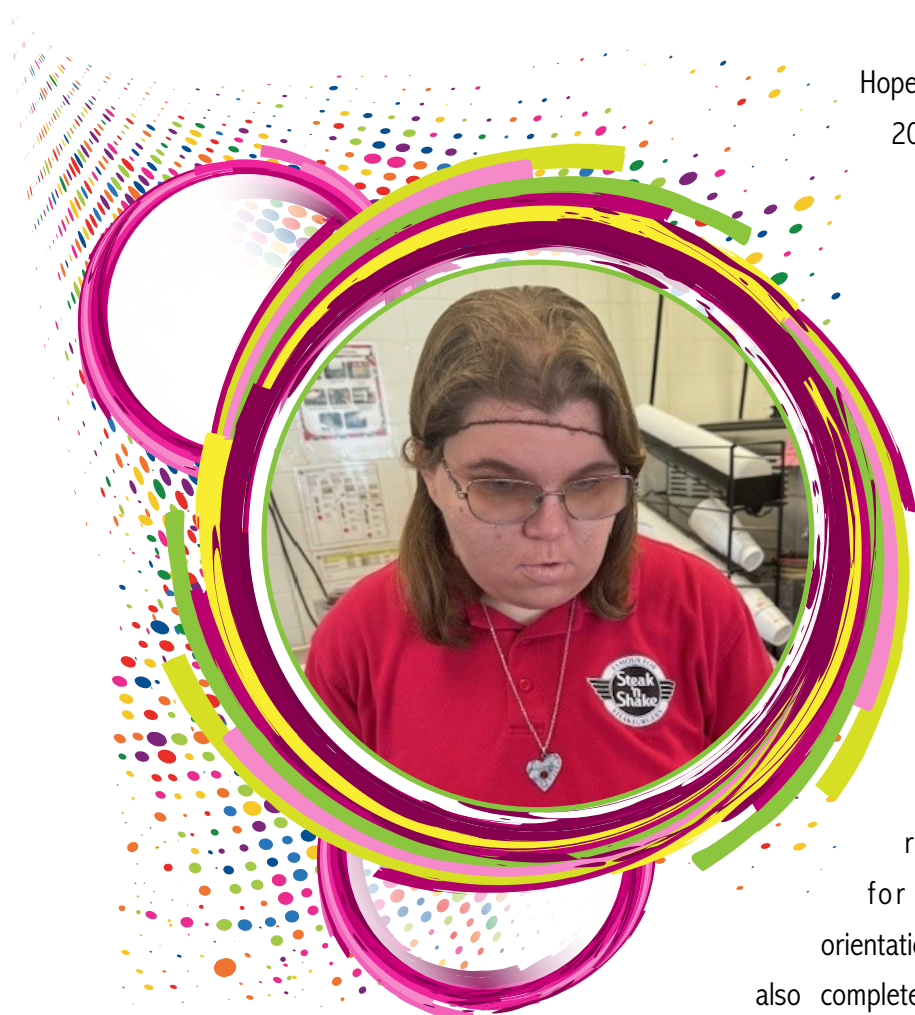
85.60%



Vocational Rehabilitation Rate of Successful Rehabilitation

75.74%





Success Story Hope Johnston

Hope Johnston's VR case opened in 2023 after having a Children's Services case in High School. Her vision loss is due to Mitochondrial Optic Neuropathy. She was hired at Steak n Shake in the summer of 2023. A worksite assessment was completed along with job coaching from Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC), vendor, and Department of Mental Health (DMH). In addition, rehabilitation training from RSB for Braille training and an orientation and mobility assessment was also completed. Hope's workplace accommodations include: 10X magnification for reading text, a penfriend, voiceover on phone, a Clover video magnifier, and an Ipad.

Hope works three days per week and receives continued job coaching support from DMH funding. She takes an independent living course once a week and has moved to a senior living apartment close to work and uses local cab service for transportation.

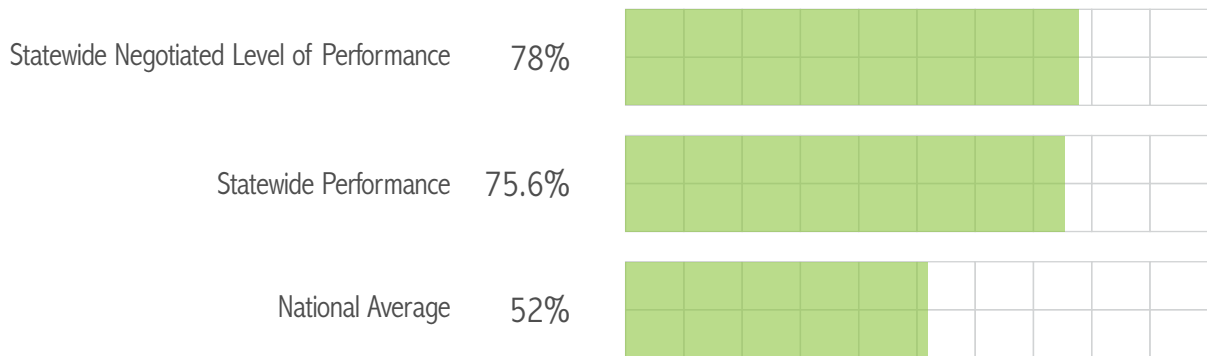
Hope is a success story because she has continued to work with others to learn her job duties. She has learned employment rules, how to use rehabilitation technology devices including applications on her phone, and she has learned to trust herself. She is able to take that next step on her journey because she is willing to do what it takes to be independent.

FEDERAL PERFORMANCE MEASURES

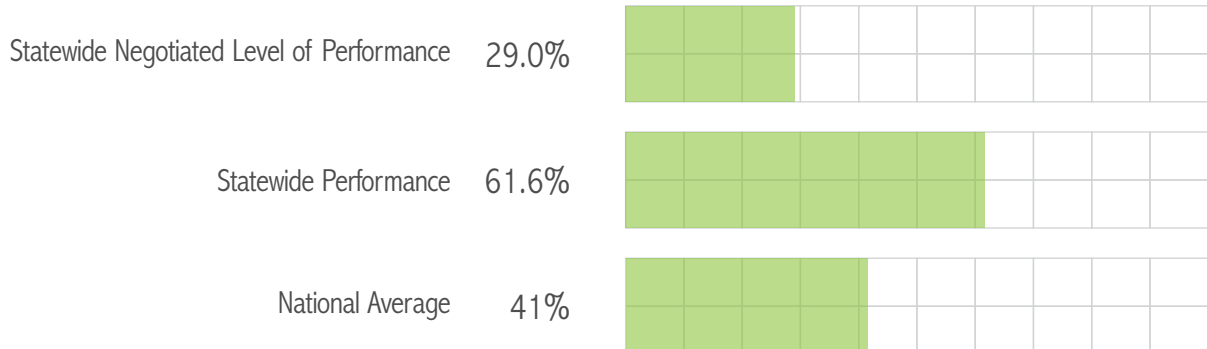
Section 116 of WIOA establishes performance accountability indicators and performance reporting requirements to assess the effectiveness of States and local areas in achieving positive outcomes for individuals served. Statewide levels of performance are negotiated and agreed to by Rehabilitation Services for the Blind, Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation, and Rehabilitation Services Administration. Missouri has been one of the top performing states in the nation, performing well above the national average in most measures. This high level of performance results in higher expectations on negotiated expected levels of performance.

In PY 23 Missouri exceeded most negotiated levels of performance and performed well above the national averages in all measures except Median Earnings 2nd Quarter Post Exit.

Measurable Skill Gain

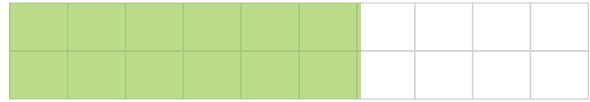


Credential Attainment

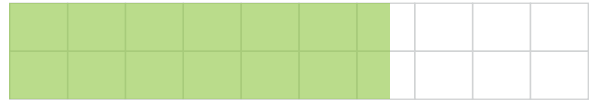


Employment, 2nd Quarter Post-Exit

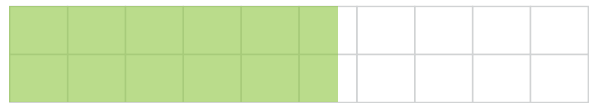
Statewide Negotiated Level of Performance 60.0%



Statewide Performance 64.8%

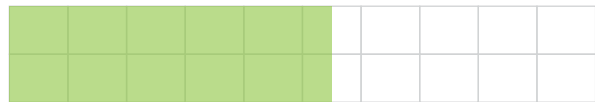


National Average 56.0%

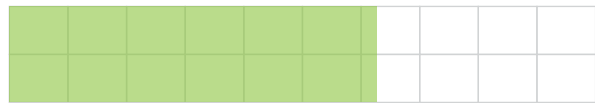


Employment, 4th Quarter Post-Exit

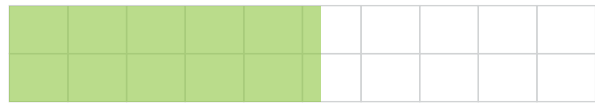
Statewide Negotiated Level of Performance 55.0%



Statewide Performance 62.5%



National Average 53.0%



Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter post-Exit

Statewide Negotiated Level of Performance \$5,450



Statewide Performance \$5,301



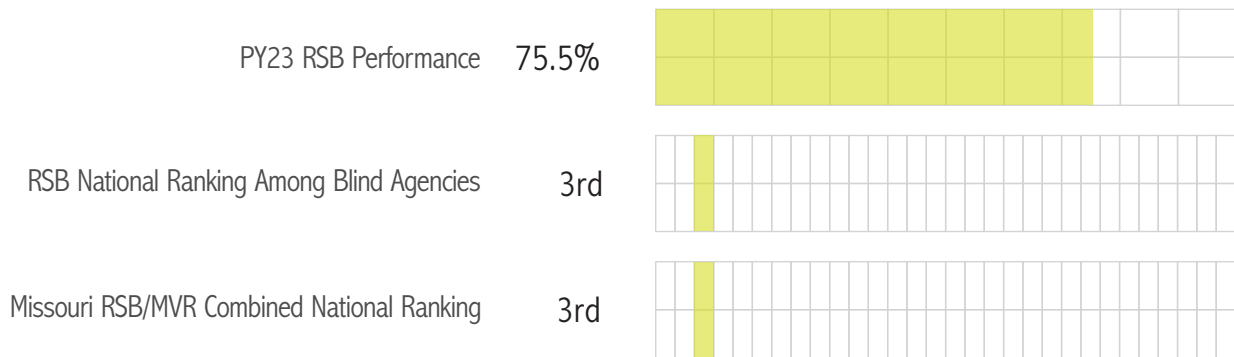
National Average \$5,513



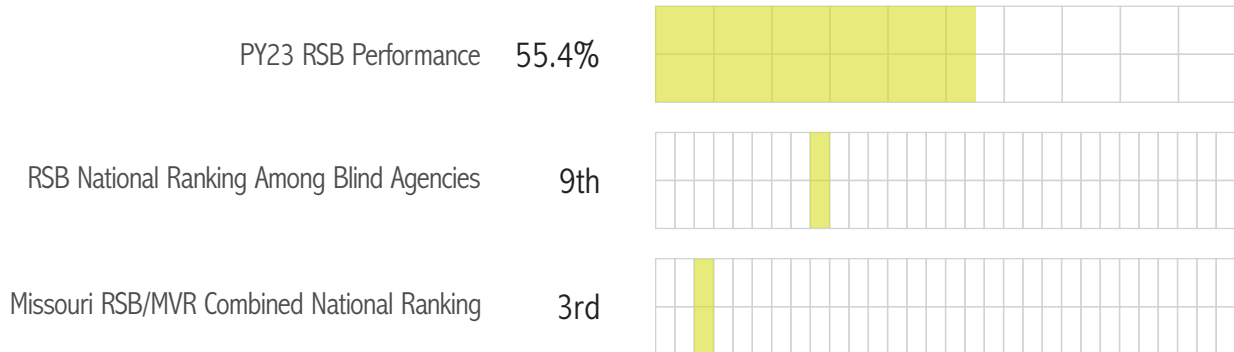
Statewide performance combined with MVR resulted in national rankings among all VR agencies of 3rd in two measures, and 4th in two measures. RSB outcomes separate and distinct from MVR has consistently shown agency performance well above the national averages. For the last six years RSB has maintained a national ranking among blind agencies of 1st or 2nd in one or more performance indicators.

For PY 23, RSB ranked 1st in two measures and 3rd in one additional measure.

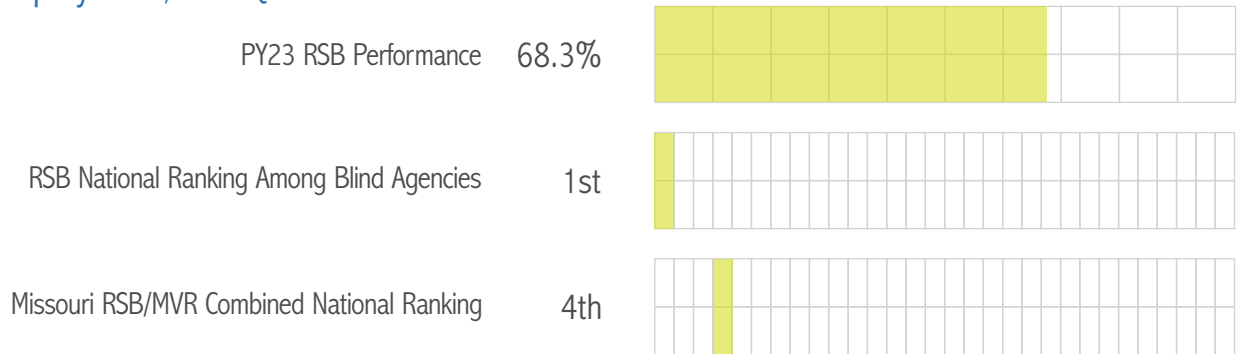
Measurable Skill Gain



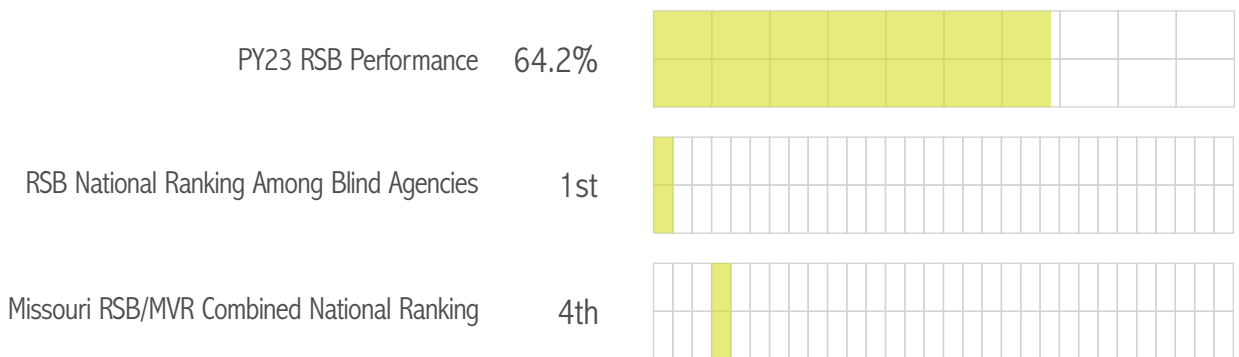
Credential Attainment



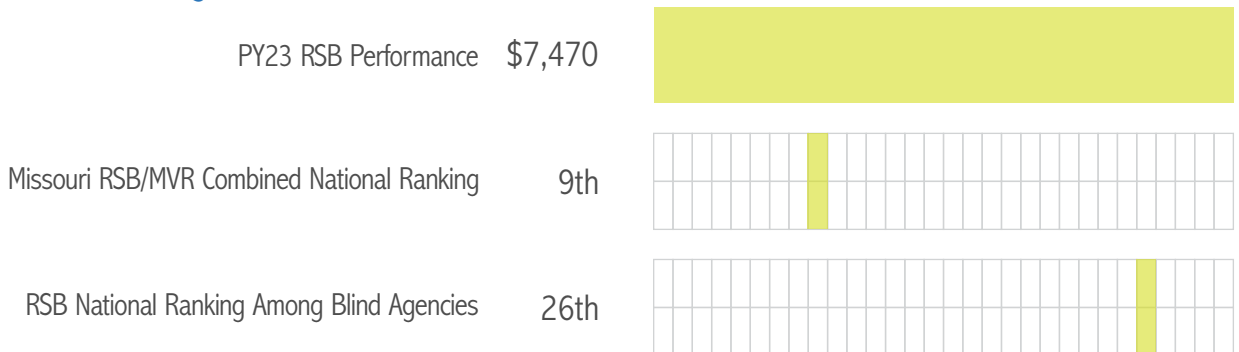
Employment, 2nd Quarter Post-Exit



Employment, 4th Quarter Post-Exit



Median Earnings, 2nd Quarter Post-Exit



Client Testimonial

TheresaBlase

They say hindsight is 20/20. For me, it truly is. From various magnifiers, and all the accessibility features I've come to know and love, it's crazy to reflect and remember things like passing my first driver's test or getting excited to purchase my first car. In 2020, I was hospitalized for a rare condition called Idiopathic Intracranial Hypertension. Simply put, this condition means that my body overproduces cerebrospinal fluid, and it does not absorb it properly. This condition caused my optic nerve to have permanent damage due to the overbearing pressure; therefore, I am left with blind spots all over my line of vision.

Vision is something that we really take for granted. I did not realize how much relearning I would have to do: from everyday tasks to working your job, I needed new strategies and guidance. Thankfully, I was referred by one of my doctors to Rehabilitation Services for the Blind.

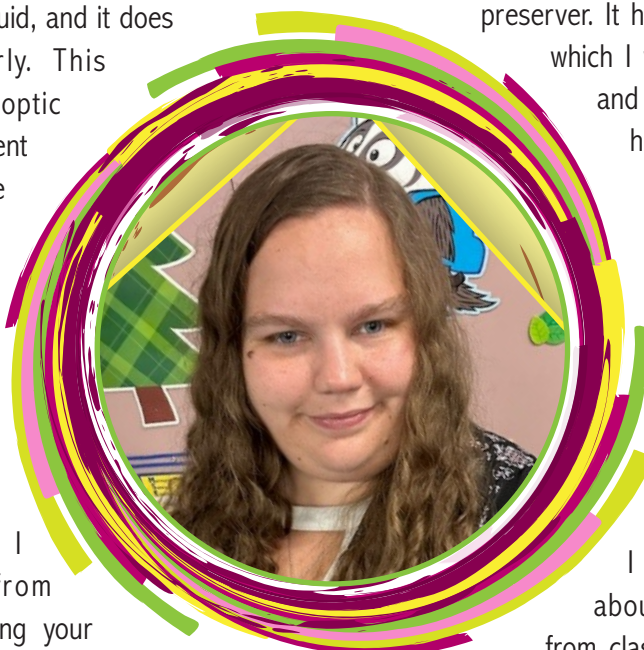
Rehabilitation Services for the Blind has taught me more than ever imaginable. They taught me tips and tricks for working around the kitchen, which has proven to work very well, according to my fiancé. RSB taught me how to use a cane properly, so that I am able to safely attend Cardinals games or go on short hikes with my students during field trips. I am still blown away by the ever-improving technology that exists for people with disabilities.

With the equipment they have provided, I am capable of doing (almost) anything that someone with a perfect set of peepers can.

After learning new life skills, I talked to my counselors about my future. I knew I wanted to finish college, but I was terrified. I remember thinking how hard it would be to see the board just for taking notes. I didn't know if it was even possible! My counselor calmed all of my fears, and she showed me that people are pushing through these challenges every single day. One of the pieces of technology they provided is a life preserver. It has a super zoom feature in

which I was able to see the board, and an inverter so that I could have the right contrast and zoom to be able to read articles. Attending college was enough stress in that of itself, but Rehabilitation Services for the Blind made it as smooth as possible. They provided me with on-campus housing so that I wouldn't need to worry about transportation to and from class. They covered my tuition

which I am forever grateful for as I display my diploma proudly. I am now certified to teach elementary students in grades one through six. I have made a million memories with laughter, love, smiles, and tears because I have had the honor of teaching second and now fifth grade. All of these incredible milestones are thanks to the help I received from RSB. I currently get to live an independent and fulfilling, happy life. I look forward to the near future, in which I plan to start working towards a master's degree and teach many more future leaders of the world.



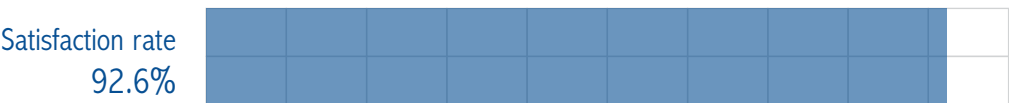
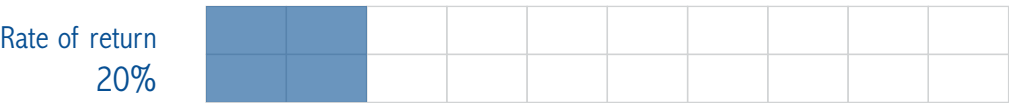
CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY

Client Satisfaction Surveys are administered to individuals after closing their Vocational Rehabilitation case with RSB. These surveys are administered on a monthly basis.

Competitive, integrated employment

140 Clients successfully closed in competitive, integrated employment were sent a survey

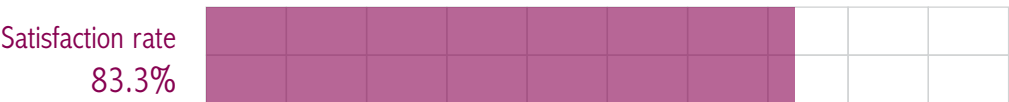
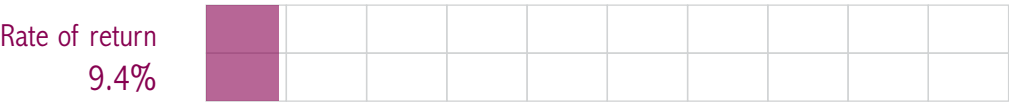
28 Clients returned their survey



Other than competitive employment

64 Clients closed in a status other than competitive employment were sent a survey

6 Clients returned their survey





Success Story

Ryan Butterfield

Mr. Butterfield was referred to RSB by Agrability after they attempted to refer him to our partner agency, Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation. He had previously worked with MVR after suffering a TBI during an auto accident in 2018.

He then had a stroke in 2019 which caused decreasing/fluctuating vision mostly affecting his near vision. His stroke also caused significant mobility issues, so he requires the use of arm crutches and a wheelchair to mobilize around his farm. Additionally, he was diagnosed with diabetic retinopathy causing peripheral vision and depth perception loss. Thankfully, MVR realized that his current barriers were vision related and they sent him our way.

Mr. Butterfield retired from the Railroad after many years working as a railroad engineer. After retirement he was able to focus on his passion — cattle farming and custom hay baling. He was experiencing extreme difficulty in managing his books and finances, finding the correct tools, repairing equipment, completing cattle counts and much more. His biggest concern though was his inability to safely navigate on the farm. His depth perception and peripheral vision loss made identifying obstacles, ruts, potholes, etc. very difficult. Since he was unable to walk without the assistance of arm crutches or a wheelchair, he was very unsteady on his feet and was concerned about falling. He had already suffered a few falls on the farm.

Mr. Butterfield participated in several assessments to determine the scope of services needed. He received an onsite Agrability Assessment, a functional assessment provided by RSB staff and a low vision evaluation provided by an eye doctor. Based on the results of the functional assessment and low vision evaluation, Mr. Butterfield received disability related skills training to assist with organizational skills for his farming equipment, using assistive tech devices for reading print material, medication management, glare control and training on the use of accessibility features like magnification to manage the books for the farm. He received training in orientation and mobility to learn about sighted guide techniques, how to establish landmarks and how to detect level changes. He was also provided several pieces of assistive technology and was trained in the use of these devices for various tasks. He received a laptop and large monitor, a Lyriq OCR device for reading longer documents and farming articles, the Clover 6 for short reading tasks and the Viewpoint VR Wearable for hands-free viewing around the farm. His favorite device is the PenFriend which assists with creating audio labels to keep his tools organized.

The report from Agrability provided recommendations to help with his ability to safely navigate around the farm. Mr. Butterfield received an Action Track Chair that would allow for safe traveling over rough terrain since his vision cannot consistently allow him to avoid fall hazards. This chair also assists with lifting him to a standing position so can complete fence or equipment repairs. A lift was also installed on his truck, which allows him to safely get in and out of his tractors.

This client is using the equipment and the skills that he learned every day to continue his successful farming operation. He plans to continue farming for years to come!

“You can't imagine how much of a help it has been to me. I mean getting on and off equipment and getting around and being able to do things. Vision wise I can do my paperwork, use my computer. I use the penfriend on tools and everything. I would say that it has been never-ending.”



PUBLIC FORUMS

The SRC continued to hold public forums throughout the state, allowing individuals to voice opinions and concerns about the services of RSB. To assist those with difficulty traveling, the Council provides phone conferencing as well.

August: St. Louis, Mo. Area – Maureen Cunningham, Executive Director presented on the Brain Injury Association of Missouri and the services they provide. Jennifer Coy, Program Director presented on the Lighthouse for the Blind and the services they provide.

November: Springfield, Mo – Shannon Porter, Chief Executive Officer for Empower Abilities presented as public speaker.

February: Kansas City, Mo – Alphapointe hosted and presented at the public forum also RJ and Phillip Best with Beholder Repair presented.

May: Jefferson City, Mo – Natasha Baebler, Missouri Deaf-Blind Technical Assistant Project Coordinator presented as guest speaker sharing information about the deaf-blind community and the services that she provides.

YEAR IN REVIEW

The SRC analyzed the results of client satisfaction surveys, which were received from RSB clients at the time of case closure. Comments and concerns expressed in the surveys were discussed by the SRC.

The SRC provided input and recommendations on the VR services portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan, reviewed the Annual Report, reviewed and analyzed the consumer satisfaction surveys, and other Council reports that may have been developed as part of the Council's functions.

The SRC began the process of reviewing and updating their by-laws to be consistent with the WIOA requirements and the Technical Assistance Circular TAC-23-02

RSB kept the SRC updated on the vacancies within RSB. Issues with difficulty in recruitment and retention were discussed.

The SRC continued to review and provide guidance on changes and execution of RSB processes, policies, and administration of the vocational rehabilitation program.

The SRC provided support and guidance on the creation and implementation of an onboarding training system for new RSB team members.

VISION FOR THE FUTURE

As RSB Strives to create opportunities for the personal and vocational success of blind and visually impaired Missourians, the SRC believes that with the proper training, alternative skills and assistive technology, those individuals who are blind can be vocationally, socially and economically competitive.

The SRC continues to work cooperatively with RSB to improve the services offered to meet what we consider to be the unique rehabilitation needs of clients with visual disabilities. The following top six strategic priorities were developed by the SRC to ensure ongoing success for visually impaired Missourians:

1. Promote the full inclusion, participation and integration of Missouri blind and severely visually impaired in the economic, social, cultural and educational mainstream of society.
2. Through the SRC's advisory capacity, assure that appropriate education and rehabilitation services increase the employment rate of blind and visually impaired individuals in Missouri.
3. Promote and assure the continuation of specialized vocational rehabilitation services to consumers who are blind and severely visually impaired through specially trained professional staff with unique skills and knowledge of blindness.
4. As part of the Employment First initiative, develop a tiered system of benefits planning to expand the benefits planning infrastructure and support more people with disabilities to work, increase their earnings, and use work incentives.
5. In partnership with RSB, the SRC agreed to review the SRC bylaws for any needed updates and that they reference current regulations.
6. In partnership with RSB, the SRC will work to implement new procedures congruent with the expectations of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, in order to ensure coordination of all entities involved increasing access of blind Missourians to today's job market.



YOU CAN “QUOTE” ME

I already had a job but the services from the blind association really made my job easier to do along with helping me to feel confident about my skills and future success.



RSB Client

YOU CAN “QUOTE” ME

“Great staff and always there when help is needed.”

“I am gainfully employed thanks to the dedication of the staff at RSB.”

“Would highly recommend RSB to others. Very helpful to me learning to navigate a world with a significant sudden vision loss. Staff very friendly, helpful, knowledgeable and quick to respond. Thanks for helping me to be able to do my job with less strain and more efficiently and navigate unfamiliar areas more safely.”

“Krista Cooperman and Lori Reber were absolutely wonderful in aiding me to navigate through this new phase of my life. All of my concerns were addressed in a timely manner. I truly appreciate their kindness and help. Thanks for all of the equipment and resources that were made available to me. So very grateful for the support.”

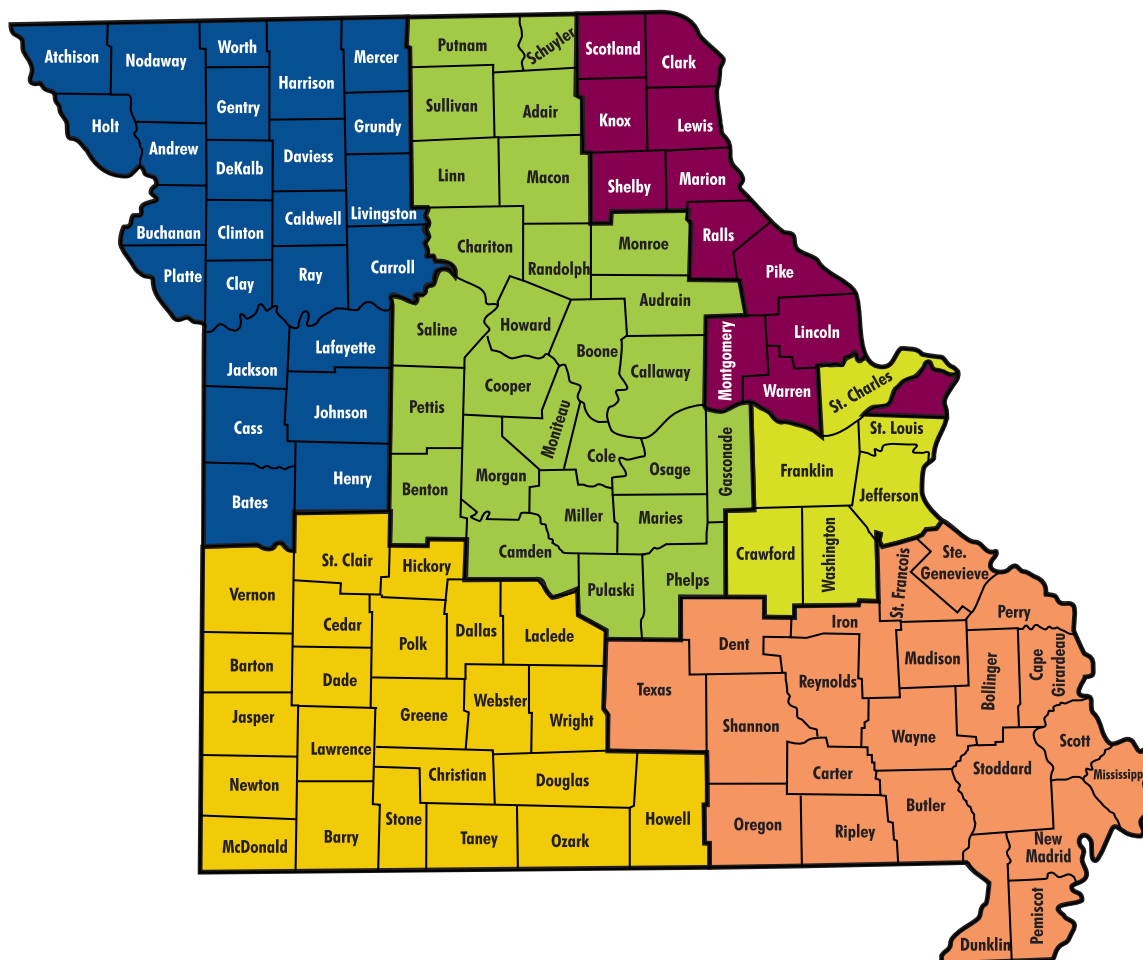
“Professional and very supportive”

“They have been nothing but pleasant and helpful to me!!”



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