**Questions from the SRC regarding DOR staffing**

*For review during the May 8, 2025 SRC Policy Committee Meeting*

What are the internal and external barriers to attracting and retaining DOR field staff, particularly VR Counselors?

How do staffing shortages impact the ability of DOR to provide quality services and good customer service?

* What is the impact of staffing shortages across different regions in California?
* Receive an update on counselor salaries, vacancies, staffing shortages and impacts in high cost-of-living areas. The relatively low salaries for DOR Counselors likely contributes to the difficulty of attracting and retaining qualified personnel.

Questions regarding telework:

* Could increasing virtual services help alleviate the counselor staffing shortage?
* Does working in the office have a financial burden on DOR staff?
* Does working in the office present physical and access barriers for DOR staff?
* Suggestion to increase telework in areas with high vacancy rates to mitigate staffing shortages.
* Suggestion to allow for increased remote work in areas where employees are sector-based.
* Suggestion to allow for increased remote work when a particular vacancy threshold in a region has been reached.

Questions regarding recruitment:

* Does DOR recruit by reaching out to VR Counseling programs at colleges and universities?
* What incentives are available to encourage people to pursue degrees in VR Counseling?
* Promote the mission of VR by conducting more outreach and highlighting consumer and VR Counselor success stories.
* Review Rehabilitation Services Administration technical assistance circulars for ideas.
* Suggestion to increase the pool of candidates - post DOR Counselor jobs as available statewide, and then the incumbent can work from the DOR office that is located closest to them. Hire DOR Counselors in any location in California to provide services statewide.
* Is there a shortage of counselors for DOR consumers who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing? How can this be alleviated?

What support and resources are available to VR Counselors who may be feeling overwhelmed?

Suggestion to streamline administrative processes and improve service delivery through technology. Utilize AI and automation for routine approvals, such as transportation reimbursements and financial aid verification, could alleviate the burden on counselors. Many consumers struggle with digital literacy, limiting their ability to use existing online portals effectively. The development of training programs could improve consumers’ ability to navigate digital systems and upload required documentation.

Suggestion to create a virtual hub for certain services to assist in certain job functions to relieve some issues (*suggested by a member of the public).*