

# Georgia State Rehabilitation Council *Annual Report*



# 2010

*Executive Summary*

## *Georgia State Rehabilitation Council / 2010 Annual Report*

State rehabilitation councils reflect a tradition of effective advocacy and commitment to the success of the publicly-funded VR program, a system that affords opportunities for its customers to have more choices on their journeys toward meaningful employment. The Georgia State Rehabilitation Council continued that tradition, and is pleased to present its SFY2010 annual report in support of Georgia's vocational rehabilitation program, a system that encourages people with disabilities to take an active role in shaping the services they receive.

In this difficult time of double-digit unemployment, a stagnant economy, and a still challenging vacancy rate in professional VR staff, the Georgia VR program is to be commended for its creativity and commitment in achieving success in going about its essential business: assisting people with disabilities to work and helping them to choose a path toward improved self sufficiency and increased self esteem. The SRC, too, had a meaningful year going about its essential business, and carrying out its prime responsibilities of helping to structure and implement the Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA), planning and conducting a series of four statewide public hearings, this year in partnership with the State Independent Living Council, and coordinating the client satisfaction survey.

No matter how the information was gathered, nor at what venue, what we heard reinforced the notion that the objectives we agree to focus on cannot be accomplished in one fiscal or calendar year. Rather they become the foundation upon which we build for the next year. We must renew our commitment to stay involved for the long term. We must refine our goals to help us address nagging challenges. We must increase our efforts to accomplish more with less.

A significant example of our commitment to long-range goals is one in which the Council takes great pride: each member's steadfast and quiet resolve in support of the new complex at the Cave Spring Rehabilitation Center, one of the few residential facilities in the country that focuses on young adults with sensory disabilities. The new campus will offer more than 50 students appropriate, adequate, and accessible space: dorm, classrooms, computer lab, health center, cafeteria, and an enhanced and modernized greenhouse/retail plant store. The latter will provide fertile ground for work experience training, as will such service units as food preparation, health services, and laundry, maintenance and housekeeping.

The year ahead will be a challenging one as we seek to maintain the vitality of the VR program and motivate new actions to move us closer to achieving our goals. It will be important that the VR program build on the success of the Service Integration Strategy initiated in 2009. Consolidating VR and Career Center services leads to more extensive assessments of clients early in the process, and cross training the respective staffs expands service capacity and allows exploration of creative opportunities to acquire additional resources. More sophisticated, better managed and improved internal procedures, as well as carefully-researched MIS protocols all lead to greater employment opportunities for people with disabilities and a growing number of satisfied employers.

The Council will concentrate on increasing collaboration with WIA leaders as well as local workforce investment boards, which will help extend the reach of services by allowing VR to tap into comparable benefits. We know the value of cultivating partnerships with businesses, agencies and organizations that are natural allies, from chambers of commerce to the criminal justice system, and from educational institutions to housing authorities. The emphasis on establishing mutually beneficial relationships will stimulate successful client-employer matches, and help to meet the workforce needs of businesses across the state as job vacancies are filled with qualified, competent job candidates who just happen to have a disability.

A major continued focus for 2011 will target young adults transitioning from high school to the workplace or post-secondary education. It is critical that we make a concerted effort at eliminating the black hole that many young people with disabilities fall into after completing high school. The Council will likewise bring new urgency to working with veterans and mark as a high priority crafting more effective outreach strategies and ways to assist the increasing number of wounded warriors to return successfully to the society they served to protect.

Additionally we have pinpointed a critical and overarching goal for the coming year: establishing meaningful communication flow among VR clients, business leaders and employers, disability professionals and advocates of persons with disabilities to allow for continuous feedback about the VR program, and to encourage the VR leadership to be responsive in a timely manner as it relates to best practices as well as issues. Combining current technology with personal interaction, we hope to develop pertinent data via various portals -- web based questionnaires, phone surveys, public comment sessions after the Council's quarterly meetings, and blogs -- all with an eye to elicit substantive comments while providing exceptional customer service.

We recognize that change will be a constant in the coming year, but we also know that change is dynamic. So as we continue to support VR staff to improve and expand VR services, the changes we make will lead to the effects we seek. Council members and VR professionals are true public servants who embrace abiding optimism, a service ethic that leads to substantive dialogue and thoughtful decision making, and a deep belief that a rising tide lifts all boats.

Too often society has been slow to recognize the talents and employability of those with disabilities. It is fundamental to the Council's very existence that its members focus on changing the still too commonly held belief that disability equals inability. To that end, we will remain dedicated to be a voice of conscience in the policymaking process to ensure that the environment we create is one where all people have the opportunity to succeed.

*Numbers do not define the essence of Georgia's vocational rehabilitation program, but they do help paint a picture of its clients. . . . of the people who are served with the resources allotted. Most importantly, each number represents an individual with a disability on a personal path of achievement. These three are as typical as they are unique.*



**Perla Rodriguez** was referred to Vocational Rehabilitation by the Special Education department at East Hall High School in Gainesville where she was served for academic and mental health issues. Her self-esteem and self-concept were low, she felt worthless and wondered if she would ever have a job. Perla was one of many students nominated for the first Project Search group in Hall County, where the Northeast Georgia Medical Center is the actual work site. She was one of seven students selected to participate.

Interns, as they are called when on hospital rotation, are not given preferential treatment; they are expected to present a professional appearance and demeanor at all times. Perla was in immediate high demand for many reasons; not only is she bilingual in Spanish and English, she exhibited a solid work ethic, excellent attendance a willingness to try new tasks, and the ability to get along with her co-workers.

Northeast Georgia Medical Center had not worked with students previously. In fact, VR had worked for quite some time to assist individuals with disabilities to become hired there. Yet Perla did such outstanding work that a job was created for her. As a Patient Tech, she takes patients' blood pressure and transports them to various hospital departments. She earns a very competitive wage and is now part of the American work force, pays taxes like millions of others, and contributes back to society. Most importantly, Perla doesn't have just a job -- she has a career.



**Scott Harris** is an intelligent and friendly individual who resides in Nashville, GA; he is also a T-4 paraplegic with no use of his lower extremities. Scott sought and received VR services from the Tifton office where the rehabilitation job readiness specialist on his VR team assessed his skills and interests using tools such as CAPS, ERA and the O\*Net Interest Profiler to help Scott determine a work goal. Job readiness training included resume development, learning to fill out job applications and assistance with interview skills. Since a vocational evaluation supported Scott's interest to work as a customer service clerk, the rehabilitation employment specialist identified an opening for a cashier position at ALCO, a local department store.

The ALCO manager found Scott to be a "people" person with a positive attitude and was willing to hire him, but he was concerned about the accessibility to the cash register since Scott uses a wheelchair. That's when the assistive technology work team got involved to provide the necessary job site accommodations, which included identifying a surplus power chair with an adjustable height seat and custom fabricating components to make the cash register accessible and ergonomically safe for Scott to use.

Scott has been successfully employed at ALCO since April 2009 and he is looking forward to working additional hours. Local management commended VR for its assistance and says that Scott has been a wonderful employee -- customers love him and store traffic has significantly improved since he was hired. One final note: ALCO's southeastern district manager expressed his interest to have the VR rehabilitation engineer adapt cash registers in other stores in Georgia so that the company may be able hire more VR clients.



**Linda Morris** had endured a previous job loss specifically because she has bilateral hearing loss. So when she was hired by AFLAC as a Customer Specialist I, and even though she notified the AFLAC trainer of her hearing loss, she felt anxious since the position required her to be on the phone all day. In short order, the company contacted VR and worked diligently with the VR staff to assist Linda.

The main problem seemed to be that using the headset designed specifically for AFLAC's call center did not allow Linda to hear customers clearly enough to collect critical information. Even the amplified headset AFLAC bought for Linda to try could not be used effectively with her hearing aids, which had deep ear molds.

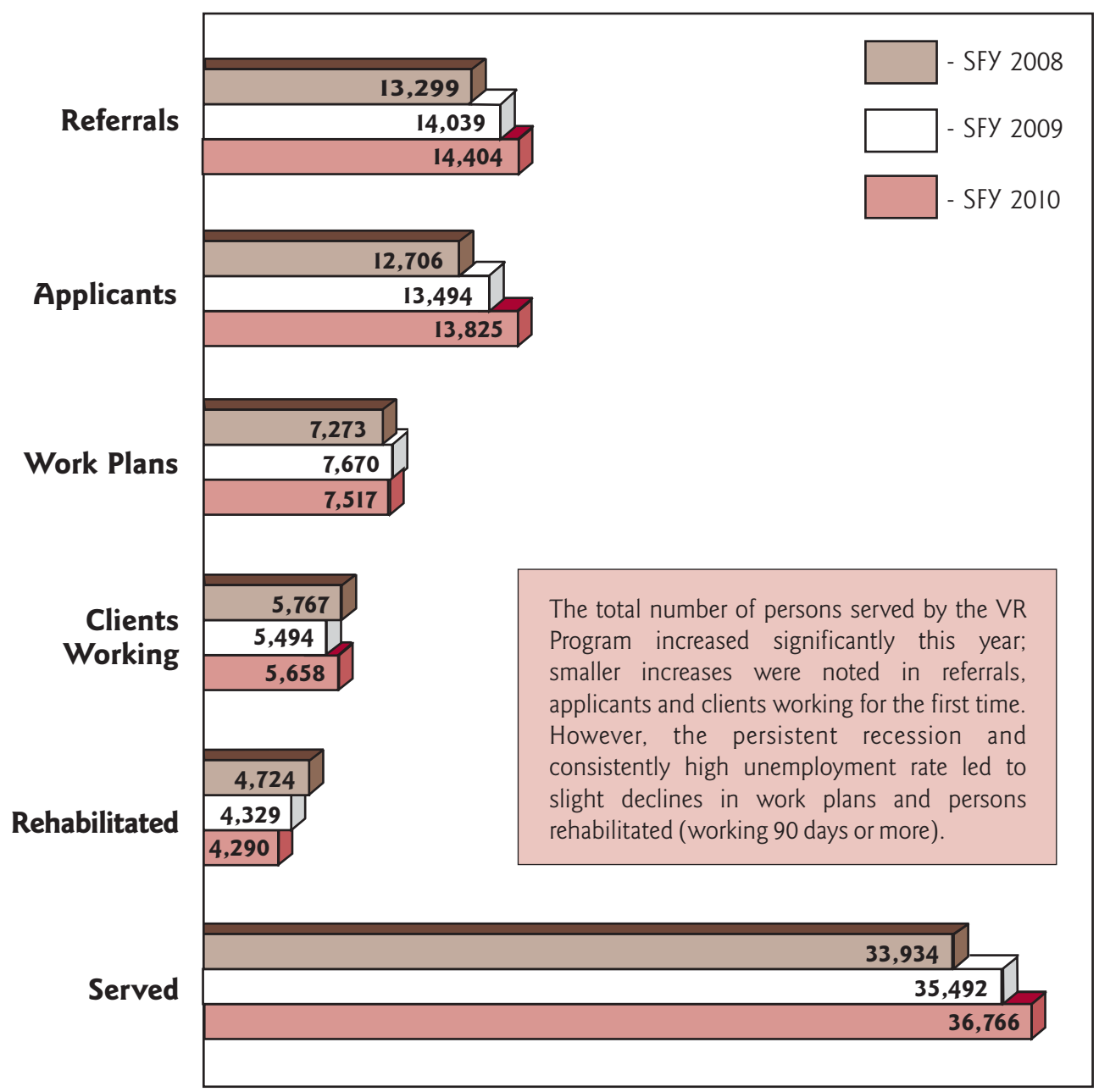
Enter the assistive work technology team to observe and evaluate. The rehab technician collaborated with the hearing and audiology lab to modify both the ear piece of the amplified headset, and then to redevelop around the new ear piece the special ear mold that Linda needed. When all the fabrications were complete, the rehab tech met with Linda and the audiology company to align and set the ear piece to the headset properly, making sure the modified ear mold, the modified ear piece, and the headset aligned properly and comfortably in her ear. Periodic follow-up and real time observation of Linda on the job ensured that the modification was working properly, and that the accommodation was a success.

Linda was promoted to a Customer Specialist II and is currently working at the AFLAC call center; she is exceeding performance in all her job responsibilities. Additionally, VR received several new referrals because AFLAC requested assistance for other employees who also require job modifications.

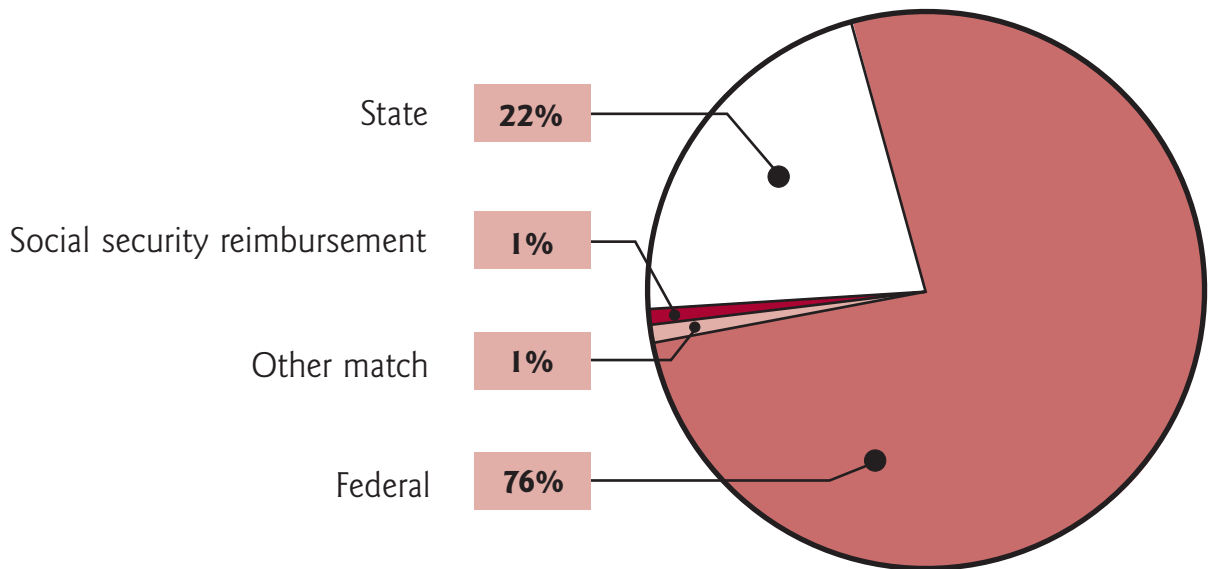
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# VR Program Service Trends

(SFY 2008 - SFY 2010)

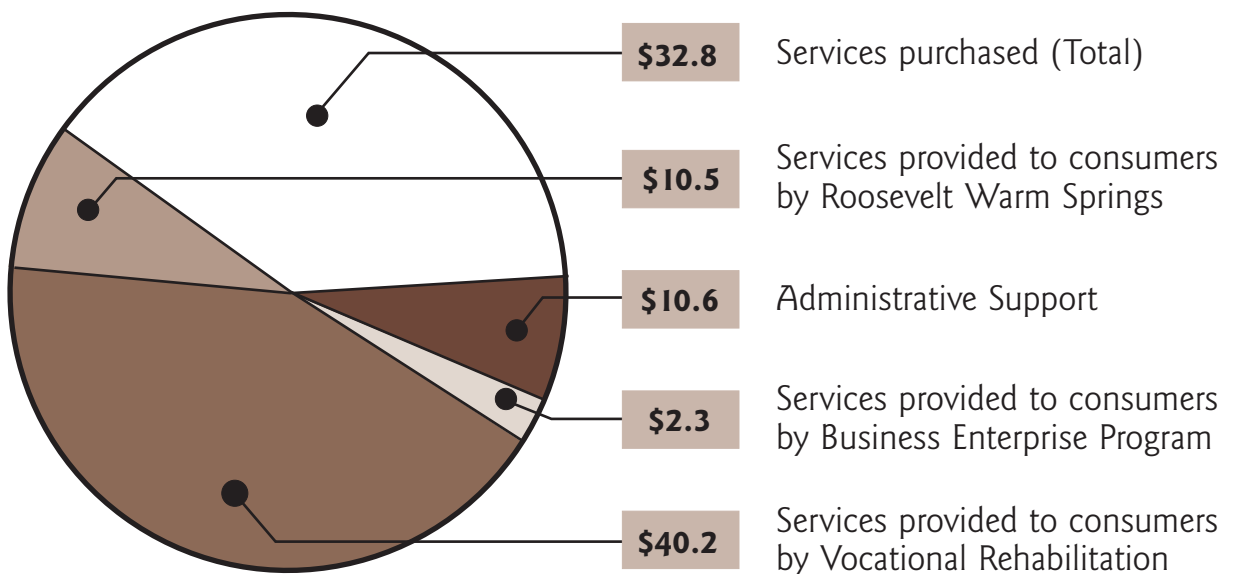


## 110 Program Funding Sources (SFY 2010)



## 110 Program Expenditures (SFY 2010)

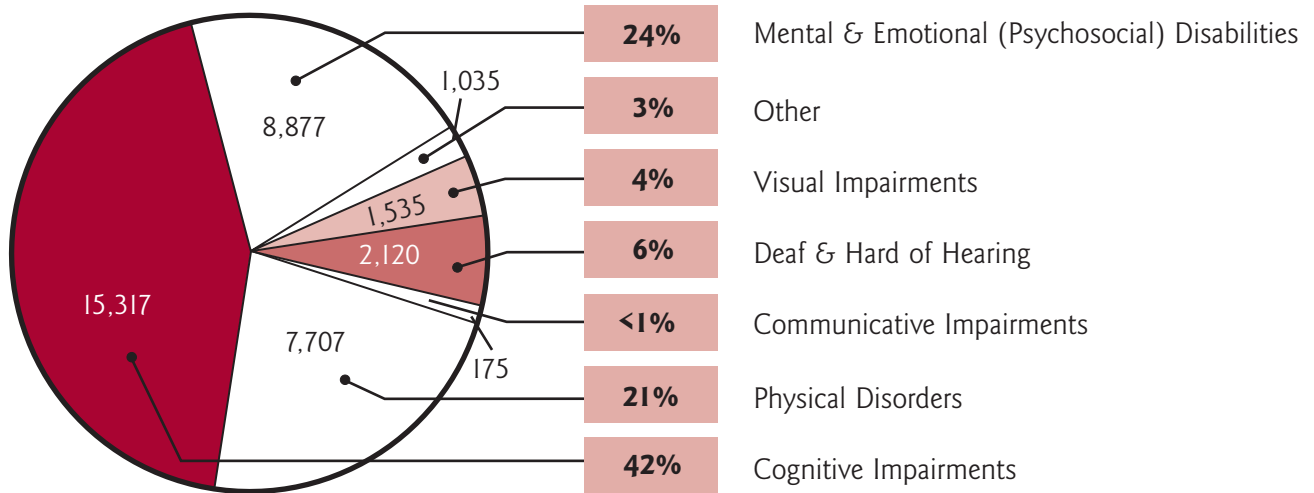
(In millions)



## Total Clients Served - By Disability Category

(SFY 2010)

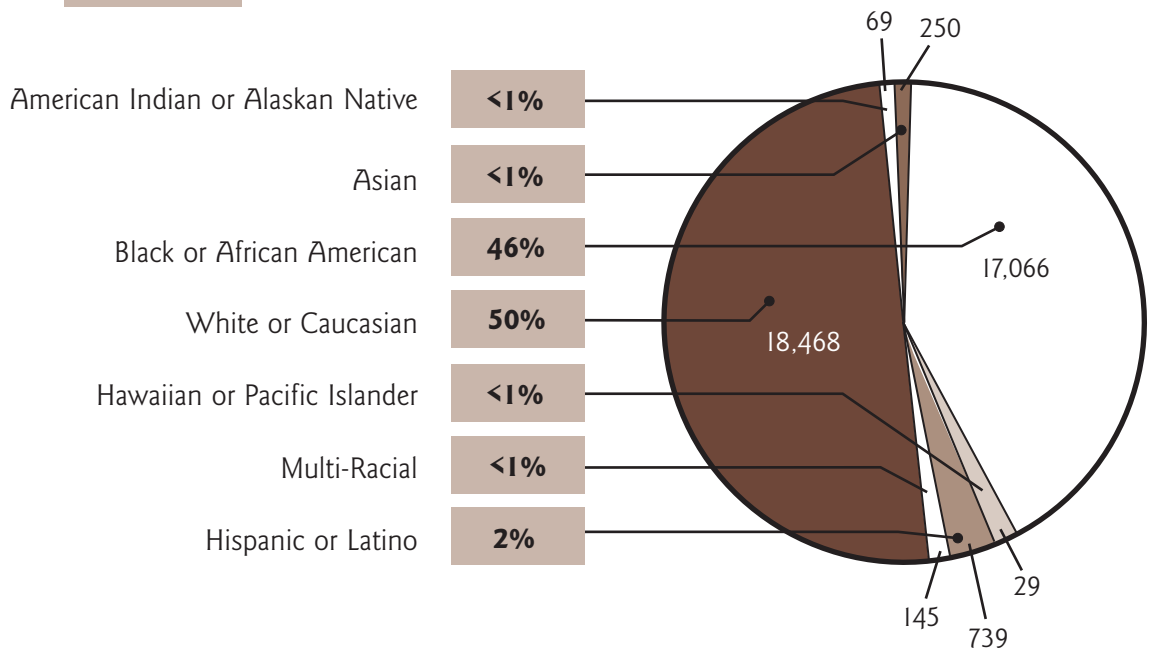
**Total=**  
36,766  
100%



**Total=**  
36,766  
100%

## Total Clients Served - Race/Ethnicity

(SFY 2010)



## Referral Sources for New Referrals (SFY 2010)

<b>Educational Institutions (Elementary/Secondary)</b>	3,199	22%
<b>Educational Institutions (Post Secondary)</b>	496	3%
<b>Physician or other Medical Personnel or Institutions</b>	605	4%
<b>Welfare Agency (State or Local Government)</b>	475	3%
<b>Community Rehabilitation Programs</b>	1,176	8%
<b>Social Security Administration</b>	282	2%
<b>One-Stop Employment/Training Centers</b>	520	4%
<b>Self-Referral</b>	4,373	30%
<b>Other Sources</b>	3,278	23%
<b>Total</b>	14,404	100%

## Total Clients Served - Age/Gender (SFY 2010)

	Served	Percentage	Female	Female Percentage	Male	Male Percentage
<b>Under 18</b>	1,477	4%	573	2%	904	2%
<b>18 - 24</b>	16,090	44%	6,279	17%	9,811	27%
<b>25 - 30</b>	3,889	10%	1,453	4%	2,446	7%
<b>31 - 39</b>	4,283	12%	1,736	5%	2,547	7%
<b>40 - 54</b>	8,214	22%	3,725	10%	4,489	12%
<b>55 +</b>	2,803	8%	1,322	3%	1,481	4%
<b>Total</b>	36,766	100%	15,088	41%	21,678	59%

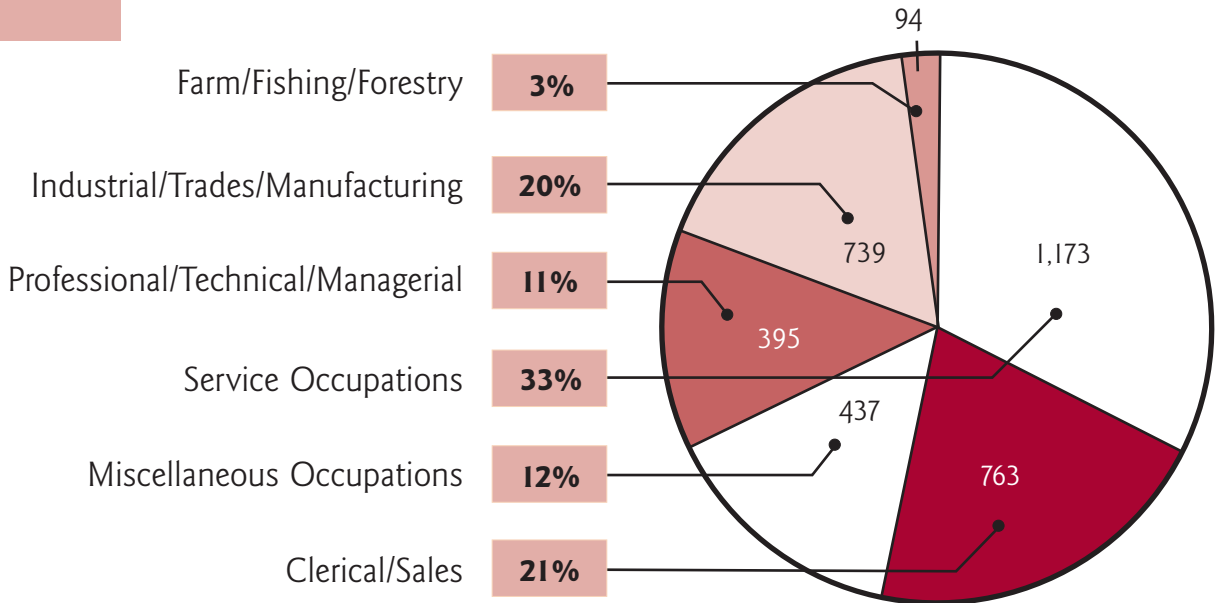
**Total=**

3,601

100%

**Client Employment by Occupation (SFY 2010)**

Closed 26/Without Supports



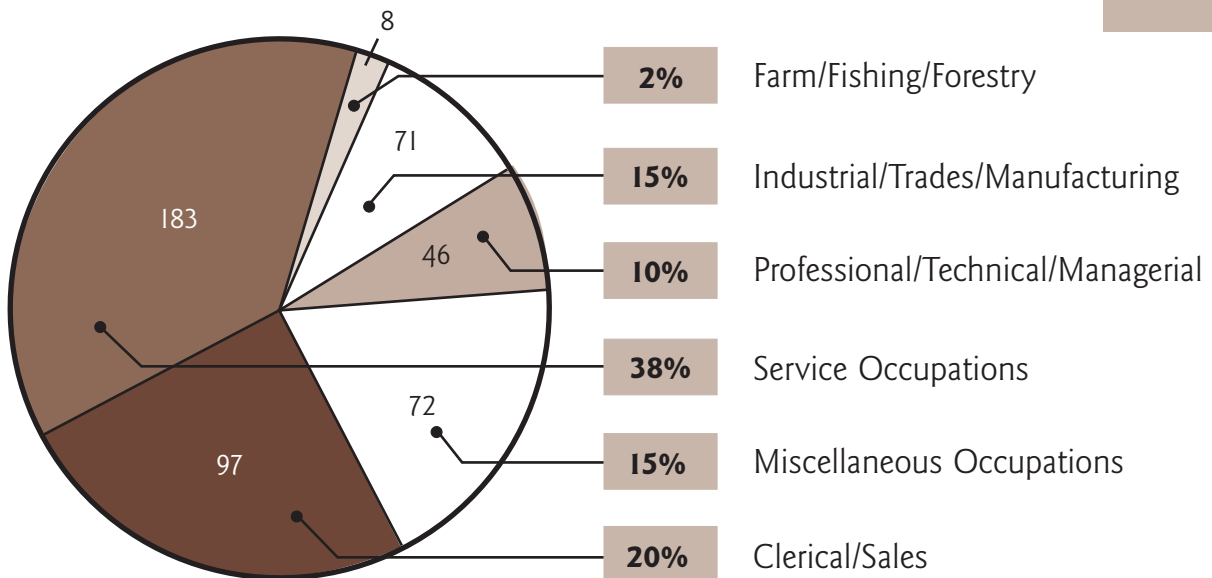
**Client Employment by Occupation (SFY 2010)**

Closed 26/With Supports

**Total=**

477

100%



The Georgia State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) reflects a cross section of the state's citizenry who have a stake in the vocational rehabilitation process, and who bring expertise to the Council from myriad perspectives. The Council works jointly with state officials to develop VR goals and priorities and review them annually. To accomplish this effort, the SRC aims to:

- Build partnerships among people and organizations that participate in realizing the mission and vision of the organization;
- Forge a spirit of trust and cooperation among all partners;
- Reach out to people with disabilities and employers throughout the state to create a true spirit of inclusion;
- Be receptive to the concerns and issues raised by people with disabilities, employers, and other concerned individuals so that its work can be a catalyst for positive change.

### *Mission*

To work in partnership with the Georgia Department of Labor (GDOL) / Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program to prepare Georgians with disabilities to enter, return to, and/or advance into competitive employment, and to promote their hiring.

### *Vision*

To advocate for VR to be the premier organization that assists people with disabilities to maximize their work potential and level of independence, and to ensure that each person with a disability will have the opportunity to guide his/her own education and career path.

### *Philosophy*

We believe all people deserve the best we have to offer; therefore, we strive to actively value:

- Meaningful Work
- Inclusion
- Informed Choice
- Self Determination
- Trust and Integrity
- Positive and Effective Change
- Purposeful Collaboration

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**GEORGIA  
DEPARTMENT OF LABOR**  
MICHAEL L. THURMOND, COMMISSIONER

### *SRC Members*

**Linda Shepard, Chairperson**  
Douglasville

**Joe Tedesco, Vice Chairperson**  
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**James Ashworth**  
Atlanta

**Dexter M. Brown**  
Atlanta

**Fred Cannon**  
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**Ashley Carraway**  
Decatur

**Anisio Correia**  
Atlanta

**Thomas W. Dennis**  
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**Michael G. Hale**  
Bogart

**Virginia C. Harris**  
Bainbridge

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Albany

**Wes Massey**  
Commerce

**B. Lu Nations-Miller, Ph.D.**  
Atlanta

**Bennie Butler Newroth**  
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**Alice Ritchhart**  
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Whigham

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Macon