

ANNUAL REPORT

MICHAEL HEIMBAUGH

“My advice would be to keep putting yourself out there and not to let fear of rejection hold you back. Interacting with the world differently from others doesn’t make you any less deserving of a fulfilling career. It just means the path to get there might be a little more challenging, but that’s what makes it worth doing.” – Michael

Through On-the-Job Training, an OVR program that offers wage reimbursement to employers who hire job seekers referred by OVR, our Harrisburg Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRs) office helped Michael start his career as the Programs Manager at Newport Public Library. What he likes best about his job is being able “to connect with people on a personal level. Whether I’m helping people find new books or hosting preschool story time, I always welcome the opportunity to talk to patrons [to] get to know them a little better and help them out any way I can.”

Congrats Michael! Keep up the great work.

Staff Shoutouts!

Kathryn Hill, VR Counselor, and Patrick Kane, VR Supervisor

Since starting with Newport Public Library, Michael has implemented their Summer Reading Program, as well as planned crafts, games and activities for events throughout the summer. He has also revived the library’s Pre-K Storytime Program. His employer shared that his “creativity, enthusiasm and compassion make him a valuable asset to our organization.”

What has contributed to his success? Michael shared, “I’ve had so much help and support throughout my life from my parents, family members, teachers and therapists in terms of developing social skills and self-advocacy, as well as learning to work with my ASD, anxiety and depression. As I reflect on my past and current struggles, I also think it’s important to acknowledge my own resilience and courage in facing these difficult challenges. I’m a lot braver than even I often realize.”



Michael and Perry County Library Director Jeanne Heichler pause for a photo in front of shelves of library books.

LUKE LEIBY

“Pursue opportunities in environments that allow you to be the best version of you. Success isn’t about doing everything on your own; it’s about knowing when to seek guidance and support from those around you.” – Luke

Luke began working with our Harrisburg Bureau of Blindness & Visual Services (BBVS) office when he was eight years old. At 15, he started vocational rehabilitation services to help prepare for success in college and work. In high school, he attended many of OVR’s college-prep programs, including Project PAS: Promoting Academic Success and our Summer Academy for Students who are Blind or Visually Impaired.

After graduation, Luke went to Rider University to pursue a degree as a music director. He later changed his major to computer programming and transferred to the University of Pittsburgh.



Luke and service dog Grenadine smile for a photo outdoors.

College wasn’t without its challenges, and Luke had to overcome many barriers. Luke’s VR Counselor encouraged him to not give up, and BBVS helped him with the assistive technology he needed, including JAWS and a Notetaker. BBVS staff also provided Orientation & Mobility instruction so Luke could travel independently. His hard work and perseverance paid off, and, in August of 2022, Luke graduated with honors from the University of Pittsburgh.

In 2018, while in college, Luke was hired as an intern at Penn-DOT through the OVR & Office of Administration State Employment Summer Internship Program. One of the projects he worked on as an intern was developing an Amazon Alexa Skill for citizens to report problems with traffic lights. In 2019, he accepted an opportunity through OVR to work as an intern at Deloitte. The Center for Independent Living of Central PA partnered with us to provide transportation for Luke to commute to and from work since there were no bus stops within safe walking distance. It was this internship at Deloitte that helped Luke realize he had chosen the right career path as a computer programmer.

After graduating from the University of Pittsburgh, Luke worked for Deloitte and then transferred to Prime Access Consulting (PAC) where he is now a Junior Software Developer. What he loves about his career at PAC is “knowing that the work I do has real-world effects on the lives of those with disabilities. I contribute to developing software that enables folks to interact with public spaces like museums, universities, etc. Our mantra is ‘it is that environments are disabling, not that people are disabled.’”

Congrats Luke on all your success!

Staff Shoutouts! Freda Roseborough and Justin Christopher, VR Counselors; Jessica Hanula, VR Specialist; Ruth Lotz, Assistant District Administrator; John Lockard and James Joyce, Orientation & Mobility Instructors; and J-nae Kettoman, Clerical Assistant 3

TANARA JONES



From left to right, Timothy Flynn, Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor; Tanara; Cybill Laughery, Palmiero Toyota Mobility Finance Director; and Timothy Brant, Brant's Driving School Certified Driver Rehabilitation Specialist, smile for a photo in front of Tanara's modified van.

Tanara, who happens to have Limb Girdle Muscular Dystrophy, has been a wheelchair user since 2007. With our Erie BVRs office's assistance, she was able to secure employment at Palmiero Toyota and the independent and reliable transportation she needed to commute to and from work.

Palmiero Toyota brought Tanara on board as an Administrative Assistant/ Receptionist through OVR's On-the-Job Training program, a program that offers wage reimbursement to employers who hire job seekers referred by OVR. Tanara shared that she enjoys her job at Palmiero Toyota, and what she likes best is the people she works with. She has recently increased her hours and is being cross trained in other administrative duties, which has been both challenging and rewarding.

When Tanara's adapted vehicle needed replaced, Palmiero Toyota and Toyota Corporation donated a Toyota Sienna van to her and OVR assisted with the vehicle modifications and assistive technology for the van, as well as adaptive technology driver's training.

Tanara shared that working with OVR has been a "life changing experience" and that it helped her reach her highest personal and vocational goals. Her challenge and encouragement to others with disabilities who may feel like they cannot work is to make contact with their local OVR office and start working with a VR Counselor today!









Congrats Tanara on all your success!



Tanara smiles for a photo while sitting in her modified van.

Staff Shoutouts! Debi Davis, VR Counselor; Tim Flynn, VR Supervisor; and Tim McNamara, Business Services/ Placement Counselor

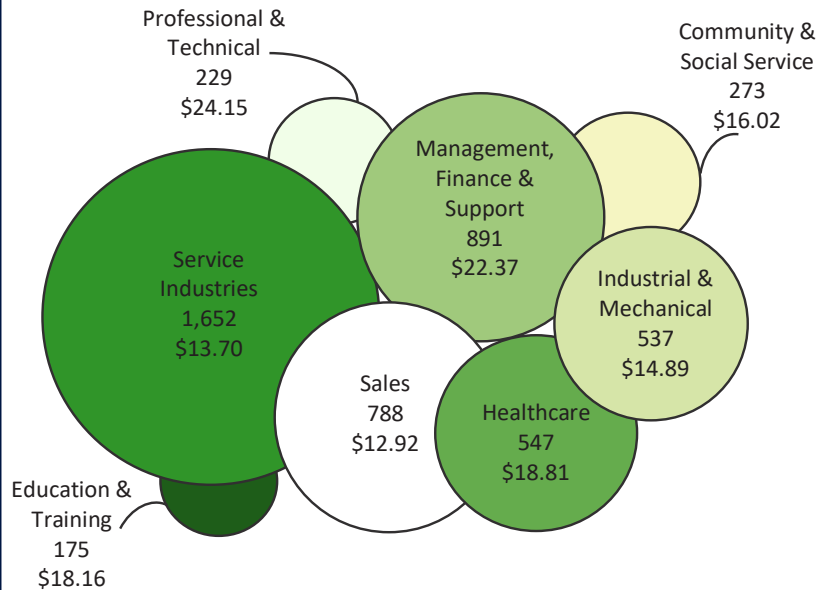
PROGRAM YEAR 2021 VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION HIGHLIGHTS¹

-  **53,721** individuals engaged with OVR ²
-  **13,762** new applicants
-  **17,237** students received Pre-Employment Transition Services ³
-  **5,374** individuals placed into employment
-  **\$15.34** average hourly wage of individuals employed
-  **\$38.97 M** estimated annual government savings ⁴
-  **\$9,116** average per-person cost of services for an employment placement
-  **16.7 months** projected time to recover investment
-  **75%** Hiram G. Andrews Center Employment Rate ⁵



Which Occupations Do Our OVR Customers Work In?

Placements and Average Hourly Wage Per Sector



- OVR Staff Attended 3,141 Individualized Education Plan Meetings.**
- OVR Provided \$18,363,237 in Financial Aid to 1,868 Students for Post-Secondary Training or Education.**
- OVR Staff Conducted 4,494 Individual Section 511 Counseling Sessions.**
- 325 Youth Gained Paid Work Experience Through "MY Work" in the Summer of 2022.**
- OVR Spent 70,789 Staff Hours Providing and Arranging Pre-Employment Transition Services.**

¹ Program Year (PY) 2021 began 7/1/2021 and ended 6/30/2022.

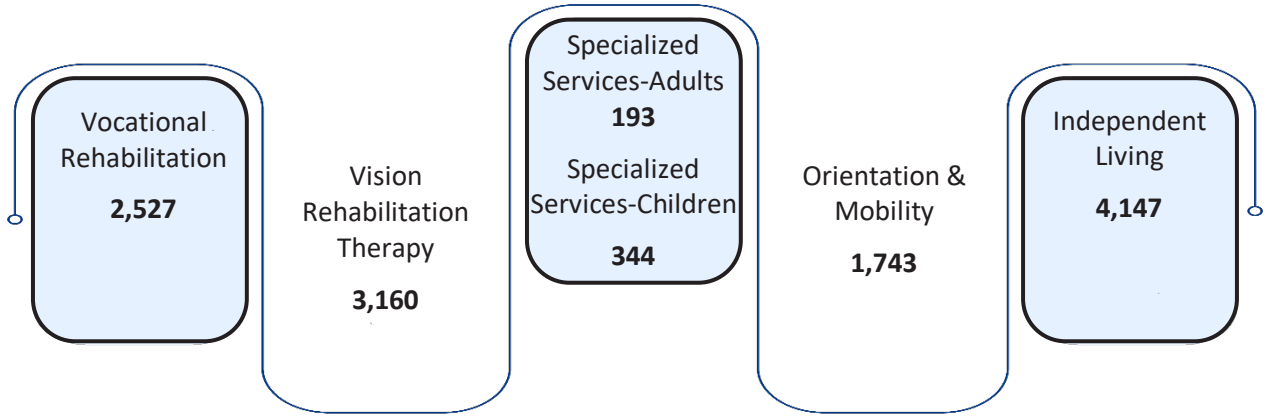
² Number of OVR customers who had an open VR case as of June 30, 2022, or had their case closed during the Program Year 2021.

³ Includes potentially eligible students and students with OVR cases, and both purchased and staff-provided services.

⁴ Based on estimated income taxes, total average annual SSA reimbursement and SSA benefits that may decrease or end due to employed individuals achieving SGA levels established by the SSA.

⁵ Six-year running average of program graduate employment.

Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS)

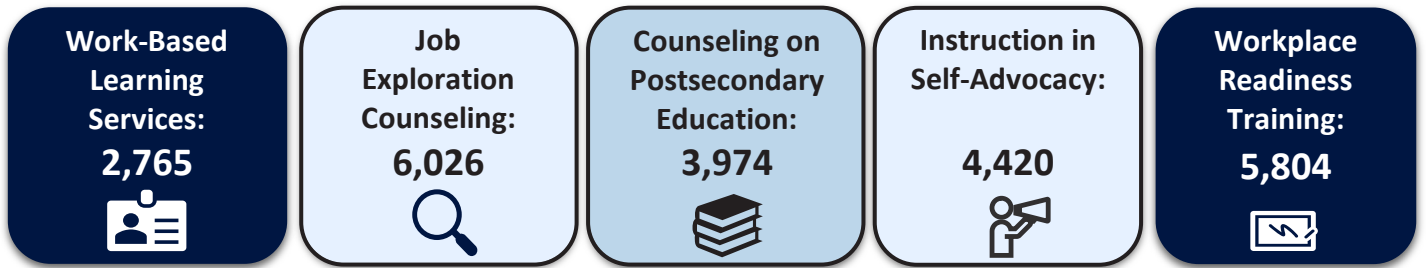


The Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

supported 19 blind vendors and monitored 315 vending and snack bar locations throughout the Commonwealth at commercial, industrial or government locations.

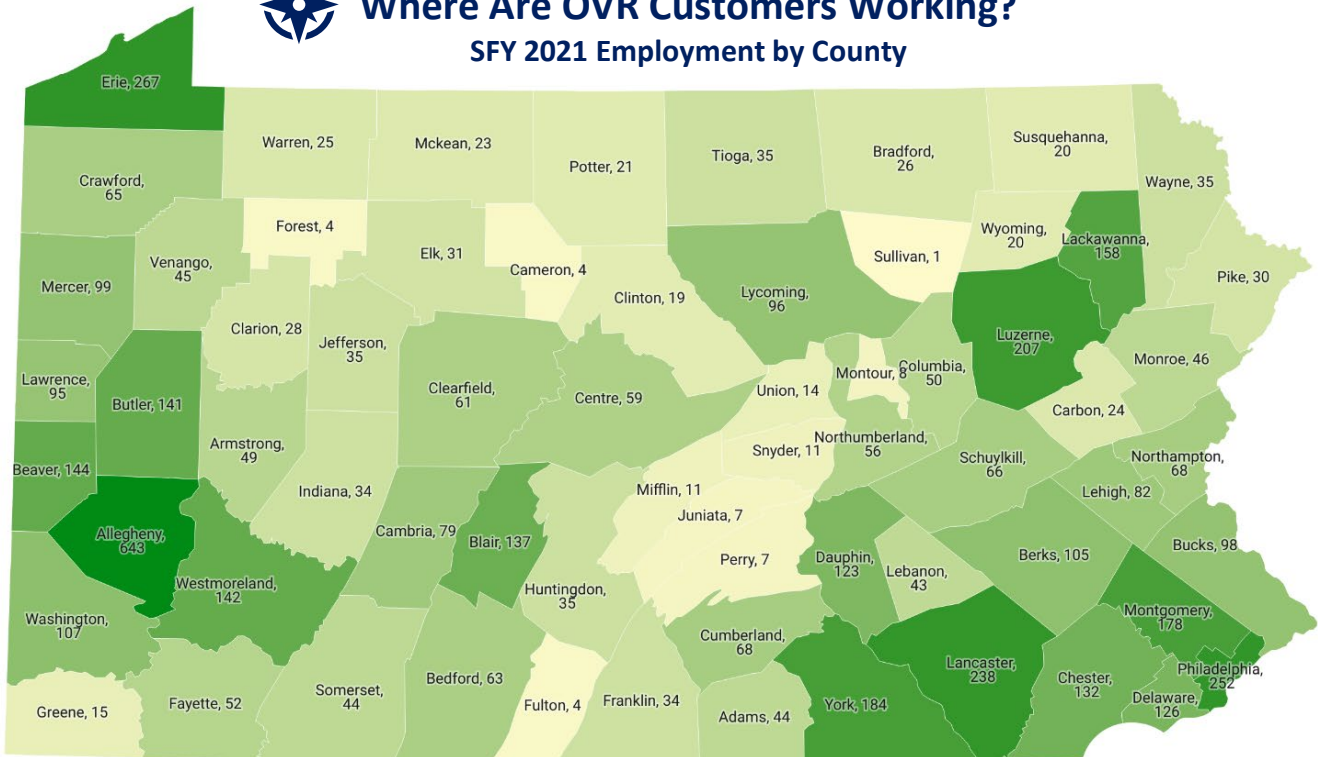


Students Who Received Pre-Employment Transition Services From OVR



Where Are OVR Customers Working?

SFY 2021 Employment by County



MATTHEW CHRISTLEY

Matthew, an individual who happens to have autism, expressive language disorder and an intellectual disability, began working with our Williamsport BVRs office in high school. Our team at Williamsport was able to connect him to job shadowing opportunities and paid work experiences, as well as job readiness and independent living skills training. He also received resume assistance, attended mock interviews and participated in job exploration.

It was in high school that Matthew became interested in welding after taking shop class. He attended OVR's Commonwealth Technical Institute at the Hiram G. Andrews Center (CTI at HGAC) for welding, graduating at the top of his class and receiving a diploma in Welding Technology in August of 2022.

While attending CTI at HGAC, the Center shared that he was a model student, polite, hardworking, worked well with others and maintained good attendance.



Matthew smiles for a photo.

Prior to graduation, Matthew worked with his OVR and CTI at HGAC VR Counselors to apply to three businesses. Within several weeks of returning home after graduation, he was working a full-time, entry-level welding position at Gehman Iron Inc. in Knoxville, PA.

Matthew enjoys the hands-on work at Gehman Iron, Inc. In November of 2022, he was awarded Employee of the Month and he also recently received a raise. Matthew's self-discipline and hard work helped him to reach his goal of becoming a welder. He said that his parents, the welding training at CTI at HGAC and his OVR VR Counselor Faylyn also helped him succeed. Matthew's advice for other individuals with disabilities is that you can accomplish anything as long as you put your mind to it.

Great work Matthew and congrats on all your success!

Staff Shoutouts! Faylyn Frost, Williamsport VR Counselor, and Galen Miller, VR Counselor at CTI at HGAC



**OVR
Directory**



OVR's website – www.dli.pa.gov/ovr



**Apply for OVR
Services**

OVR's Mission: To assist Pennsylvanians with disabilities to secure and maintain employment and independence.

Auxiliary aids and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities.

Equal Opportunity Employer/Program