

Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DORS)

Meeting Session #2

October 26, 2022

Maryland State Department of Education
Division of Rehabilitation Services





PRESENTATION OUTLINE

1. Overview of Commission Responsibilities
2. Selection of Commission Chair
3. Discussion of Session 1
4. Commission Topic # 9 – Continued
5. Commission Topic # 6 – Continued
6. Maryland’s Order of Selection
7. Commission Topic # 3



Overview of Commission Responsibilities

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2. Selection of Commission Chair
3. Discussion of Session 1
4. Commission Topic # 9 – Continued
5. Commission Topic # 6 – Continued
6. Commission Topic # 3

As a member of the Commission, you will play an important role with your thoughts and recommendations.

Legislative Context

- The Maryland General Assembly has set the following expectations:
 - The Maryland General Assembly passed HB 660 in Spring 2022.
 - HB 660 requires that a “Commission to Study the Division of Rehabilitation Services” be established.
 - The new Commission is to meet at least 5 times and discuss a set of 10 different topics.
 - After the Commission evaluates and makes recommendation on each topic, the Commission is to submit a report to the General Assembly and Governor.
 - An interim report is due by December 15, 2022.
 - The final report is due by March 15, 2023.

Required Topics for Discussion for the Commission

1. Methods for improving stakeholder input on the Division of Rehabilitation Services' programs and services
2. Methods for improving the relationship and communication between transition professionals working at the Division of Rehabilitation Services and the Developmental Disabilities Administration
3. Methods for improving the amount of time it takes to provide vocational rehabilitation and transitional services
4. Methods for improving public-private partnerships to assist more Division of Rehabilitation Services' clients
5. Methods for improving accountability and transparency of the Division of Rehabilitation Services' programs and services
6. Whether the eligibility criteria for the Division of Rehabilitation Services' programs and services should be altered
7. Whether the Division of Rehabilitation Services should continue to be a division of the State Department of Education or should be transferred to another State agency
8. If the Commission determines that the Division of Rehabilitation Services should continue to be a division of the State Department of Education, whether the Division of Rehabilitation Services should have a governing board separate from the State Board of Education
9. Whether there are specific budgetary requests that could support the job training programs provided by the Division of Rehabilitation Services
10. Any other improvements to the Division of Rehabilitation Services' programs and services the Commission considers appropriate

Today's Focus Topics

1. Methods for improving stakeholder input on the Division of Rehabilitation Services' programs and services.
3. **Methods for improving the amount of time it takes to provide vocational rehabilitation and transitional services.**
4. Methods for improving public-private partnerships to assist more Division of Rehabilitation Services' clients.
6. Whether the eligibility criteria for the Division of Rehabilitation Services' programs and services should be altered.
9. Whether there are specific budgetary requests that could support the job training programs provided by the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

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Selection of Commission Chair

Responsibilities and selection process for the Commission's Chair.

Roles and Responsibilities of the Commission Chair

- Work collaboratively with MSDE administration to create agendas for each meeting and plan commission meetings.
- Ensure that the **Commission is operating independently.**
- Assist in determining the **selection of guest speakers and presenters.**
- **Build consensus and teamwork within the Commission** through the encouragement of an atmosphere of openness and trust.
- Confirm that the **Commission addresses the ten recommendations within House Bill 660.**
- Ensure that the **interim and final reports encompass the ideas and recommendations of the Commission.**

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Discussion of Session 1

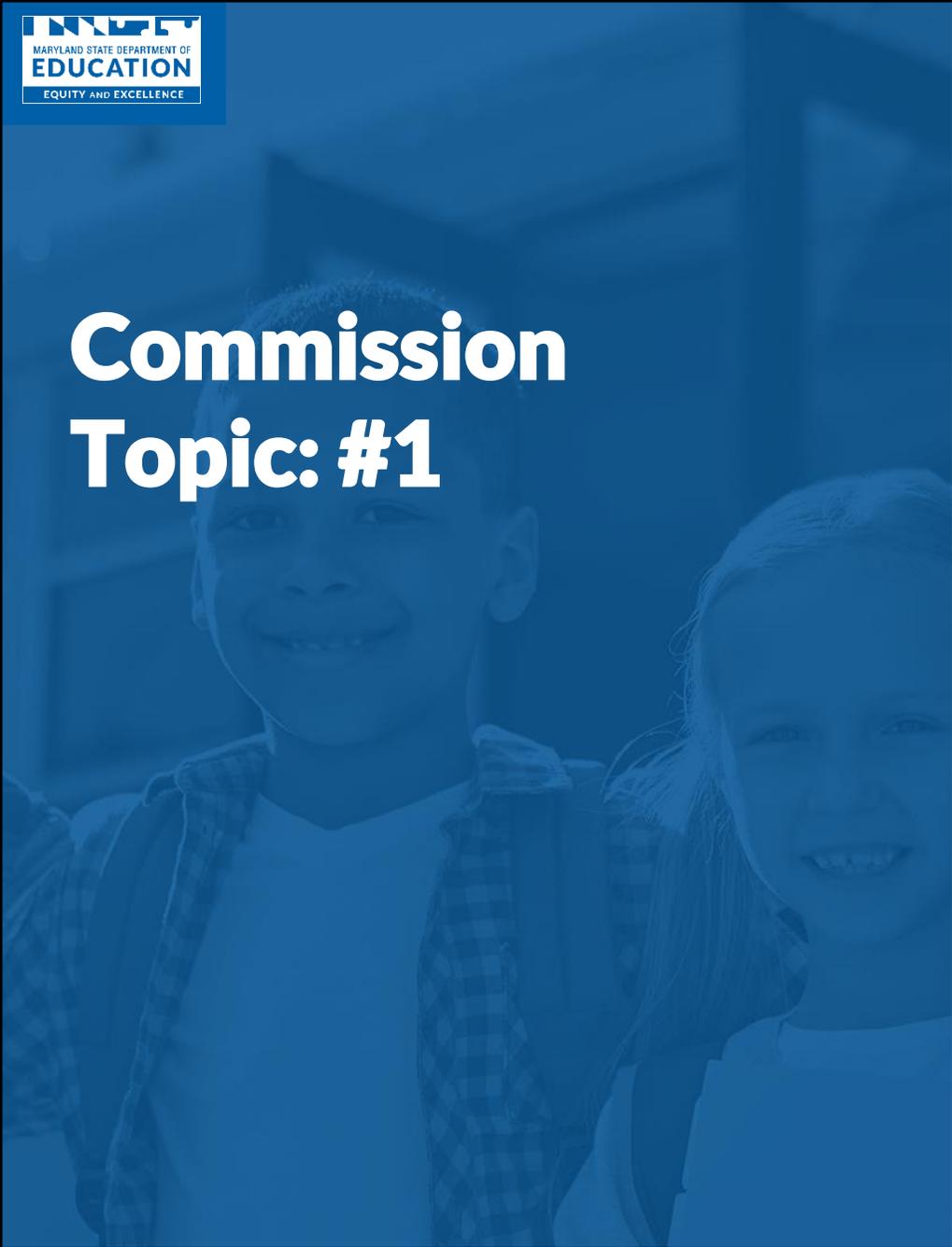
Reviewing topics and answering questions from the Commission's last meeting.

Outstanding Questions from Session #1 (1 of 2)

- How do you define the accuracy rate for DDS?
- Using the word “Independence”, does that mean that these are individuals who are chosen by Social Security?
- What is the response rate from customer survey?
- How do you get meaningful input from customers in a way that it is accessible to them and comfortable to them?

Outstanding Questions from Session #1 (2 of 2)

- Related to credential attainment, for conversations about Labor and Employment, high school diplomas are an important signal. Given that DORS supports such a high population of individuals with cognitive disabilities, how are you ensuring that you can meet federal required measures?
- How is the child's school or LEA informed of Pre-ETS services provided by DORS or through a contractor, and how are these services annotated in the child's IEP to inform their transition activities and post-secondary goals?
- How are LEAs and transition specialists trained in what services DORS provides and what DORS cannot do?



Commission Topic: #1

How does DORS ensure stakeholder input for programs and services?

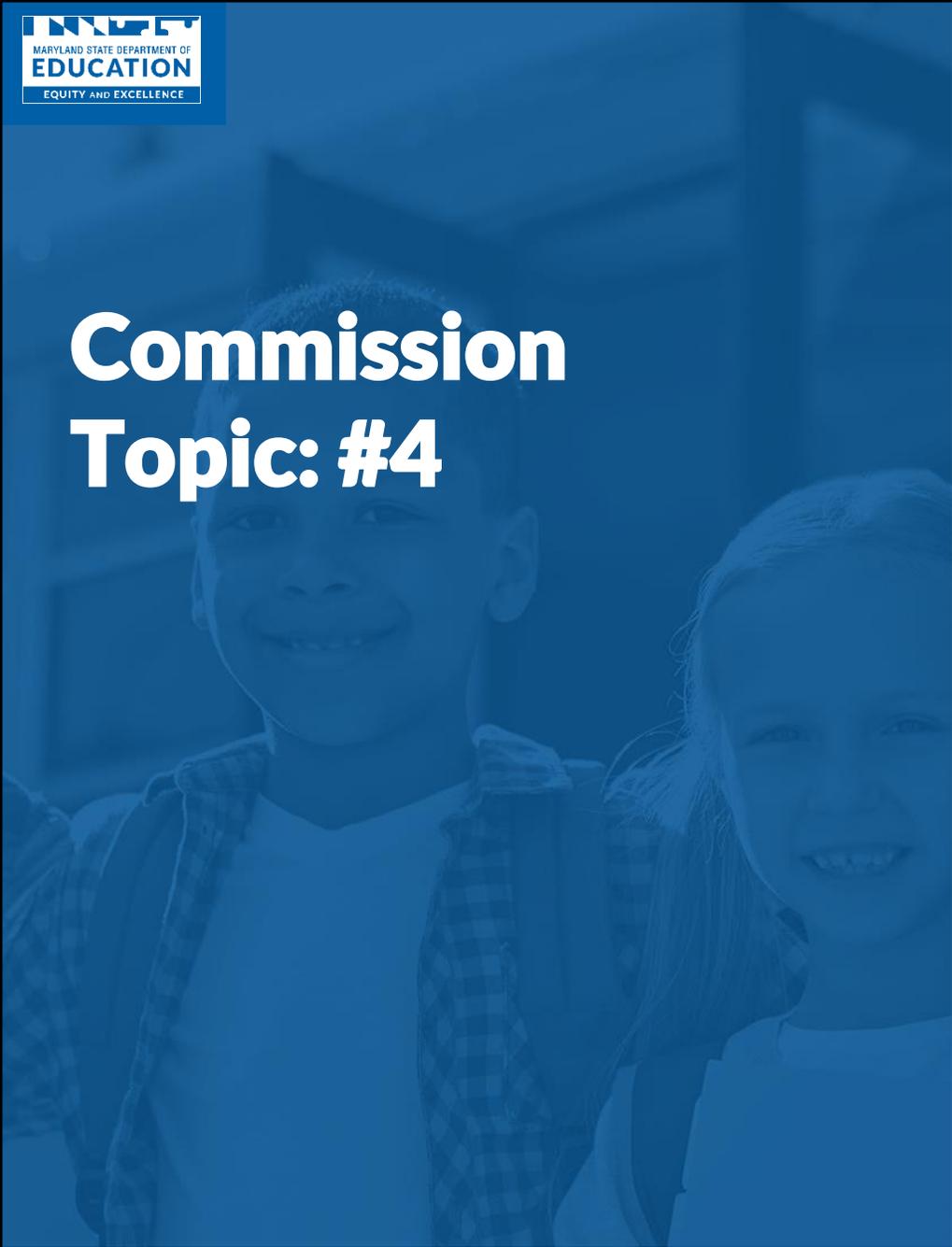
Recommendations from Session 1:

Topic #1: Stakeholder Input

- DORS sits on the Development Disability (DD) Council, which leaves time for State Agencies to provide updates and get information out and receive stakeholder input. Working with the DD Council prior to any meeting so that information and documents can be prepared for the Council to be able to provide input on specific topics.
- DORS and the DD Council can partner in working with the underserved populations particularly those living in poverty who are Black/African American, Latino/Hispanic, or Asian American.
- Partnering around listening sessions so that DORS can receive feedback on information it sends out.

Stakeholder Input

What other areas and avenues should DORS consider to seek stakeholder input?



**Commission
Topic: #4**

**How does DORS utilize
public-private
partnerships to assist
Division of Rehabilitation
Services' clients?**

Recommendations from Session 1:

Topic #4: Public-Private Partnerships

- Develop a framework for two-way communication between DORS to the Local Education Agency or school to ensure that the transition coordinator, IEP chair, or LEA is aware of a student's involvement in Pre-Employment Transitioning Services.
- Have links to resources for employers and individuals.
- Explore partnerships from across the state for driver education programs.
- Develop partnerships between hospitals and universities like Morgan State University and the University of Maryland Baltimore County have with St. Agnes Hospital.
- Spell out the process so employers know about their ability to partner with DORS for training and employment opportunities.

What other public-private partnerships should the Division of Rehabilitation Services explore?

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Commission Topic # 9 – Continued

How should Maryland be investing to better support DORS job training programs?

Review of Discussion of Topic #9

Factors impacting the delivery of DORS training programs:

- **Maryland federal VR grant allotment compared to States with a similar population is lower.**
- **The VR Grant funding increases are based on the Consumer Price Index.**
 - **Social Security just announced an 8.7% increase in benefits, which is a program that also uses the Consumer Price Index.**
- **State Match and Maintenance of Effort requirements are impacted by large increases in the VR grant.**
 - **If DORS is flat funded in FY 24, then Maryland will revert a portion of its VR grant back to the Rehabilitation Services Administration. The reverted funds are then given to States who can meet the additional Match requirements.**
- **The State of Maryland stands to lose \$28,558,280 in federal funding over the next four fiscal years for training and services if State funding remains flat.**

Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act

- **Before the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA):**
 - An **individual could either** go into a post-secondary or vocational training program **or** they could go to work. **Not both.**
- **WIOA changed this approach** with the focus on **creating career pathways through education and training.**
 - Example: **DORS could support an individual** to go to school to earn their **Certified Nursing Assistance (CNA) license**. If that individual wanted to become a Licensed Practical Nurse (LPN), the individual could continue to work as a **CNA** and **DORS would support the individual's LPN.**
- **WIOA changed the performance measures** to ensure there is a **focus on training.**
 - **2nd and 4th quarter wages and median wage.**
 - **Measurable Skill Gains and Credential Attainment.**

Adult Work-Based Learning Experiences

Prior to WIOA, DORS had a very robust work-based learning experiences that focused on those individuals who were **transitioning out of high school and adults**.

- Due to the **required 15% set aside for Pre-ETS**, the focus moved to providing the work-based learning experiences to those **individuals in high school**. The **adult program was discontinued**.
- DORS recognizes that **not all individuals are able to participate** in a rigorous training program leading to a credential or certification.
- Work-based learning teaches both **soft skills as well as specific job skills** necessary for a job.
- Research has shown that **work-based learning combined with VR services** leads to higher levels of **employment of individual with disabilities**.
- **DORS will be restarting the adult work-based learning program in 2023**.

Workforce and Technology Center Training (1 of 3)

DORS offers a number of **academic and job training programs** through the **Workforce and Technology Center**:

- **Academic Services** are provided as a **single service** or as a **wraparound service** to support an individual who has a **specific training goal**.
- **Pre-GED Tutoring**
- **GED Program**
- **Academic Assessments** (Individual and Group)
 - **Math and Reading Testing**
 - **College Assessments**
- **Academic Instruction** (Individual and Group)
- **Virtual Assessments and Instruction**

Workforce and Technology Center Training (2 of 3)

The career and technology training programs are designed to **meet the needs of the current labor market**, thus creating a pathway to employment.

- **Automotive** Detailing I & II
- Automotive **Refinishing** (Paid On-the-Job Training Component)
- Automotive General Service **Technician** I & II
- Certified **Child Care** Provider (Practicum Work Experience)
- CVS **Health-Retail** Training (Paid Practicum Work Experience)
- CVS Health-Pharmacy Technician (Practicum Work Experience)
- **Environmental Services-Housekeeping** and/or Floor Technician
- **Food Services** (Paid On-the-Job Training Component)
- Professional **Animal Care Workers (PAWS)** (Practicum Work Experience)
- Sephora Warehouse Associate (Paid On-the-Job Work Experience)
- **Starbucks** Retail/Barista Training (On-Site Training)
- Warehouse **Technician** (Practicum Work Experience)

Workforce and Technology Center Training (3 of 3)

- There is a major push at the State level by the Maryland State Department of Education and the Department of Labor for youth, **including youth with disabilities**, to enter into an **apprenticeship program as career pathway**.
- **DORS and the Workforce and Technology Center** are supporting this initiative with the Apprenticeship Services program.
 - **Apprenticeship Consultation:** Meetings with the individual and **DORS counselor** to **determine the next steps towards apprenticeship**. This includes assessing **apprenticeship requirements**, determining if it is an achievable **career choice**, and if **additional assessments** are needed.
 - **Apprenticeship Exploration:** Allows the individual to explore pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship **programs** to find out **what the program is all about and the skills sets needed** to enter the program.
 - **Apprenticeship Support Services:** The **WTC Apprenticeship Navigator**, in collaboration with the **DORS counselor**, will provide needed **support to the consumer** throughout the **application, hiring, and apprenticeship process**.

DORS Funding Consideration

What should Maryland's investment be in the Division of Rehabilitation Services to ensure that the vocational rehabilitation program is able to maximize its federal funding to provide services and training to individuals with a significant or most significant disability?

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Commission Topic # 6 – Continued

Should the eligibility criteria for the Division of Rehabilitation Services' programs and be altered?

Order of Selection Process Recap

- A State **VR Program** is required to submit to the Rehabilitation Services Administration a plan on how the VR Program is going to serve individuals on an Order of Selection and what criteria the VR Program is going to use.
- The criteria is **not based solely on the type of disability.**
- The criteria must be **based on the significance of the individual's disability and the impact the disability has on their functional levels.**
- It is **up to the State VR Program** to determine if an Order of Selection is needed in their State and the number of **Categories the State will use** to determine who receives services.

DORS Current Waitlist by Years

- DORS provides referral services to those individuals on the waitlist.
- DORS reopened Category 2 in September 2022. DORS will have rolled everyone off for 2017 by November and start rolling off individuals from 2018 in December.

Year	Number of Cases on Waitlist
2017	94
2018	443
2019	566
2020	505
2021	602
2022	533
Grand Total	2,743

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Maryland's Order of Selection

Maryland is one of 32 states with three categories.

Maryland's Order of Selection (1 of 3)

- **Category 1 – Most Significant**

- An individual with a **"most significant" disability** is an individual who is available and willing to participate in the DORS Vocational Rehabilitation program, meets the definition of significant disability, and has a disability which seriously affects three or more functional capacities.

- **Example:**

- Consumer has a diagnosis of Bipolar Disorder, Personality Disorder, and recovering substance abuse. Consumer reports that due to her depression she stays in bed days on end at times, and she also reports past hospitalizations for her mental illness (Interpersonal Skills). Consumer stated she resides with her fiancé who supports her financially and he also helps her with daily living tasks (Self Care). Consumer reports she has not worked in approximately 16 years (Limited Work Skills).

Maryland's Order of Selection (2 of 3)

- **Category 2 – Significant**
 - An individual with a **“significant” disability** is an individual who is available and willing to participate in the DORS Vocational Rehabilitation program and meets the definition of significant disability; has a disability which seriously affect one or more functional capacities.
- **Example**
 - Consumer has progressively lost her hearing. Consumer provided a recent hearing evaluation and hearing aid recommendation. She communicates verbally and does not know sign language. Consumer is requesting services for DORS to assist with hearing aids so that she can use them as an accommodation on the job.

Maryland's Order of Selection (3 of 3)

- **Category 3- Non-Severe**

- An individual with a “**Non-Severe**” disability is an individual who is available and willing to participate in the DORS Vocational Rehabilitation program who has been determined eligible for VR services but has not been determined to have a significant or most significant disability.

- **Examples**

- Sam's medical documentation points to low back pain controlled with rest and ibuprofen. No other disability information or functional limitation provided.
- Jeff is a 17-year-old student who has a 9th grade reading and math level. Documentation of ADHD but no meds or counseling.

What recommendations would you propose to DORS to reduce the waitlist or change the order of selection?

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Commission Topic # 3

How is DORS ensuring that it provides vocational rehabilitation and transitional services as soon as possible?

Referrals, Applications, and Services

- **Number of referral cases** handled by DORS between January 1, 2021 and October 6, 2022:
 - DORS received **24,867 VR referrals**.
 - **Only 11,697 referrals (47%) resulted in an application.**
 - DORS received **7,069 Pre-ETS referrals**.
 - **Only 2,574 referrals (36%) moved forward for services.**
- **Reasons for drop off** between referrals and applications:
 - **Lack of family support** to assist with following through on the necessary documentation.
 - **Not connected to a community provider** who can either provide the information or assist the individual in following up on obtaining the necessary documentation.
 - **No interest in pursuing VR or Pre-ETS services.**
 - **Inaccurate** information entered into the online referral form, which results in application package not being received.
 - **Duplicate** referrals being sent.

Timeline to Provide VR Services

- **Federal requirements** to provide VR services:
 - A VR agency has **60 days** to make an **eligibility decision** once an application has been received.
 - In FY 22, **DORS** is making an eligibility decision in **37 days** on average.
 - **96.1%** of all VR eligibility decisions are made within 60 days. The national average is 94.6%.
 - A VR agency has **90 days** to develop an **Individual Plan for Employment**, once determined eligible for services.
 - In FY 22, **DORS** counselors are developing a Plan in **66 days** on average.
 - **94.3%** of all Plan developments are completed within 90 days. The national average is 95.5%.
- During this timeframe, DORS had between **38 to 43 VR counselor and supervisor vacancies**.

Factors That Can Influence Time To Service (1 of 3)

One factor is the **availability of current medical documentation** in order to make the correct eligibility decision.

- **Example:** The Behavioral Health Administration (BHA) provides specific DORS counselors **access into their case management system to pull current medical information for individuals** who have been referred by a BHA provider.
 - With the proper documentation, it takes an average of **23 days to make an eligibility decision and 31 days to move that individual into an Individual Plan for Employment.**
- If an individual who has applied for VR services and **does not** have any medical documentation, then **DORS will need to obtain a medical assessment before making an eligibility determination.**
 - Without the proper documentation, it takes an average of **51 days for DORS to make that eligibility determination and 63 days to move that individual into an Individual Plan for Employment.**

Factors That Can Influence Time To Service (2 of 3)

DORS staff caseloads:

- **Nationally**, the average caseload size for a **VR counselor** is between **85 to 100 cases**.
 - **North Carolina VR** is recruiting new counselors to manage an average caseload of **60**.
- Currently the average active caseload size for a **VR Counselor in Maryland** is **137**, even when **fully staffed**.
 - If the delayed cases are added, the caseload size would grow to be **150**.
 - This ranges between **37% to 61% higher** than most **VR agencies** across the nation.
- To meet the **national** average caseload size of 85-100 cases per counselor, **DORS would need to add at least 60 new counselor positions (State PINs)** to support this workload level.
- To meet **North Carolina's** average caseload of 60 cases per counselor, **DORS would need to add at least 188 new counselor positions (State PINs)** to support this workload level.

Factors That Can Influence Time To Service (3 of 3)

- **Individual circumstances:**
 - **Lack of family support** to assist with following through on the necessary documentation.
 - **Not connected to a community provider** who can either provide the information or assist the individual in following up on obtaining the necessary documentation.
- **Mailing of documents:**
 - The movement of paper documents back and forth between DORS and the individual can add up to **two weeks or more to the overall process.**

Improvements DORS Has Made (1 of 4)

- **Prior to December 2020, all referrals were on paper.** A secretary would manually enter the referral information into the case management system.
 - **Referrals often took weeks** to enter the information due to workloads and to mail the application package to the individual.
- **In December 2020, DORS moved to an all-online referral form** that automatically interfaces with the case management system. The application package is **mailed to individuals within two business days.**
- **On July 1, 2022, the starting salaries went from \$42,035 to \$54,665.**
 - **Existing VR Counselors and Supervisors received a 2 grade and 4 step increase,** which increased their salary approximately 20% and an additional 4.5% increase starting November 1, 2022.
- **In July, DORS had a total of 122 vacancies with 30 pending hires.** As of this week, DORS has **88 vacancies with 46 pending hires.**

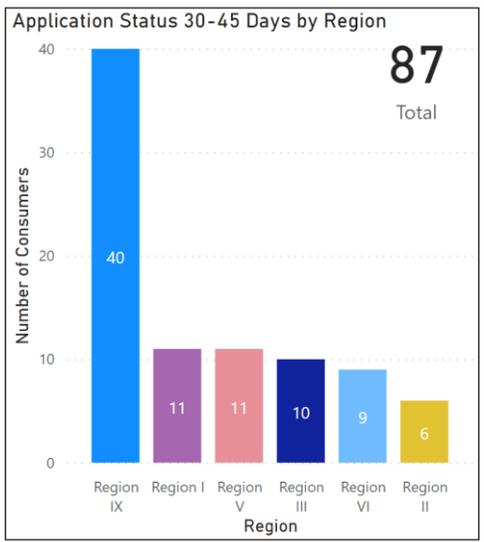
Improvements DORS Has Made (2 of 4)

- On February 1, 2022, DORS implemented its new Eligibility Determination Unit (EDU). The EDU focuses solely on determining eligibility for VR services or determining whether a student with a disability qualifies for Pre-ETS.
- Partnership with the Center on Transitioning and Career Innovation to assist the EDU by handling the delegable workload for Pre-Employment Transitioning Services.

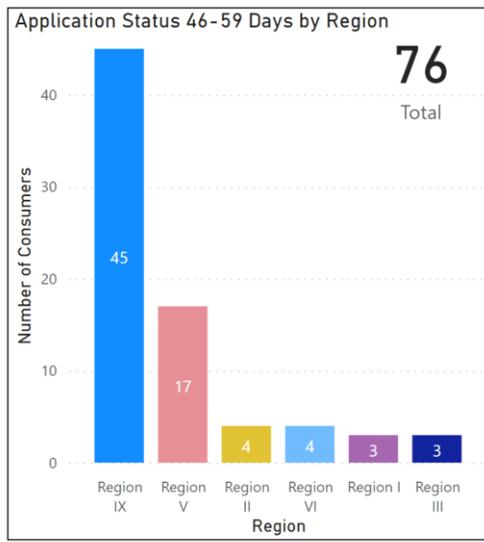
Improvements DORS Has Made (3 of 4)

DORS uses Power BI to visualize data to help supervisors and managers track a case's progress through each stage in the process and ensure compliance with Federal time requirements.

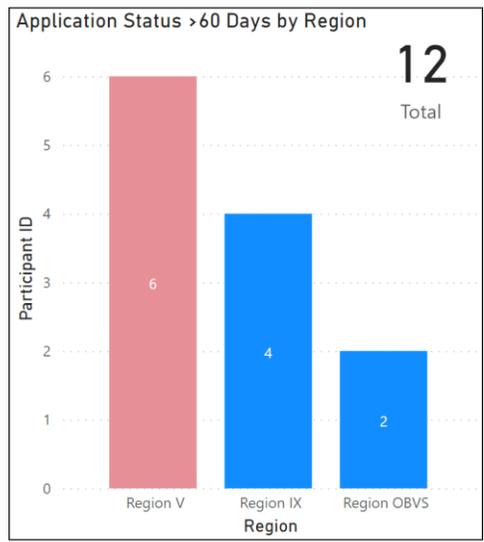
Application Status Report



Region	Totals
Region I	11
Region II	6
Region III	10
Region IX	40
Region V	11
Region VI	9
Total	87



Region	Totals
Region I	3
Region II	4
Region III	3
Region IX	45
Region V	17
Region VI	4
Total	76

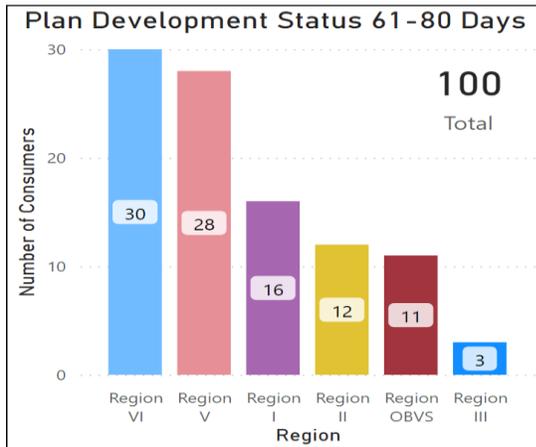


Region	Totals
Region IX	4
Region OBVS	2
Region V	6
Total	12

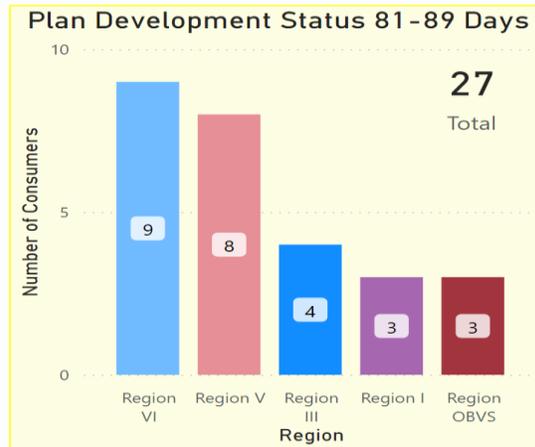
Improvements DORS Has Made (4 of 4)

Number of Days from eligibility to IPE.

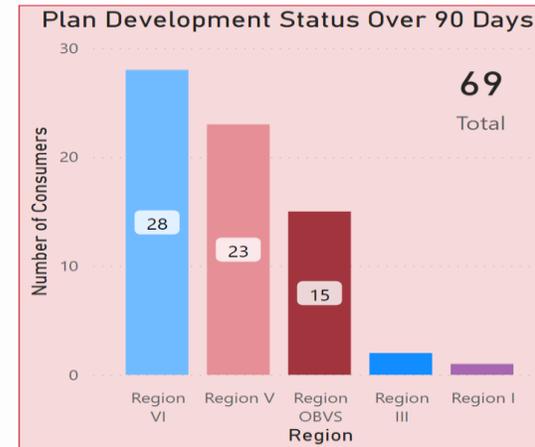
Plan Development Overview by Region



Region	Total
Region I	16
Region II	12
Region III	3
Region OBVS	11
Region V	28
Region VI	30
Total	100



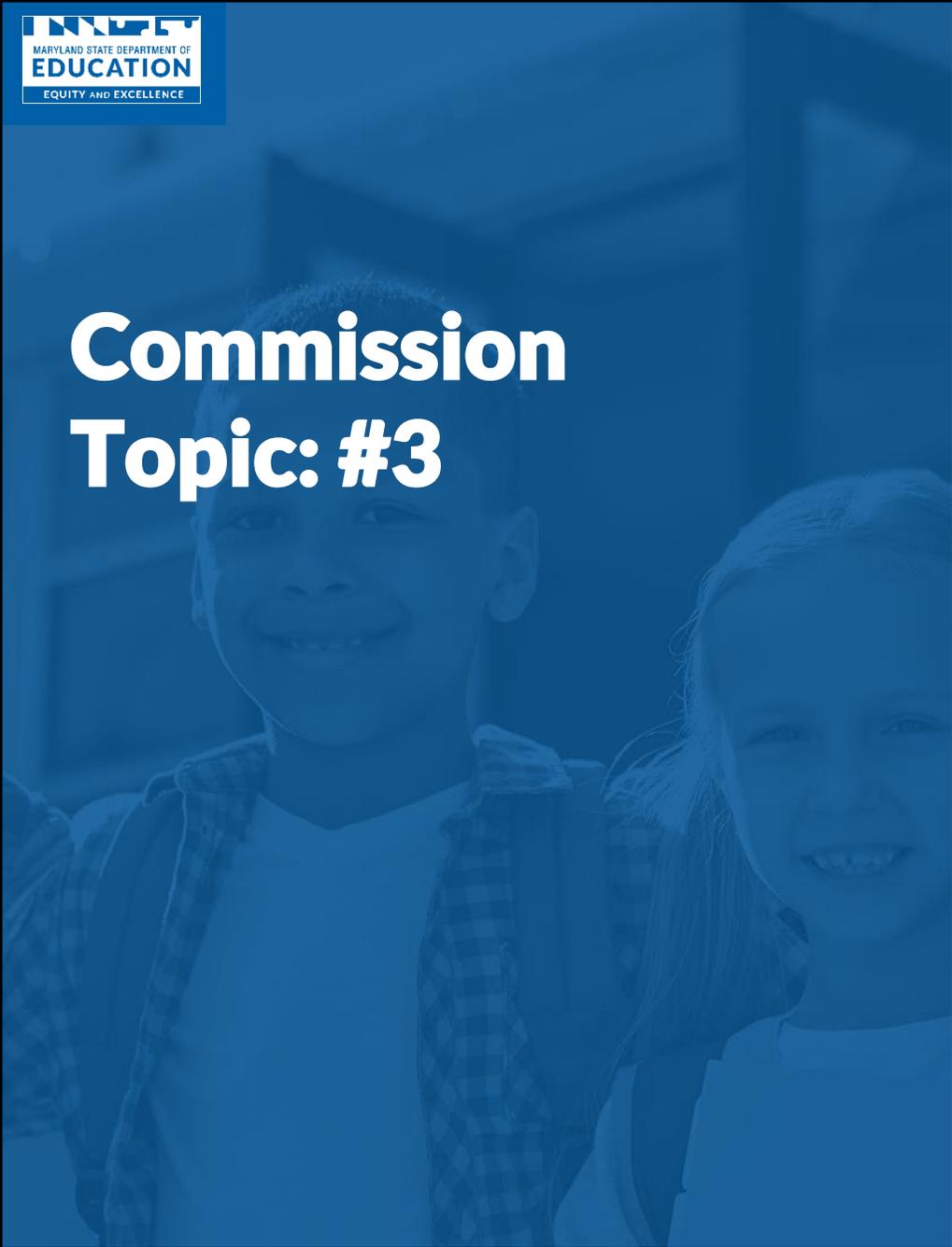
Region	Total
Region I	3
Region III	4
Region OBVS	3
Region V	8
Region VI	9
Total	27



Region	Total
Region I	1
Region III	2
Region OBVS	15
Region V	23
Region VI	28
Total	69

DORS Future Improvements

- **Electronic signature**: Beginning today October 26, the EDU will begin rolling out the use of the Citrix electronic signature package. This will be followed by the Office of Blindness and Vision Services, then selected Field Services Offices.
 - This will reduce the amount of time of having to mail documents for client signatures.
- **Emailing of client VR application package**: The applicant will receive the application directly and then will submit their paperwork through a secure portal. This includes a notification about the DORS/CTCI partnership.
 - This will eliminate the delay caused by having to mail information. DORS is looking to start this in January 2023.
- **Two way-directional texting**: A new texting communication system to provide individuals with follow-ups and reminders about upcoming events involving their cases.
 - The procurement is nearing completion with the expectation that this will go to the Board of Public Works in January 2023. Testing and first stage implementation is expected by July/August 2023.



Commission Topic: #3

What additional strategies and resources are needed to reduce the time needed to provide vocational rehabilitation and transitional services and meet Federal requirements?

Upcoming Schedule

- Upcoming Meetings
 - November 17, 10:00 am – 12:00 pm
 - December 8, 1:00 pm – 3:00 pm
- Interim Report is due on December 15, 2022