# Items 18 & 19 Attachment: Current List of SRC Policy Questions

**Item Type: Information, Discussion and Possible Action**

**Background:**

The SRC’s policy recommendations reflect the Council’s efforts to review, analyze and advise DOR on the performance and effectiveness of California’s VR program, a function of the SRC required by federal law. The SRC’s current list of policy questions under consideration are summarized below:

Intersection of Retention Plans and Order of Selection: Per federal regulations, State VR agencies may elect to serve individuals at risk of losing employment outside the order of selection and provide VR services needed for the individual to maintain employment.

* If DOR implements an Order of Selection with closed categories, would DOR support the provision of VR services to individuals who reapply and require services to maintain/retain employment even though the individual would otherwise be assigned to a waiting list?

SRC Recommendation Review: Which SRC recommendations from the past five years should the SRC revisit and request updates on?

Gun Violence: The California Health and Human Services Agency is calling upon Departments, including DOR, to recognize gun violence as a public health and public safety crisis, and for Departments to do more to act on this issue.

* How can DOR contribute to the strategies and actions that address this crisis?
* What are examples of those strategies?

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI): The California Health and Human Services Agency is leading many initiatives to improve DEI and as a result, DOR will likely be asked to develop an equity action plan.

* How can inequities in DOR’s programs and services be identified, and what methodologies can be used to address these equity gaps,
* What communities are unserved and underserved, and how can DOR effectively reach them, and,
* What methods and models should DOR look to and consider to address these inequities?

Independent Living and Traumatic Brain Injury Programs:

* How can DOR provide coordinated “no wrong door” services to address the whole person whether they enter the systems through the VR or independent living programs?
* How can DOR improve employment services and outcomes for individuals with traumatic brain injuries (TBIs)?
* How can TBI be more openly included in discussions, both at DOR and with community-based organizations?
* How can TBI stigma be reduced?

Benefits Planning and Employment:

* How can DOR increase awareness for consumers about available benefits?
* There is a need to include vocational rehabilitation and the benefits of employment when community supports are being discussed. Where and when does employment fit into the conversation?

Student Services:

* What strategies could help DOR double the number of students receiving DOR Student Services?
* How is DOR going to ensure that youth with disabilities leave high school with either 1) a family sustaining wage, or 2) enrolled in VR services?

Budget Change Proposal (BCP) Concepts

* If DOR was going to make a budget ask, what should that ask be, and why? Requests should be new initiatives, not a request to do more of the same. The DEI analysis requirements in Executive Order N-16-22 should be considered when developing BCP concepts.

Legislative Policy Change: If DOR had an opportunity to make a legislative policy change, what would that change be, and why should DOR ask for that change?

Information and Data Analysis: What can the data and trends from the Consumer Satisfaction Survey, fair hearing and mediation decision trends, and Comprehensive Statewide Assessment tell us about the impact of DOR’s programs and the opportunity to improve service delivery?

Program Development

* Before developing a new initiative or program what are the core, guiding principles that need to be identified and established?
* What are some of the core principles that should guide efforts to integrate health and human services programs?
* What systems and policies are outdated and need to be modernized? Or instead, do we need to let go of them?

**Attachments**

[DOR Waitlist and Post-Employment Services Data](#_DOR_Waitlist_and)

[Summary of SRC Recommendations from 2015 – 2022](#_Summary_of_SRC)

## DOR Waitlist and Post-Employment Services Data

**DOR Waitlist Summary**

*Source: DOR Caseload Dashboards as of November 14, 2022*

| **End of State Fiscal Year (SFY)** | **Number of DOR Consumers on the Waitlist** |
| --- | --- |
| SFY 2018 – 19  | 38 |
| SFY 2019 – 20  | 22 |
| SFY 2020 - 21 | 0 |

**DOR Post-Employment Services Data**

*Source: DOR Report #AH22-057, received November 9, 2022*

1. As of October 1, 2022, the number of consumers currently receiving post-employment services:
* There are only 17 consumers in PES status and receiving services as of October 1, 2022.
* As of November 9, 2022, there is only 1 consumer who is currently PES status and receiving services.
1. Historical data on the number of DOR consumers receiving post-employment services, by year from 2021 – 2017:

| **State Fiscal Year (SFY) Authorization Begin Date** | **Number of Consumers Receiving Post-Employment Services** |
| --- | --- |
| SFY 2017-2018 | 228 |
| SFY 2018-2019 | 189 |
| SFY 2019-2020 | 182 |
| SFY 2020-2021 | 138 |
| SFY 2021-2022 | 140 |

1. Average cost of post-employment services by year from 2021 – 2017:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **State Fiscal Year (SFY) Authorization Begin Date** | **Average Total** |
| SFY 2017-2018 | $443.50 |
| SFY 2018-2019 | $483.55 |
| SFY 2019-2020 | $398.74 |
| SFY 2020-2021 | $394.93 |
| SFY 2021-2022 | $501.08 |

1. Average length of time it takes consumers to receive post-employment services by year from 2021 – 2017:

| **State Fiscal Year (SFY) Authorization Begin Date** | **Average Number of Days to Receive Post-Employment Services** |
| --- | --- |
| SFY 2017-2018 | 159.3 |
| SFY 2018-2019 | 256.7 |
| SFY 2019-2020 | 187.9 |
| SFY 2020-2021 | 263.8 |
| SFY 2021-2022 | 184.2 |

*Calculation: Authorization begin date to post-employment services start date*

1. Trend analysis: what are the top reasons why consumers who are employed come back to DOR to seek post-employment services?

| **State Fiscal Year (SFY) Post-Employment Services Closure Date** | **Advance Employment** | **Maintain Employment** | **Regain Employment** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| SFY 2017-2018 | 18 | 235 | 37 |
| SFY 2018-2019 | 13 | 185 | 20 |
| SFY 2019-2020 | 14 | 169 | 22 |
| SFY 2020-2021 | 9 | 121 | 13 |
| SFY 2021-2022 | 14 | 157 | 12 |

1. Trend analysis: what are the most frequently requested post-employment services?

| **Service Category** | **SFY 2017-18** | **SFY 2018-19** | **SFY 2019-20** | **SFY 2020-21** | **SFY 2021-22** |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Assistive Technology Assessments/Evaluations | 9 | 4 | 2 | 3 | 6 |
| Assistive Technology Devices | 26 | 22 | 26 | 33 | 20 |
| Assistive Technology Training | 27 | 15 | 8 | 11 | 23 |
| Books and School Supplies | 0 | 9 | 2 | 6 | 6 |
| Business / Professional Service Fees | 13 | 19 | 14 | 11 | 11 |
| Business Based Service | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Clothing | 42 | 22 | 21 | 26 | 16 |
| Concur Travel | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Cooperative Contract Services | 0 | 0 | 23 | 59 | 27 |
| Cooperative Employment Services | 37 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Dental | 0 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Durable Medical Equipment | 0 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Employment Services | 17 | 30 | 31 | 17 | 10 |
| General Medical | 12 | 5 | 8 | 4 | 6 |
| Group Job Coaching for Client | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Hearing and Speech | 22 | 10 | 12 | 11 | 10 |
| Interpreter and Notetaking Services | 10 | 15 | 6 | 1 | 8 |
| Job Coaching - Individual | 17 | 10 | 4 | 7 | 1 |
| Maintenance | 4 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 |
| Maintenance Fees/Services | 0 | 5 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Occupational Skills Training | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| On-the-Job Training / Apprenticeship | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Orientation and Mobility Services | 7 | 2 | 6 | 4 | 3 |
| Orthotics and Prosthetics | 2 | 2 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Other Goods and Services Not Coded Elsewhere | 8 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Personal Computers - General/Hardware/Software | 26 | 22 | 22 | 28 | 22 |
| Placement Equipment | 19 | 3 | 10 | 9 | 16 |
| Pre-ETS 1: Job Exploration Counseling | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Pre-ETS 2: Work-Based Learning Experiences | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Pre-ETS 3: Postsecondary Counseling | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Pre-ETS 4: Workplace Readiness Training | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| Pre-ETS 5: Self Advocacy Training | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Psychological | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Rehabilitation Technology Services | 1 | 1 | 0 | 2 | 0 |
| Short Term Supports | 18 | 17 | 15 | 14 | 18 |
| TPP Administrative Costs | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 5 |
| Training - Barrier Removal | 4 | 3 | 13 | 10 | 5 |
| Training - Business and Vocational | 9 | 12 | 11 | 5 | 7 |
| Training - College/University | 12 | 9 | 8 | 5 | 6 |
| Training - Other | 3 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 |
| Training Equipment | 3 | 1 | 2 | 4 | 3 |
| Transportation Services | 59 | 36 | 49 | 15 | 15 |
| Travel | 11 | 6 | 3 | 0 | 16 |
| Travel - Fee Based | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| Tutors | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Vehicle - Other | 4 | 0 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Vehicle Modification | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 |
| Vehicle Operation Fees | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Vision | 26 | 23 | 24 | 23 | 26 |

## Summary of SRC Recommendations from 2015 – 2022

| **Year and Number** | **SRC Recommendation**  | **DOR Response** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| 2015.1 | Provide SRC information on how many consumers attended soft skills training and how many districts participated and developed an integrated approach to provide soft skills program. | DOR provided soft skills training to 123 consumers in all 14 districts. DOR will provide soft skills training as part of VR services, and as appropriate based on need, as identified in each consumer’s Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). |
| 2015.2 | Expand engagement with businesses and ensure business engagement is disseminated throughout DOR. | DOR welcomed continued opportunities to collaborate with business on their employment needs. As DOR builds partnerships with businesses they will provide training and resources to management and staff.  |
| 2015.3 | Develop partnership agenda at District Offices to engage in regional planning and local service delivery efforts with the Workforce Boards.  | DOR is developing a partnership with the State Board at the state level to be replicated at the regional and local levels.  |
| 2015.4 | Include students with 504 Plans in engagement efforts to provide services. | Students with or eligible for 504 plans will be included in outreach efforts. |
| 2015.5 | Inform staff and consumers of the importance of Assistive Technology.  | The DOR will continue to pursue innovation(s) and advanced technology to educate and inform consumers on Assistive Technology and determine how to increase user competency. |
| 2015.6 | SRC will further evaluate the Consumer Satisfaction Survey results. | The DOR continues to make efforts to address consumer concerns and welcomes SRC recommendations to enhance and improve services for DOR consumers. |
| 2016.1 | Improve orientation process to provide consistent and accessible information of the VR process and informed choice. | DOR will engage in the following activities (1) A formal review and discussion of current district/office consumer orientation delivery protocols (2) A “Consumer Orientation Workgroup” comprised of central office and field staff will be established to develop and implement specific actions to improve the consumer orientation process statewide. |
| 2016.2  | Provide work incentive planning services during the development of the IPE.  | DOR has initially provided work incentive planning services to individuals who are in the job search process, as this support is critical to an individual at this time. DOR will explore additional ways field staff can provide work incentive planning services to consumers earlier in the rehabilitation process. |
| 2016.3 | Notify field staff, CRPs, and CAPs when Consumer Satisfactory Survey is distributed.  | When the consumer satisfaction survey is being conducted, the Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Division and the Specialized Services Division receive an email notification that contains instructions for our staff in the field offices to encourage and remind their consumers to complete the consumer satisfaction survey. For the upcoming survey distribution cycle, the memo notification will also be issued to Community Rehabilitation Program partners and the Client Assistance Program to have them as available resources to support this activity. |
| 2016.4 | Provide local labor market data to consumers during plan development and implementation.  | DOR has provided Labor Market Information (LMI) training to service delivery team staff, including employment coordinators. All team staff is provided information and access to the following resources, which provide current and on-demand LMI. This LMI is shared with consumers throughout the plan development and subsequent job search process. DOR's Workforce Development Services and Staff Development are developing online training for DOR field staff on "How to Find and Use LMI."  |
| 2016.5 | Establish networking opportunities for consumers, former consumers, and DOR staff with individuals with disabilities who are successfully employed.  | DOR Employment Division staff, including Workforce Development Services, will collaborate with DOR Independent Living and Community Access Division staff to develop a joint-divisional workgroup to analyze the feasibility of and workload requirements necessary to develop a statewide consumer formal networking protocol.At upcoming statewide district administrator meetings, the topic of “networking opportunities” will be an agenda item for the purpose of identifying current practices and encouraging and supporting local districts to work with local businesses, local Independent Living Centers, and successfully employed current and prior consumers to provide networking opportunities for DOR consumers. |
| 2016.6 | Provide training to DOR staff on procurement methods that allow consumers to make informed choices on their Assistive Technology (AT) and training providers.  | Training was provided twice in 2016 to buyers and other DOR staff on approved procurement methods to allow consumers to make informed choices about AT and services. The staff were trained on the need to also include considerations of consumer preferences, especially if they are based on consumers’ personal experiences or reliable information when selecting a vendor. |
| 2016.7 | Create formal mechanism to ensure contact is maintained between DOR and consumer in their first 90 days on job. | DOR will review current district practices related to contact with consumers during their first 90 days of employment and investigate the potential to leverage VR Team staff (i.e. employment or service coordinators) to make monthly contacts to assess consumer progress and need for additional services.  |
| 2016.8 | Provide materials and training in brand marketing to CRPs and other stakeholders as part of business engagement efforts. | DOR's Workforce Development Section (WDS) will be working with External Affairs staff on a long-term branding strategy in support of business engagement that, per SRC's recommendation, will include specific strategies with Community Rehabilitation Programs, cooperative programs, and other stakeholders and partners. |
| 2016.9 | Develop a plan to address the Reasonable Accommodation (RA) needs of youth being served under Pre-ETS. | The DOR intends to address the RA needs of students with disabilities being served under Pre-ETS through the following clearly defined plan:1. Policy guidance to DOR field staff on the provision of Pre-ETS services, including considerations for RA such as interpreters, accessible materials, and readers as allowed by RSA for potentially eligible individuals and additional accommodations and supports as an individualized VR service for eligible individuals.
2. Explore ways DOR might “fast track” the eligibility determination and plan development of students with disabilities who need reasonable accommodations to participate in Pre-ETS.
3. Staff technical training on the provision of Pre-ETS services, including considerations for RA.
4. Review with California Department of Education (CDE), the responsibility of Special Education in providing RAs that cannot be charged as Pre-ETS.
 |
| 2016.10 | Consider adopting a customer experience strategy to guide the provision of services to consumers. | DOR’s Customer Service Unit (CSU) annually provides Team Managers and District Administrators with data and trends regarding consumer complaints/concerns and customer service strategies. All districts were provided a comprehensive Customer Service Training curriculum and have provided training to district staff. The DOR’s CSU, in collaboration with DOR’s Staff Development Section, will develop a customer service training component for all staff training academies. |
| 2017.1 | Continue to improve the consumer orientation process. | DOR will review the orientation process for improvements consistent with the Core Values of ‘investing in the future through creativity, ingenuity and innovation’, and ‘continuous improvement’. We will identify improvements to better make information available to individuals who want to attend a workshop yet find it difficult to attend when offered, and to increase the opportunities to participate in a workshop.  |
| 2017.2 | Make work incentive planning services available to consumers at intake and throughout the VR process. | DOR will explore additional ways field staff can provide work incentive planning services to consumers earlier in the rehabilitation process.  |
| 2017.3 | Include all case service staff for training on LMI.  | DOR is making the online training modules available to all DOR staff members and will emphasize the module on the utilization LMI as a tool for team staff members, including the rehabilitation counselors for purposes of plan development.  |
| 2017.4 | Establish formal mentoring opportunities between consumers and former consumers who are successfully employed. | DOR welcomes the opportunity to discuss, with the SRC, any model of a formal mentoring program that the SRC suggests being considered. Among many of the discussion items are: How DOR should identify mentors; how to address privacy and safety concerns; how to involve our stakeholders in exploring a formal peer mentoring program.  |
| 2017.5 | Establish communication protocol for first 90 days of consumer’s employment. | DOR Districts currently utilize the Vocational Rehabilitation Services Delivery Team Business Specialists to contact employed consumers during their first 90 days of employment. In addition, Community Rehabilitation Providers also contact employed consumers, as appropriate.A protocol exists in the Business Specialist Guide, entitled “Job Retention.” District Administrators or their delegate will review the section to identify improvements in communication that may be made to assist the consumer in addressing any unmet accommodation needs with their employer and provide support as needed.  |
| 2017.6 | Provide ongoing disability etiquette and inclusion training to all DOR staff. | We agree that ‘disability etiquette’ is important. The DOR web page has a number of resources for our staff including a document regarding ‘disability etiquette’ and we address concerns as they come to our attention to raise awareness of perception around words and terms that may not be known to employees who do not have disabilities. The DOR Office of Civil Rights is conducting statewide training on a variety of issues entitled “Awareness, Empathy and Respect.” This training includes knowledge and sensitivity. The Disability Inclusion Advisory Committee is also developing a training module and will be recommending statewide training to begin this Spring.  |
| 2017.7  | Refocus the duty statements and section assignments of the Business Specialists to DOR’s Workforce Development Section. | The Business Specialists are a vital component of the local VRSD Teams that provide direct services to both DOR’s job seekers and local business customers. By working closely with the local staff, we believe that the Specialists are most effective. WDS will continue to provide the Specialists with assistance and resources on regional, state, and national employment information, monthly meetings to discuss challenges and opportunities and roles.  |
| 2018.1 | Post the Rehabilitation Administrative Manual to DOR external website.  | In early 2019, DOR is launching a redesigned website. We will post RAM chapters 0, 1, 7, 9, 11, 12, 15, 29, 30, 31, and 34 in the “Public Information” section on the redesigned DOR website. |
| 2018.2 | Prioritize efforts to leverage partner programs and resources to improve consumer services and outcomes. | To further advance DOR’s priority of building and leveraging partnerships, DOR is developing a team to map both existing and potential partner programs and resources. Ultimately, these efforts will assist DOR and our partners with achieving the policy objective identified in California’s Unified State Plan of “aligning, coordinating, and integrating programs and services to economize limited resources while also providing the right services to clients, based on each client’s particular and potentially unique needs so as to facilitate skills-attainment.” |
| 2018.3 | Utilize the Comprehensive Statewide Assessment (CSA) to gather information on consumers regarding effective methods to elicit feedback about their DOR experience. | DOR is currently developing the 2018-2020 CSA. Through this effort, DOR will reach out to consumers through interviews, focus groups, surveys, etc. about providing feedback on their DOR experience.  |
| 2018.4 | Ensure each consumer understands LMI. | Available to all DOR staff are online training modules that contain current information on how to utilize LMI to provide important information to consumers about their employment goal. DOR staff, including the Business Specialists, regularly receive opportunities for training on businesses’ needs and hiring practices either during monthly calls or at district and unit meetings. Additionally, DOR will launch a redesigned DOR website that will include user-friendly, current and accessible LMI available to all job seekers.  |
| 2018.5 | Rebrand individuals who receive DOR services from consumers to students, jobseekers, or workers. | Prior to moving forward with such a significant change, conducting a policy and impact study (which could be informed by focus groups) would be critical. Based on the results of the study, DOR would need to develop a communication and change management plan to ensure successful implementation. The DOR welcomes the opportunity to collaborate and have further discussions with the SRC regarding this recommendation.  |
| 2018.6 | Provide the SRC with all State Price Schedule for Assistive Technology policy documentation for review and feedback before implementing the alternative purchasing mechanism.  | Due to the limited timeframe between issuance of the SRC’s recommendation and launch of the statewide Cal-ATSD on January 1st, a comprehensive review by the full SRC of all policy documentation was not feasible. |
| 2019.1 | Display Client Assistance Program (CAP) materials in local DOR Offices. | The SRC Executive Officer will coordinate with CAP and DOR VR Employment Division representatives on next steps for distributing and displaying the materials. DOR encourages CAP to also provide materials in alternative formats.  |
| 2019.2 | Remind DOR field staff that a consumer’s case expenditures are not discussed with consumers or be considered in the provision of goods and services. | Per federal and state regulations, DOR is required to provide information related to cost of services to assist an applicant or consumer with exercising informed choice. Additionally, the DOR is required to ensure that the IPE is developed and implemented in a manner that provides the individual with the opportunity to exercise informed choice in selecting services, service providers, and methods for procuring services.  |
| 2020.1 | Work to understand causes and explore solutions related to the recruitment and retention of VR Counselors. | The challenges to the recruitment and retention efforts of VR Counselors listed in the State Leadership Accountability Act report were due to high-cost geographical locations of the VR Counselor positions, low pay differentials, and the lack of a robust candidate pool. Further, the DOR Workforce Strategic Plan used qualitative analysis and evidence from the VR Counselors’ employee exit surveys to identify low pay as the primary cause, besides retirement, why VR Counselors leave their position. VR Counselors have higher salary opportunities for comparable job duties available statewide at the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs, at universities, or within the private sector. To help attract and retain VR Counselors, DOR offers internships, student positions, generous benefits, telework, flexible work schedules, and career advancement opportunities. DOR has improved and increased workplace engagement by holding virtual all-staff meetings and added Microsoft Teams for team-based chats, collaborating, and remote meeting. DOR publishes recruitment tools on the intranet and encourages workforce planning as a standing agenda item for district management team meetings. DOR understands recruitment and retention require strategic thought and planning and will continue to monitor these efforts.  |
| 2020.2 | Consider the impact of Assembly Bill 5 (Gonzalez, Statutes of 2019, Chapter 296) Worker Status: Employees and independent contractors as it develops the 2021/22 budget. | As with all service delivery decisions, the DOR will develop a fiscal analysis of proposed approaches to ensure effective fiscal planning. |
| 2020.3 | Increase knowledge and engagement of DOR services through collaborative communication efforts with other state agencies and organizations. | Collaboration of messages and website content with like-minded agencies and organizations continues to be a large part of DOR’s communication strategy. In 2020, DOR extended its social media’s audience reach by 30% and more than 100% in post engagements (the number of times people liked, reacted, commented, or shared DOR’s social media posts). DOR collaborated with the Employment Development Department, the California Department of Aging, Listos California, the California Foundation for Independent Living Centers, the State Independent Living Council, and The Arc of California on joint social media campaigns such as the Americans with Disabilities Act 30th anniversary, National Disability Employment Awareness Month, and ongoing emergency response communication efforts. Further collaboration is planned with other entities such as the State Council on Developmental Disabilities and the California Transition Alliance.To help drive interested individuals to the DOR website, education institutions, workforce development boards, and partners provide links from their website to the DOR website. These partners include school districts, offices of education, community colleges, universities, The Anaheim Workforce Connection, Disability Benefits 101, County of Marin Health and Human Services, San Mateo County Health, Vision Aware and Choice Adaptive. Future work includes plans for DOR to increase its outreach to foster care youth and justice-involved individuals.  |
| 2020.4 | Integrate on-going mechanisms to eliminate racial, ethnic, and cultural disparities. | DOR established the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) team to develop DOR’s DEI vision, goals, and objectives for state year 2020-21. This team will work to build DOR’s internal capacity to support long term DEI efforts and develop an initial set of DEI strategies to be implemented by the DOR. DOR has supported managers’ participation in implicit bias and cultural competency trainings. Employees have united through the work of the African American and Asian Pacific Islander taskforces and established the Latinx taskforce. The majority of DOR CRPs are accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF). CARF is committed to diversity and cultural competence in all CARF activities and associations and has an eight-module webinar available to its members to support ongoing development. The DOR is collecting, analyzing, and sharing data on consumer demographics to learn more about the consumers served or who are potentially unserved or underserved. The DOR conducts a triennial comprehensive statewide needs assessment to identify unserved or underserved communities and strategies to serve them. DOR has entered into demographic data sharing agreements with the Employment Development Department and nationally with VR agencies. The DOR is contracting with San Diego State University to analyze consumer demographic data and employment outcomes. The DOR’s support of these data endeavors and diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts will further the department’s commitment to the pursuit of employment, independence, and social equity.  |
| 2021.1 | Recommends DOR materials (informational handouts to consumers, website content, staff resources and training) related to financial participation and loaned property regulations are developed with plain language | The DOR agrees with this recommendation. The DOR is required by Government Code §6219 to write each document it produces in plain, straight forward language, avoiding technical terms as much as possible, and using a coherent and easily readable style. The DOR will develop consumer informational handouts, website content, resources, and training materials related to financial participation and loaned property regulations, when approved, consistent with the requirements of Government Code §6219. The intent of the information is to ensure consumers, staff, and interested stakeholders understand how the regulations are applied, are given examples, and know who to contact for questions or concerns. The DOR will keep the SRC involved as an active partner to provide input as these products are developed.  |
| 2021.2 | The SRC recommends DOR assess the Virtual Delivery Services Project and Student Assistant & Peer Mentorship Project in terms of:* Analyzing performance outcomes of these projects
* Consideration for statewide implementation in all DOR Districts
 | The DOR appreciates the recommendation of the SRC and agrees that an evaluation to determine the efficacy of these programs is important to support the possible broad implementation of the two programs. The DOR sees the value and innovation that the two service delivery projects, Virtual Delivery Services and the Student Services and Peer Mentorship Project, have brought to the DOR Inland Empire District. Both projects ensured continuing vocational rehabilitation services and DOR Student Services to consumers and students, respectively, during the COVID-19 pandemic. Both projects are tracking utilization and impact through established performance measures including cost, goals, and outcomes. This information will help DOR analyze the extent to which the projects are achieving the intended results to inform DOR’s consideration for statewide implementation of both projects to all DOR districts. The DOR plans to evaluate and start making decisions on changes, including expansion during and through State Fiscal Year 2021-2022.  |
| 2021.3 | The SRC recommends that the VR Connections Project staff: 1. Provide meaningful opportunity for stakeholder input (including vendors, consumers, and DOR staff);
2. Respond to stakeholder input to ensure that VR Connections provides an effective and efficient platform for all users; and
3. Ensure that the VR Connections Project meets Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accessibility requirements.
 | The DOR concurs with this SRC recommendation and has initiated actions to facilitate stakeholder input throughout the VR Connections Project and deliver an effective and efficient platform for all users that meets all accessibility requirements.   In May 2021, the VR Connections Project team administered a survey to vendors, consumers, and staff to assess overall satisfaction and gather feedback on how current features can be improved. Survey results indicate overall VR Connections satisfaction was rated from 1 to 5, with “1” being least satisfied and “5” most satisfied. Initial survey results revealed a vendor satisfaction rating of 3.9 out of 5, consumer satisfaction rating was 4.2 out of 5, and staff satisfaction rating was 3.5 out of 5. In July 2021, a second set of surveys were sent to vendors, consumers, and staff to collect information for future VR Connections development including a solicitation for stakeholder participation in upcoming design sessions, with additional surveys planned throughout the life of VR Connections. As noted, in combination with the ongoing stakeholder surveys, and to inform future VR Connections features prior to final design and implementation, DOR is incorporating stakeholder feedback including through vendor and consumer participation in design sessions.Accessibility is a requirement and philosophy of DOR, including for the VR Connections Project. The VR Connections Project team ensures accessibility standards are met by adhering to California Government Code Sections 7405 and 11135, and Web Content Accessibility Guidelines. The VR Connections Project team includes the input of assistive technology (AT) users throughout the development and testing of features to confirm accessibility for all AT users. The VR Connections Project team will ensure accessibility standards continue to be met and will engage, listen, and respond to stakeholders through surveys, design review sessions, and the VRConnections@dor.ca.gov inbox.  |
| 2021.4 | Work Incentive Planning InformationThe SRC recommends DOR expand consumers’ access to Work Incentive Planning (WIP) information and services by providing WIP information and services so the consumer can make an informed choice. WIP services should be consistent throughout California in the following ways:1. Before, during and after the consumer’s individualized plan for employment is written
2. Virtually through on-line materials and a recorded video that provides an overview of work incentive information and explanation of DOR WIP services. (Materials and video must meet website accessibility requirements)
3. Provide WIP information to family members of consumers (who may be impacted)
 | The DOR appreciates the SRC’s recommendations to expand consumers’ access to DOR’s WIP information and services. Currently, DOR Districts provide this service to Potentially Eligible (PE) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) consumers receiving Supplemental Security Income and/or Social Security Disability Insurance. PE consumers receive DOR WIP services either in a group setting to learn financial literacy skills or on an individual basis if they are planning for or participating in paid work experience as part of their DOR Student Services. VR consumers receive DOR WIP services either in Service-J status, Employed status or Service status or in their final quarter or semester of training. Some benefits planning services may also be provided during other stages of the VR process through the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Programs sponsored by Social Security.DOR staff will examine currently provided WIP services and assess whether resources, including staff resources, are available, can be identified, obtained or redirected to expand WIP services, including providing these services earlier in the consumer’s case. Following this examination, the DOR commits to working with the SRC regarding the development or implementation of possible changes to the provision of this important VR service.Regarding the SRC’s recommendation on providing WIP information to family members, currently, at any meeting with DOR staff, including meetings with Work Incentive Planners, all PE and VR consumers have the right to include family members, other representatives, or advocates. The DOR will ensure that WIPs and other DOR staff know and inform participants and their families and representatives that family members can be and are encouraged to participate.With respect to online resources, DOR will review currently available online information regarding WIP services and access to and availability of that information to participants. DOR will ensure that online information is in plain-language and consumer-focused, that WIP website materials are accessible to consumers, family members, representatives, stakeholders, and partners, and provides an accurate explanation of DOR WIP services. DOR would appreciate the SRC’s sharing of resources or examples that are representative of what the SRC recommends as potential on-line materials and recorded videos that they feel provide a good overview of and delivers effective work incentive information.DOR looks forward to future conversations with the SRC on this recommendation and sharing the results of the analysis, steps that have been or will be taken, and potential next steps the DOR will take in support of the delivery of effective and timely WIP services. |
| 2022.1 | Transportation RegulationsTo address consumers’ transportation challenges, DOR should review their transportation regulations to determine what areas should be retained, modified, or removed. Areas for consideration include:* Increasing the consumer-owned vehicle usage paid amount of fifteen cents ($0.15) per mile, or at twenty cents ($0.20) for adapted vans
* Ensuring consumers can financially assume the cost of transportation before closing their record of service
* Adding ridesharing methods such as Uber or Lyft as a form of reimbursable transportation
 | The DOR thanks the SRC for the recommendation to review the transportation regulations in respect to the consumer-owned vehicle usage paid amount, consumer’s responsibility of financially assuming costs of transportation, and adding alternative modes of transportation such as ridesharing. DOR staff will analyze the feasibility and requirements necessary to update these regulations and discuss if, where, and how to implement changes, and the potential impact to consumers and DOR. DOR welcomes future discussions with the SRC about this recommendation, to include updates on the analysis and any actions the DOR will be considering or pursuing regarding regulatory and or policy changes related to participant transportation. DOR appreciates the SRC’s partnership and is looking forward to these future conversations. |
| 2022.2 | Working with Local Education Agencies to Increase Awareness of DOR ServicesIssueInformation on DOR services to students with disabilities should be shared with all teachers, not only teachers in Special Education. There are students with disabilities that may not qualify for Special Education, such as those with 504 plans, that could potentially utilize DOR services. RecommendationTo increase awareness that all students with disabilities, including those without an Individualized Education Program, are eligible for vocational services, the DOR should partner with local education agencies to increase awareness and information to teachers, administration, counselors, parents, and students.StrategyIncluding additional details about DOR Student Services in secondary transition planning handbooks and resources may be an effective strategy to increase awareness. Examples of these resources include the California Transition Alliance Handbook, the Individualized Education Program template, the universal referral form, and the California Department of Education website. | The DOR appreciates the SRC’s recommendation and strongly agrees that communication, awareness, and outreach is an essential component of ensuring that all students who can benefit from DOR Student Services are aware of - and can effectively access - these services. The DOR conducts ongoing outreach to local education agencies and schools serving potentially eligible students with disabilities ages 16-21. Each California school district has an assigned DOR liaison. DOR Field Leadership ensures that at least annually, all DOR school district liaisons reach out to their contacts which include, but are not limited to superintendents, special education directors, program coordinators, principals, and community college Disabled Student Program directors. The communication from DOR includes information about the pre-employment transition services that DOR offers to students with an identified disability, with or without an Individualized Education Program (IPE) or 504 plan. DOR school district liaisons provide their contact information and offer to meet with the school contact to answer questions, provide additional information, and to present to students, parents, teachers, and staff. In addition, DOR leadership and staff regularly engage with other partners to increase awareness about DOR Student Services. These include agencies who work with youth in foster care, workforce development boards, local partnership agreement partners, regional centers, and other stakeholders who can share information within their own networks. The DOR welcomes collaboration with the California Transition Alliance and will request that additional information on DOR Student Services be incorporated into their Transition Planning: The Basics handbook. The DOR will connect with the SRC’s California Department of Education (CDE) representative to discuss next steps for adding more information on DOR Student Services to the IPE template, the universal referral form, and the CDE website. DOR plans to significantly increase the number of youth who receive DOR Student Services by increasing outreach efforts, scaling up existing initiatives, and pursuing cross-system collaboration opportunities. DOR’s vision is that all youth with disabilities leave high school with either a family sustaining wage, are actively engaged in post-secondary education or training, or are receiving employment services through DOR’s VR program. |
| 2022.3 | Expanding Partnerships between Vocational Rehabilitation and Behavioral Health AgenciesIssueLocal behavioral health agencies could benefit from a state level partnership model like the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint. A formalized process (example: local partnership agreements) could help enhance services and increase opportunities for employment for individuals with behavioral health disabilities. RecommendationTo increase and sustain successful employment outcomes for individuals with mental illness, the SRC recommends that DOR develop a blueprint that:1. Identifies barriers, challenges, and successful programs;
2. Identifies the key stakeholders and leaders on the state and local level; and,
3. Increases communication, resources and training for agencies and organizations.
 | The DOR appreciates the SRC’s recommendation and agrees with the need to increase and sustain successful employment outcomes for individuals with behavioral health disabilities. There are initiatives underway that when made public, will align with the intent of the SRC’s recommendation. The DOR looks forward to sharing information with the SRC when these initiatives become public.  |