

2025 ANNUAL REPORT

**KENTUCKY STATEWIDE**

**COUNCIL FOR VOCATIONAL**

**REHABILITATION**



# Table of Contents

<b>Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation</b> .....	<b>1</b>
Mission .....	1
Vision .....	1
SCVR Annual Report Requirement.....	1
Meet the SCVR .....	1
<b>Kentucky Disability Overview</b> .....	<b>3</b>
Key Points .....	3
<b>Role of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Letter from the Statewide Council Chairperson.....	5
Letter from the OVR Executive Director.....	6
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Demonstrating Growth: 2024–2025 Comparison.....	7
Career Services .....	7
Training Services .....	7
<b>SCVR Collaboration with Kentucky OVR</b> .....	<b>8</b>
2024 Consumer Satisfaction Survey Results Summary.....	8
<b>Implementing Order of Selection:</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Advancing Compliance and Service Delivery.....	10
Priority Categories Updates .....	10
Limitation to Functional Capacity Defined for Priority Category .....	11
Pre-Employment Transition Services and OOS.....	11
<b>VR Program Federal Reallotment Process</b> .....	<b>13</b>
<b>OVR Regulations</b> .....	<b>14</b>
<b>Employment First Council</b> .....	<b>15</b>
<b>Rate Study: Establishing a Foundation for Fair and Sustainable Service Rates</b> .....	<b>16</b>

<b>Advancing Service Delivery Through a New Case Management System.....</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>OVR Reorganization .....</b>	<b>18</b>
Division of Program Policy and Support .....	18
<b>Kentucky's Statewide Workforce and Talent Team .....</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) .....</b>	<b>20</b>
Pre-ETS Summit with Education Partners .....	20
Pre-ETS Work Experience Program .....	20
Student Spotlight: Charlee.....	21
Student Spotlight: Alyssa.....	21
<b>Expanding Access and Opportunity for Kentuckians Who Are Deaf-Blind .....</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Kentucky Impact Map .....</b>	<b>24</b>
Map Description .....	24
<b>FFY2025 Financial Statement .....</b>	<b>25</b>
Revenue .....	25
Expenditures by Expense Type .....	26
Expenditures by Fund Source .....	26
<b>Agency Stats for 2025 .....</b>	<b>27</b>
Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) Outcomes .....	27
Expenditures by Service Type.....	27
Demographics .....	28
Gender .....	28
Race* .....	29
Impairment.....	29
Employment Outcomes by Occupation Group.....	29
WIOA Performance Measures.....	31
Measurable Skills Gain Rate .....	31
Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit.....	31
Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit.....	31

Credential Attainment Rate.....	31
Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit .....	31
Pre-ETS Spending .....	31
Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment .....	32
Social Security Update .....	32
<b>2025 Featured Success Stories for Each Division .....</b>	<b>33</b>
Division of Field Services .....	33
Field Services Success: Tracie .....	33
Field Services Success: Donna .....	34
Division of Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center.....	35
Perkins Training Success: Kyle.....	35
Perkins Training Success: Shane.....	36
Division of Kentucky Business Enterprises .....	36
2025 Coke Scholarship Winners .....	36
Entrepreneurship – Pre-ETS.....	38
Division of Blind Services .....	38
Low-Vision Clinic.....	38
McDowell Center Success Story .....	40

# Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires that each state establishes a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) that partners and collaborates with the state's vocational rehabilitation (VR) agency regarding the delivery of services to individuals with disabilities. In Kentucky, the Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR) serves as the state's SRC. The SCVR reviews agency data, surveys and reports. It also provides input and makes recommendations to the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) to ensure the employment needs of persons with disabilities in the state are met. Pursuant to 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5), SCVR has prepared this annual report for the governor and the secretary of the U.S. Department of Education.

## Mission

The mission of the SCVR for the state of Kentucky is to analyze policies, programs and services, make recommendations and advise/partner with the agency and its stakeholders.

## Vision

The vision of this endeavor is to ensure the services, policies and programs are consumer-oriented and consumer-driven resulting in meaningful employment, self-sufficiency and independence.

## SCVR Annual Report Requirement

Under 34 CFR 361.17(h)(5), the SRC, as one of their functions, prepares and submits to the governor and secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, a federal fiscal year annual report on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the state. This report is required to be made available to the public. Additionally, this annual report will include an operating and financial report to increase fiscal transparency. It is anticipated that the revised and newly created regulations will be filed as emergency regulations to allow for immediate implementation. These updates also incorporate into state regulation the new and approved priority categories.

## Meet the SCVR

**Danielle Burton**, representing National Federation for the Blind, is the current chair of the council and has served since Aug. 16, 2022.

**Allison Johnson**, representing the state educational agency as an employee for the Kentucky Department of Education, is the current vice-chair and has served on the council since Feb. 7, 2024.

**Kelly Bass**, a vocational rehabilitation counselor from OVR, began her service on April 3, 2025.

**Johnny Collett**, representing the Kentucky Workforce Innovation Board, began his service on Feb. 7, 2024.

**Jeff Edwards**, representing the Client Assistance Program, has served on the council since April 3, 2025.

**Michael Fein**, representing the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), has served on the council since April 3, 2025.

**Jade Finley**, a graduate student who is representing as a consumer of vocational rehabilitation, has served since Feb. 7, 2024.

**Cora McNabb**, OVR ex-officio, has served on the council since July 18, 2019.

**Kellie Smith**, representing Kentucky Special Parent Involvement Network (KY-SPIN), has served on the council since Feb. 7, 2024.

**Mary Teresa Terlau**, representing Kentucky Council for the Blind, has served on the council since Aug. 16, 2022.

**Veronica Willis-Oldham**, an individual with a disability, has served on the council since April 3, 2025.

**April Thrasher**, representing business, industry and labor, was appointed Oct. 21, 2025.

**Jaye Forsythe-Seward**, representing community rehabilitation programs, was appointed Oct. 21, 2025.

**Stephen Lloyd Noble**, representing business, industry and labor, was appointed Oct. 21, 2025.

# Kentucky Disability Overview

Kentucky has one of the highest rates of disability in the country. Many Kentuckians with disabilities face barriers that make it harder to get an education, find a job and earn enough money to meet basic needs. These challenges are amplified in rural areas where resources are limited.

## Key Points

- **High Disability Rate:** Kentucky has the second-highest disability rate in the country. In some counties, more than one-third of adults have a disability.
- **Employment Challenges:** The national average of employment for workers without disabilities is 79.5% and 46.3% for workers with disabilities. Kentucky is 78.6% for non-disabled workers employed and 39.8% for disabled workers employed.
- **Education Gaps:** People with disabilities in Kentucky are far less likely to have a college degree and more likely to leave high school early.
- **Poverty and Financial Barriers:** Nearly one in four Kentuckians with disabilities live in poverty. Many rely on disability benefits and risk losing support if they earn too much.
- **Mental Health Support:** Kentucky has high mental health needs, but access to care is limited, especially in rural counties.
- **Transportation and Housing:** Limited public transportation and affordable housing options make it harder for people with disabilities to work and live independently.

## Role of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

The OVR helps Kentuckians with disabilities prepare for work, find jobs and stay employed. OVR programs help reduce reliance on public benefits and improve wages for participants, but this one agency alone cannot address the systemic issues that exist. Collaborative partnerships to address the diverse barriers can include solutions such as:

- Expand early career support for youth with disabilities
- Increase access to higher education and job training
- Improve transportation and housing options
- Strengthen mental health services
- Support employers who hire people with disabilities

We must work together to more robustly support individuals with disabilities in their pursuit of employment, benefits and increased wages for independence.

## Letter from the Statewide Council Chairperson



I would like to take this opportunity to express my thanks to all the council members who have made my time so far as chairperson a rewarding and wonderful experience. I am honored to be able to serve as your council chair and I am looking forward to seeing future work that this council will do.

This council plays a crucial role in its partnership with OVR in ensuring that Kentuckians with disabilities receive quality supports and services to become contributing members of society. Over the past year, the council has done incredible work.

We have taken steps to redefine service categories, improve field services, address accessibility concerns and ensuring that quality services are being provided to consumers.

In closing, I want to again thank the entire council on your hard work as an individual with disabilities myself, it is incredible to see a room full of individuals who all strive for the same goal of ensuring successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Danielle Burton, Chairperson, SCVR (Danielle pictured above with her dog Chestnut)

## Letter from the OVR Executive Director



As I reflect on the past year, I am very thankful for the collaborative working relationship OVR has with the State Rehabilitation Council. The council's presence and involvement with OVR through committee meetings with staff and other community stakeholders provides an invaluable and unique perspective on the provision of vocational rehabilitation services. Thank you for believing in the mission of OVR and walking alongside us on this journey.

Since 2023, Kentuckians with disabilities have turned to OVR in unprecedented numbers. In 2024, the agency received 19,197 new referrals—an increase of 2,462 from the previous year—signaling not only greater visibility, but growing trust in the essential services we provide.

This increased demand and increase in the cost of services has brought both opportunities and expected fiscal pressures. Even amid these challenges, OVR remained steadfast in its mission. In federal fiscal year (FFY) 2024, OVR assisted 4,915 individuals with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment. In 2025, that number increased nearly 15% to 5,643. This growth reflects the dedication of our staff and partners and illustrates the meaningful impact of vocational rehabilitation across the commonwealth. It also represents a predictable financial outcome: as more Kentuckians seek and receive services, the agency's financial needs naturally follow. OVR's continued success demonstrates that our services are no longer a secret, but a vital and highly utilized resource helping thousands of individuals pursue meaningful careers and greater independence. While the numbers in this report tell a story of growth in numbers, the true measure of our success lies in the lives changed through OVR services.

As we begin a new year, our priority is to assist more individuals with disabilities to achieve their employment goals. We look forward to working closely with the council and setting the goals and strategies for the VR state plan for Program Years 2027 - 2030.

Cora McNabb,

OVR Executive Director

## Executive Summary

In FFY 2025, the OVR experienced significant growth in both participation and financial investment, reflecting increased demand and expanding awareness of our services. Career Services served 1,535 (11.37%) more participants than the previous year, with expenditures rising by \$4.7 million, while Training Services added 763 (16.6%) participants and required an additional \$4.9 million in investment. The average cost per participant also rose by \$184 in Career Services and \$532 in Training Services, because of the increased cost of goods and services. These increases highlight OVR's growing visibility and impact while underscoring the importance of continued innovation, resource planning and stakeholder engagement. Comparative charts for 2024–2025 illustrate these upward trends in participation and cost per participant.

These achievements occurred despite considerable challenges, including the impending launch of a new case management system and the temporary closure of all priority categories under an Order of Selection. Even under these constraints, OVR adapted to maintain progress. With plans underway to serve individuals currently on the waitlist, the growth seen in FFY 2025 reinforces the agency's resilience and its ongoing commitment to service excellence.

## Demonstrating Growth: 2024–2025 Comparison

### Career Services

Year	Participants Served	Funds Expended	Cost per Participant
2025	15,034	\$21,673,322	\$1,441.62
2024	13,499	\$16,970,290	\$1,257.15
Change: +1,535 participants served, +\$4.7M expended, +\$184 per participant.			

### Training Services

Year	Participants Served	Funds Expended	Cost per Participant
2025	5,358	\$17,299,350	\$3,228.70
2024	4,595	\$12,391,267	\$2,696.68
Change: +763 participants served, +\$4.9M expended, +\$532 per participant.			

## SCVR Collaboration with Kentucky OVR

### 2024 Consumer Satisfaction Survey Results Summary

The 2024 Consumer Satisfaction Survey, coordinated by the Human Development Institute (HDI) at the University of Kentucky for the Kentucky OVR, gathered feedback from 1,000 consumers with cases closed in fiscal year 2024. The survey was conducted via phone (15%) and online (85%) with an overall response rate of 17%.

Respondents represented all closure categories: 72.9% closed Successful in Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE); 15.7% closed Unsuccessful after individualized plan for employment (IPE) was initiated; 6.9% closed from Acceptance Prior to IPE; and 4.5% closed from Application. The average satisfaction rating was 3.51 out of four with 88.2% rating services as good or very good. Consumers closed Successful in CIE were mostly satisfied (mean = 3.78).

Counselor and office experiences were rated positively. Over 93% agreed that offices were accessible, materials were provided in accessible formats and staff were courteous. Nearly 90% reported being able to get timely appointments while 92% agreed their counselor understood their disability. Job goal selection and understanding of rights were also well supported.

Employment outcomes showed that 91.7% of those closed in CIE were employed at the time of the survey. Overall, 94.3% of employed respondents were satisfied with their work and 86.8% with their salary. Most respondents agreed that VR services helped prepare them for employment.

Case closure results indicated 86% knew when their case was closed and 85.2% agreed closure was appropriate. Nearly 90% knew they could reapply for services and 93.4% stated they would return to OVR if needed.

For those using Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs), 80.8% were satisfied and 82.2% would recommend CRP services. Among Blind Services recipients, 70% rated McDowell Center training as good or excellent, 57% rated orientation and mobility services as excellent and 100% rated Braille services as excellent.

Open-ended comments reflected appreciation for support, requests for better follow-up, and concerns regarding communication and staff turnover. Historical data from 1997–2024 continues to show consistently higher satisfaction among consumers closed Successful in CIE.

The completed Consumer Satisfaction Survey summary with supporting charts and graphs is available on the agency website along with previous years reports.  
<https://kcc.ky.gov/Vocational-Rehabilitation/boards-and-councils/scvr/Pages/Minutes.aspx>

# **Implementing Order of Selection:**

## **Advancing Compliance and Service Delivery**

In 2025, the Kentucky OVR utilized the only budget management framework allowable for state vocational rehabilitation agencies to prevent a fiscal deficit by implementing an Order of Selection (OOS). This process is outlined in 34 C.F.R. 361.36 (c). This regulation provides guidance to the states to determine fiscal resources available to serve all eligible individuals at the beginning of a federal fiscal year or when circumstances change during a fiscal year. The agency-maintained information and communication flow with SCVR and on May 14, 2025, OVR formally implemented the OOS and closed all priority categories of service.

### **Priority Categories Updates**

In 2025, OVR took critical steps to align with federal regulations under 34 CFR 361.36, which require agencies to establish an OOS when resources are insufficient to serve all eligible individuals. During implementation, the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) identified duplicative language within the existing priority categories that described “most significantly disabled” in both the first and second categories. To ensure compliance, OVR closed all categories while collaborating with federal partners and state leadership, as well as conducting public forums prior to revising the state plan, regulations and internal policies and procedures. The updated priority categories have been approved by the RSA and will be adopted by state regulation, providing clearer, more detailed definitions that are explicitly tied to service needs and employment outcomes. The following are the updated and approved priority categories.

**Priority Category 1:** Individual with a most significant disability requires multiple vocational rehabilitation services for a period of six months or more and experiences serious limitations in four or more areas of functional capacity, in terms of an employment outcome.

**Priority Category 2:** Individual with a significant disability requires multiple vocational rehabilitation services for a period of six months or more and experiences serious limitations in three areas of functional capacity, in terms of an employment outcome.

**Priority Category 3:** Individual with a significant disability requires multiple vocational rehabilitation services for a period of six months or more and experiences serious limitations in one to two areas of functional capacity, in terms of employment outcome.

**Priority Category 4:** Individual with a disability who has been determined eligible for vocational rehabilitation services and does not meet the criteria for priority categories one, two or three.

## **Limitation to Functional Capacity Defined for Priority Category**

In the context of 34 CFR 361, functional capacity refers to an individual's abilities in specific areas as defined below. These are assessed to determine vocational need and assist with evaluating and understanding how the severity of the disability may limit an individual's ability to achieve a vocational outcome.

- **Self-Care:** The ability to perform activities of daily living to participate in training and/or work activities.
- **Work Skills:** The ability to learn and/or perform work functions.
- **Interpersonal Skills:** The ability to interact in an acceptable and mature manner with co-workers, supervisors and others to facilitate the normal flow of work activities not related to foreign language or cultural differences.
- **Communication:** The accurate and efficient transmission and, or, reception of information, either verbally or non-verbally due to physical, sensory, emotional or cognitive impairments not related to foreign language or cultural differences.
- **Mobility:** The physical, cognitive, sensory or psychological ability to move efficiently from place to place, including community, school, home and work.
- **Self-Direction:** The ability to plan, initiate, organize and carry out goal-directed activities related to job preparation and employment.
- **Work Tolerance:** The ability to carry out required physical and cognitive work tasks in an efficient and effective manner over a sustained period.

## **Pre-Employment Transition Services and OOS**

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) are mandated by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which requires VR agencies to set aside at least 15% of its federal funds for these services. The goal is to support students with disabilities in transitioning from school to postsecondary education or employment, focusing on skill development, workplace readiness and career exploration.

Pre-ETS includes five required activities: job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, counseling on postsecondary opportunities, workplace readiness training, and instruction in self-advocacy. Additionally, four coordination activities are essential, such as attending IEP meetings, collaborating with workforce boards and employers, working with schools and participating in person-centered planning when invited.

If funds remain after required services, VR agencies may implement nine authorized activities, such as developing strategies for independent living, providing training to staff, disseminating best practices and supporting partnerships to improve transition outcomes. Pre-ETS services begin once a student requests them and provides disability documentation to a VR agency.

Pre-ETS is not impacted by OOS and students may continue to be served. The services for Pre-ETS are provided through approved vendors of the state OVR.

## VR Program Federal Reallotment Process

The federal VR program's reallotment process ensures efficient use of appropriated funds by allowing the RSA to redistribute unused state grant funds to states with demonstrated needs. States unable to use their full allotment submit a Grant Reallotment Form. RSA reallocates these funds to maximize impact while ensuring compliance with federal requirements.

The process involves several steps: states identify unused funds; RSA assesses the pool of relinquished funds; the commissioner reallots funds to states able to use them; and recipient states must meet matching requirements within the same fiscal year. Maintenance of Effort (MOE) deficits are deducted from the pool to prevent agencies from benefiting from shortfalls. Reallotment is capped at the amount each state requests. If demand exceeds available funds, RSA determines the distribution method.

The purpose of this process is to maximize use of VR, Independent Living Services for Older Individuals Who are Blind (ILOIB) and State Supported Employment Services (SE) formula grants, while supporting states in need and ensuring that federal resources are fully and effectively utilized.

In 2025, the Kentucky OVR received reallotment funds in the amount of \$10 million in VR Basic Support funding, \$58,757.50 in SE funding and \$9,314 in ILOIB funding from RSA. This additional funding was necessary to address the large increase in applications as well as the increased cost of goods and services.

## OVR Regulations

In 2025, OVR, in conjunction with the SCVR, Education and Labor Cabinet leadership and legal staff thoroughly examined the existing agency regulations and determined that revisions and development were needed to fully encompass the policies and incorporate language from SB103 from the 2025 legislative session that requires an amendment to KRS 151B.195 and implement the new OOS categories. The changes strengthen oversight and accountability, establishes a clear preference for in-state services without limiting informed choice and sets comprehensive standards for service fees in alignment with procurement laws. The law also mandates regular fee reviews, allows for third-party rate studies and requires full documentation of exceptions. It is anticipated that these regulations will be filed in the coming months.

## Employment First Council

The Employment First Council continues to advance Kentucky's commitment to making competitive, integrated employment the first and preferred option for people with disabilities. In 2025, the council fulfilled its statutory responsibilities by identifying policy barriers, developing training and resources and collaborating with partners to expand employment opportunities statewide. Key activities included publishing audience-specific FAQ documents, participating in KY RETAIN's employer webinar series and delivering more than 25 presentations promoting Employment First. The council also supported Project National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) to provide training on benefits, work incentives, Medicaid and housing programs, ensuring that VR counselors, benefits specialists and providers have accurate and accessible information.

Looking ahead, the council is developing a two-part webinar on alternative funding sources to help providers diversify revenue and strengthen service delivery. Council members also played a key role in the implementation of the SE rate restructure, which established higher reimbursement rates and new accountability standards. The council remains focused on its mission, producing resources, offering training and evaluating policies to support meaningful employment and is committed to improving opportunities for Kentuckians with disabilities while strengthening the state's workforce. For a more detailed look at the Employment First Council and their activities, visit their webpage at [kcc.ky.gov/Vocational-Rehabilitation/boards-and-councils/Employment-First/](http://kcc.ky.gov/Vocational-Rehabilitation/boards-and-councils/Employment-First/)

## Rate Study: Establishing a Foundation for Fair and Sustainable Service Rates

In June 2024, OVR initiated a cost methodology study to establish fair and sustainable service rates. The contract was awarded to Public Consulting Group (PCG) through state procurement processes. PCG has conducted a comprehensive review of current services, industry standards and vendor costs.

PCG followed a four-phase process: gathering input from OVR leadership and staff, designing data collection tools and conducting interviews, engaging providers and training staff and performing quality assurance and analysis to develop recommendations. Regular communication between PCG and OVR ensured feedback and accuracy throughout the study.

The final report incorporated vendor data, peer state comparisons and national-level information from the RSA. Recommendations aligned with federal requirements (2 C.F.R. 200) and RSA standards. PCG tied service rates to allowable costs for transparency and compliance. When calculated rates fell below existing levels, PCG recommended a 'hold harmless' approach to maintain current rates until market and inflation adjustments could be applied.

In addition to rate adjustments, PCG provided programmatic recommendations to support service delivery and strengthen OVR's mission of helping individuals with disabilities achieve meaningful employment and independence.

## Advancing Service Delivery Through a New Case Management System

OVR is implementing a new case management system to improve efficiency, accuracy and communication with consumers and providers. The system is expected to enhance documentation and tracking of consumer information, authorizations, payments and reports. A vendor portal is being developed to improve communication and streamline services for providers.

Customization has required close collaboration between OVR and Geographic Solutions, the case management system vendor, to ensure the system is accessible, user-friendly and compliant with reporting standards. Rigorous testing and refinement are ongoing to support accuracy and accountability.

Implementation is scheduled for 2026, with the launch dependent on final testing. OVR is taking a careful approach to ensure the system meets all technical and regulatory requirements while supporting staff, providers and consumers in achieving employment outcomes.

# OVR Reorganization

On July 1, 2025, the General Assembly approved a minor reorganization of OVR. The reorganization officially established the existing Grants Management and System Support Branch and the Program Policy and Quality Assurance Branch within a new Division of Program Policy and Support. Additionally, the Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Branch was relocated to this division.

Due to the OOS with all priority categories closed, the branch managers of the new division report directly to the executive director until it is viable for the division director position to be filled.

The current organizational chart for OVR within the Department of Workforce Development is available on the Kentucky Personnel Cabinet website and may be accessed at the following link -

<https://extranet.personnel.ky.gov/DHRAOrgCharts/OC-51531.pdf>

## Division of Program Policy and Support

The Division of Program Policy and Support is comprised of the Grants Management and System Support (GMSS) Branch, Program Policy and Quality Assurance (PPQA) Branch and the CRP Branch. Below is a brief description of each branch and a link to their information on the OVR website for detailed descriptions.

- GMSS Branch provides support to the agency through their GMSS Sections. For a full description of the services provided within this branch, visit <https://kcc.ky.gov/Vocational-Rehabilitation/staff/Pages/Grants-Management-and-System-Support-Branch.aspx>
- PPQA provides support to the agency through their PPQA Sections. For a full description of the services provided within this branch, visit <https://kcc.ky.gov/Vocational-Rehabilitation/staff/Pages/Program-Policy-And-Quality-Assurance-Branch.aspx>
- CRP provides collaboration and support with a network of CRPs to provide an array of services to agency consumers. For a full description of the services provided within this branch, visit <https://kcc.ky.gov/Vocational-Rehabilitation/staff/Pages/Community-Rehabilitation-Program-Provider-Branch.aspx>

## Kentucky's Statewide Workforce and Talent Team

The Kentucky Statewide Workforce and Talent Team (SWATT) is a collaborative approach focused on improving how workforce partners measure, coordinate and deliver services to Kentucky employers. The state partners driving this effort are the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce, Cabinet for Economic Development, Education and Labor Cabinet, Kentucky Community & Technical College System and Council on Postsecondary Education. Other supporting Kentucky organizations include the Department of Education, Goodwill, KYSTATS, Kentucky Association of Manufacturers and Kentucky Hospital Association.

As a part of the Department of Workforce Development, OVR's Employer Services Branch is committed to being an active partner in this work by expanding outreach to businesses, strengthening communication and increasing responsiveness across all agencies involved. This collaboration will help increase workforce participation, support business growth and create meaningful job opportunities for the individuals OVR serves.

Employer Services Branch staff attended the first five SWATT roadshows and will participate in the remaining five in the coming months. Dedicated staff are participating in regular meetings in each workforce area. OVR is excited to support a more effective and efficient system that benefits employers and Kentuckians with disabilities through stronger alignment and communication.

# **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)**

## **Pre-ETS Summit with Education Partners**

In September 2025, the agency hosted its second Pre-ETS Summit to strengthen collaboration with educational and community partners in serving students with disabilities. Attendees included superintendents, special education administrators, school board members, counselors, technical education staff, mental health providers and school nurses.

Christine Johnson from the National Technical Assistance Center on Transition opened the session with an overview. Key topics addressed during the summit included strategies for increasing postsecondary readiness measures, enhancing collaboration between school districts and OVR, building partnerships to meet federal requirements while improving student success and leveraging federal funding from OVR to boost student outcomes.

The reviews from the more than 100 participants overwhelmingly provided positive feedback on relevance of topics, clarity of information, the amount of content, engagement of presenters and the likelihood of their participation if another event is offered.

## **Pre-ETS Work Experience Program**

During the summer of 2025, OVR implemented its first paid Summer Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE) for students with disabilities. WBLE are one of the five Pre-ETS activities that OVR programs are required to provide to students with disabilities. VR programs are required to set aside no less than 15% of its federal funding for the provision of Pre-ETS to students with disabilities. OVR used a portion of these funds to provide paid work experiences to students throughout the commonwealth during the summer of 2025. The program was a huge success.

During the months leading up to the summer, Pre-ETS providers identified students to participate in the Summer WBLE program. They gathered the required paperwork and parent signatures to allow students to participate and provided orientation to students to establish expectations. Students were required to work between 10 and 40 hours per week and earned no less than \$10 per hour. Pre-ETS providers monitored students' work throughout the program and provided OVR feedback about each student's experience.

At the end of the summer, the program provided meaningful work experiences to 235 Kentucky students with disabilities. These students worked a total of 32,769

hours. Two of the participants from Western Kentucky, Alyssa and Charlee, were featured presenters at OVR's Pre-ETS Summit in September 2025. They shared their experiences working at the Youth Services Center at North Middle School in Henderson, Kentucky, helping with back-to-school preparations. They both spoke about how the experience helped them gain confidence in themselves and inspired them to set bigger goals for future employment and training. They both described the Summer WBLE as a positive experience. They expressed appreciation for OVR's support and support from Pre-ETS provider Aspyre. The school principal praised both students and expressed interest in participating in the Summer WBLE program next year.

### **Student Spotlight: Charlee**



Charlee, a freshman at a Kentucky high school, participated in OVR's Summer Work-Based Learning Experiences (WBLE) program, gaining hands-on experience at the Youth Services Center at North Middle School in Henderson. She enjoys hanging out with her family and friends, cheering, shopping, Alabama football, sleeping and Starbucks. She is very involved in her school activities and in her community. Charlee is involved with the Future Business Leaders of America (FBLA), on the student council for the class of 2029 and a member of the cheerleading team.

### **Student Spotlight: Alyssa**

Alyssa, a sophomore at a Kentucky high school, participated in OVR's Summer WBLE program, contributing to back-to-school preparations at the Youth Services Center at North Middle School in Henderson. She enjoys hanging out with family, friends and her boyfriend. In addition, Alyssa loves reading, writing, photography, sleeping, shopping and eating Taco Bell. She is very involved with her school and community. She enjoys poetry and has been published in a book. Many of her writings include her disability experiences. She is the reporter for FBLA, Skills USA, and the 4-H Club. She was recently elected to the homecoming court.



Although OVR received overwhelmingly positive feedback, there were some challenges in getting the program off the ground. Some of those included assisting Pre-ETS providers navigate the initial paperwork and training. Transportation also was a barrier for some students, especially in rural areas. With these lessons learned, OVR is prepared to expand the program to provide more opportunities to more students in the future.

## Expanding Access and Opportunity for Kentuckians Who Are Deaf-Blind

For individuals who are Deaf-Blind, everyday activities such as traveling, shopping or meeting others can bring unique challenges. Deaf-Blindness combines hearing and vision loss—often partial rather than total—making it harder to access information, communicate and navigate safely in the community.

Support Service Providers (SSPs) play a vital role in bridging these gaps. SSPs are trained guides who act as the “eyes and ears” for individuals who are Deaf-Blind. They describe surroundings, share environmental details and support communication in the person’s preferred method such as tactile sign language or spoken communication. Importantly, SSPs do not make decisions for the individual—they provide information so the person can make their own choices and maintain independence.

OVR recognizes the essential role of SSPs in helping individuals who are Deaf-Blind fully participate in their communities and workplaces. OVR supports SSP services through a Service Fee Memorandum and a dedicated Deaf-Blind coordinator who helps improve access and quality. However, Kentucky continues to face a shortage of qualified SSPs and a need for more training among staff who serve Deaf-Blind consumers.

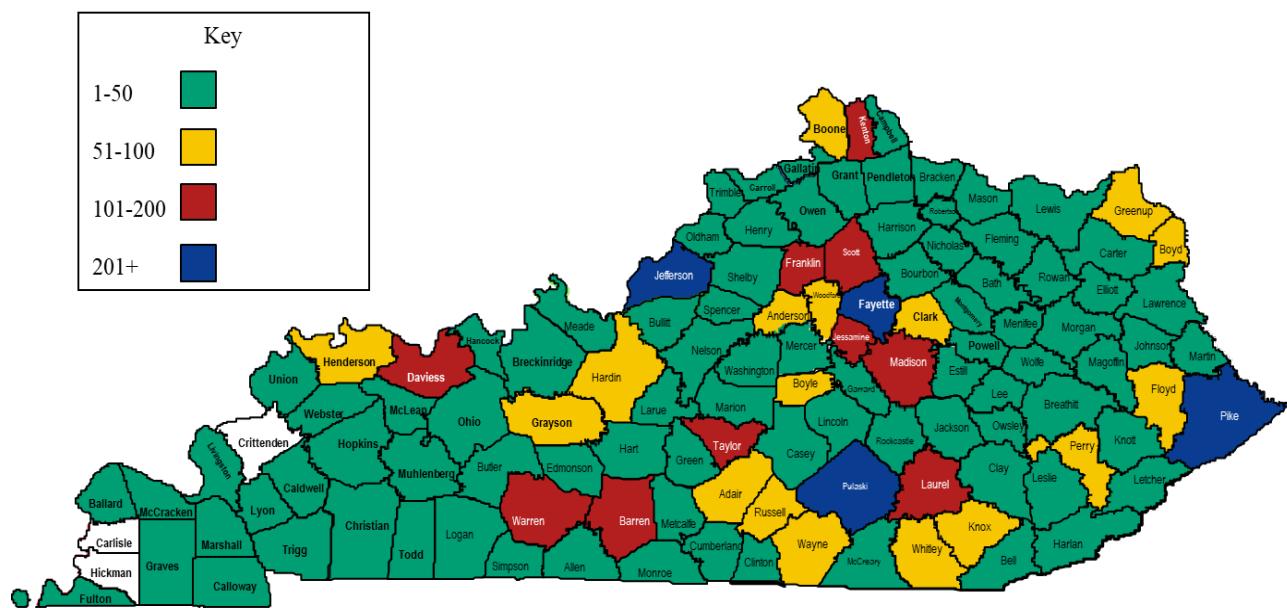
To address these needs, OVR formed an innovative partnership with Helen Keller Services, a national leader in Deaf-Blind education and support. Launched in February 2025, this partnership provides a hybrid training and coaching program for OVR’s Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind. Through online and in-person sessions, staff receive expert guidance on serving consumers who are Deaf-Blind and developing local SSP programs.

The goal is clear: to build a statewide network of trained SSP and strengthen the skills of OVR staff. By expanding these services, OVR aims to ensure that individuals who are Deaf-Blind have consistent access to quality SSP support in their own communities—opening pathways to independence, inclusion and meaningful, competitive employment.

This initiative represents a major step forward in Kentucky’s commitment to accessibility. Through partnerships, training and innovation, OVR continues to expand opportunities for individuals who are Deaf-Blind—ensuring that every Kentuckian, regardless of sensory loss, can fully participate in community life and the workforce.

# Kentucky Impact Map

The map below indicates the range of Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes (CIEO) by county.



## Map Description

This map shows CIEOs by county in Kentucky.

Jefferson, Fayette, Pike, and Pulaski counties had more than 200 CIEOs. Barren, Daviess, Franklin, Jessamine, Kenton, Laurel, Madison, Scott, Taylor, and Warren counties had between 101 and 200 CIEOs. Adair, Anderson, Boone, Boyd, Boyle, Clark, Floyd, Grayson, Greenup, Hardin, Henderson, Knox, Perry, Russell, Wayne, Whitley, and Woodford counties had between 51 and 100 CIEOs.

Carlisle, Crittenden, and Hickman counties had no CIEOs during this time period. All other Kentucky counties had between 1 and 50 CIEOs.

# FFY2025 Financial Statement

## Revenue

Revenue Category	Amount
<b>Federal Revenue</b>	
<i>Basic Support Grant</i>	83,356,609.00
<i>Supported Employment Grant</i>	417,515.00
<i>Independent Living Older Blind Grant</i>	422,122.00
<i>Assistive Technology Grant</i>	538,100.00
<b>Federal Revenue Total</b>	<b>84,734,346.00</b>
<b>Restricted Revenue</b>	
<i>Social Security Administration Program Income</i>	2,653,268.38
<i>Coke Scholarship</i>	20,000.00
<i>Miscellaneous Revenue</i>	163,136.50
<i>Kentucky Assistive Loan Technology Corporation</i>	75,000.00
<i>Kentucky Business Enterprise Commission</i>	231,868.70
<i>Kentucky Business Enterprise Set-Aside</i>	153,359.38
<b>Restricted Revenue Total</b>	<b>3,296,632.96</b>
<b>General Funds</b>	
<b>Total General Funds Revenue</b>	<b>22,653,595.05</b>
<b>Total Gross Revenue</b>	<b>110,684,574.01</b>

## Expenditures by Expense Type

Expenditures By Expense Type	Amount
<b>Salary and Fringe Benefits</b>	40,211,690.41
<b>Other Personnel Costs</b>	70,094.81
<b>Indirect Cost</b>	4,665,252.82
<b>Contracts</b>	2,828,098.58
<b>Operating Costs</b>	4,086,868.67
<b>Facilities-Rent/Utilities</b>	3,598,459.30
<b>Capital Outlay</b>	180,960.65
<b>Consumers Services/Benefits</b>	41,647,631.21
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>97,289,056.45</b>

## Expenditures by Fund Source

Expenditures by Fund Source	Amount
<b>Federal Funds</b>	72,391,003.50
<b>Restricted Funds</b>	2,947,482.59
<b>General Fund</b>	21,950,570.36
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>97,289,056.45</b>

Revenue is for FFY 2025 only. All expenditures are on cash basis for FFY 2025.

## Agency Stats for 2025

### Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE) Outcomes

CIE in FFY 2024 was 4,915 and in FFY 25 is 5,643 an increase of 728.

### Expenditures by Service Type

Type of Service	Amount Expended
<b>Rehabilitation Technology (Assistive Technology)</b>	\$8,563,924.20
<b>Four Year College or University Training</b>	\$6,879,653.76
<b>Diagnosis &amp; Treatment</b>	\$4,054,595.24
<b>Assessment</b>	\$3,604,020.37
<b>On-the-job Supports - Supported Employment</b>	\$3,023,563.31
<b>Job Search Assistance</b>	\$2,645,995.93
<b>Junior or Community College Training</b>	\$2,562,019.69
<b>Occupational/Vocational training</b>	\$1,659,295.10
<b>Graduate College or University Training</b>	\$1,284,504.35
<b>Other Services (licenses, tools)</b>	\$1,278,269.19
<b>On-the-job Supports - short term</b>	\$989,737.00
<b>Job Placement Assistance</b>	\$596,455.00
<b>Disability Related Skills Training</b>	\$535,321.25
<b>Maintenance</b>	\$348,925.22
<b>Job Readiness Training</b>	\$309,700.01
<b>Pre-ETS Work-Based Learning Experiences</b>	\$259,246.89
<b>Home Modifications</b>	\$229,256.39

Type of Service	Amount Expended
<b>Miscellaneous Training</b>	\$171,860.90
<b>Transportation</b>	\$150,450.67
<b>Interpreter Services ASL and Other Languages</b>	\$148,245.00
<b>Benefits Counseling</b>	\$136,093.50
<b>Extended Services</b>	\$59,760.00
<b>Personal Assistant Service</b>	\$54,083.48
<b>Pre-ETS Job Exploration Counseling</b>	\$14,800.00
<b>Work Based Learning Exp. - that does not meet definition of Pre-ETS, OJT or Reg. Apprenticeship</b>	\$8,766.81
<b>Registered Apprenticeship Training</b>	\$7,975.00
<b>Randolph-Sheppard Entrepreneurial Training</b>	\$4,500.00
<b>Technical Assistance Services (Self-employment)</b>	\$4,050.00
<b>Pre-ETS Workplace Readiness Training</b>	\$3,700.00
<b>On-the-job training</b>	\$3,460.79
<b>Reader Services</b>	\$3,299.75
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$39,595,528.80</b>

## Demographics

### Gender

Gender	Count	Percent
<b>Male</b>	18,125	39.20%
<b>Female</b>	22,260	48.14%
<b>Not Specified</b>	5,852	12.66%

## Race\*

Race	Count	Percent
<b>White</b>	35,287	76.32%
<b>Black/African American</b>	4,552	9.84%
<b>Other</b>	532	1.15%
<b>Not Specified</b>	6,076	13.14%

\*Race: Greater than 100% identified as multiple races

## Impairment

Impairment	Count	Percent
<b>Physical</b>	3,787	14.78%
<b>Cognitive</b>	5,405	21.09%
<b>Psychological/Mental</b>	7,882	30.76%
<b>Sensory</b>	8,551	33.37%

## Employment Outcomes by Occupation Group

Occupational Groups	Number of Cases	Average Hourly Wages	Average Hours Worked
<b>Architecture and Engineering</b>	77	\$40.88	38.56
<b>Arts, Design, Entertainment, Sports, and Media</b>	72	\$21.66	31.48
<b>Building and Grounds Cleaning and Maintenance</b>	199	\$14.63	27.09
<b>Business and Financial Operations</b>	217	\$34.53	36.07
<b>Community and Social Service</b>	299	\$22.58	35.95
<b>Computer and Mathematical</b>	83	\$31.06	38.77

Occupational Groups	Number of Cases	Average Hourly Wages	Average Hours Worked
<b>Construction and Extraction</b>	242	\$25.85	37.39
<b>Educational Instruction and Library</b>	389	\$26.61	33.62
<b>Farming, Fishing, and Forestry</b>	45	\$18.76	30.98
<b>Food Preparation and Serving Related</b>	224	\$12.63	25.54
<b>Healthcare Practitioners and Technical</b>	513	\$36.46	36.83
<b>Healthcare Support</b>	180	\$19.08	32.45
<b>Installation, Maintenance, and Repair</b>	260	\$25.06	37.77
<b>Legal</b>	64	\$57.06	35.83
<b>Life, Physical, and Social Science</b>	50	\$32.70	37.72
<b>Management</b>	668	\$30.58	36.06
<b>Office and Administrative Support</b>	588	\$19.37	33.30
<b>Personal Care and Service</b>	194	\$17.14	30.23
<b>Production</b>	280	\$23.29	37.70
<b>Protective Services</b>	137	\$21.65	34.62
<b>Sales</b>	329	\$19.41	31.34
<b>Transportation and Material Moving</b>	533	\$20.37	32.52
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>5,643</b>	<b>N/A</b>	<b>N/A</b>

## **WIOA Performance Measures**

### **Measurable Skills Gain Rate**

- PY24 – 35.30%
- PY23 – 35.40%
- PY22 – 29.60%

### **Employment Rate 2nd Quarter after Exit**

- PY24 – 60.00%
- PY23 – 60.00%
- PY23 – 59.00%

### **Employment Rate 4th Quarter after Exit**

- PY24 – 57.60%
- PY23 – 57.40%
- PY22 – 47.00%

### **Credential Attainment Rate**

- PY24 – 26.00%
- PY23 – 27.00%
- PY24 – 27.00%

### **Median Earnings 2nd Quarter after Exit**

- PY24 - \$9,252.00
- PY23 - \$8,408.00
- PY22 - \$7,921.00

## **Pre-ETS Spending**

OVR is required to set aside 15% of the federal award and the required match for that amount for Pre-ETS. The total amount expended for FFY 2025 was \$5,895.528.85.

## Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

OVR is required to coordinate a Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) every three years. This is accomplished via contract with the Human Development Institute (HDI) at the University of Kentucky via contractual agreement. The CSNA a collaboration between the State Rehabilitation Council, HDI and OVR is currently underway. The results of the assessment will be used to inform the SRC and OVR information for setting the goals and priorities for the next state plan submission. The cost expended on the CSNA during FFY was \$85,581.41.

## Social Security Update

For FFY 2025, 637 Social Security disability recipients obtained employment after receiving services from OVR. This includes Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) recipients and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients who are blind or disabled. Social Security reimbursed OVR for 201 claims totaling \$2,534,769.26, providing additional funds for direct services for consumers.

OVR supports consumers receiving Social Security disability benefits by helping them understand the impact of work on their benefits and providing information on additional supports available to them. In 2025, OVR used funds from the NEON project to train OVR staff on SSDI and SSI. These trainings provided real-life examples of benefits counseling by engaging OVR consumers who volunteered to be interviewed. In addition, more intensive trainings were provided for benefits counselors across the state, which included a session on strategies to explain to SSDI recipients that they can be better off financially by working off their benefits, a session on Housing and Urban Development Rental Assistance Programs and a session on Kentucky Medicaid.

OVR also sponsors [Kentucky Disability Benefits 101 \(https://ky.db101.org/\)](https://ky.db101.org/), a website with benefits information specific to Kentucky residents and estimators that illustrate the benefits of working. This tool is available to OVR staff, partners and consumers, as well as any Social Security disability recipient in the state who may be contemplating employment.

OVR has two in-house benefits counseling staff who provide in-person counseling to consumers. In addition, OVR continues to promote the ongoing supports available through Social Security's Ticket to Work program. The Social Security Specialist team participates in quarterly Partnership Plus calls with local Employment Networks to encourage collaboration.

## 2025 Featured Success Stories for Each Division

The following sections highlight two success stories from each of the divisions that provide direct services to individuals. The stories are a snapshot of the journey of each of these individuals as they worked with OVR to achieve their vocational goals.

### Division of Field Services

#### Field Services Success: Tracie



With support from OVR, Tracie regained financial stability, independence and so much more. When she was referred to OVR in 2024, Tracie was experiencing multiple limitations from physical and emotional conditions that resulted in her loss of employment as a dietitian. As a result, she was unable to pay her rent, utilities and other essential needs.

To get back into the workforce, Tracie's plan included job-search assistance, transportation and rehabilitation technology. Her VR counselor provided guidance and

counseling to help Tracie better understand her physical limitations, identify a new career goal, formulate a plan for achieving the goal and access services to gain employment.

Tracie's VR counselor purchased work readiness services from a CRP who assisted her with job-search essentials such as resume development, interview skills, job leads and job application assistance. Tracie utilized public transit assistance, provided through OVR, so she could travel to various employers to apply for positions and complete interviews. Her counselor remained in frequent communication to ensure Tracie received support and guidance during her job search.

In 2025, Tracie accepted a full-time position as a program coordinator for an international nutrition company. Her starting salary was \$23.10 per hour and included benefits of health insurance, a retirement plan and paid leave. Upon accepting the position, Tracie's VR counselor immediately connected her with a rehabilitation engineer who completed an assessment for technology needs individualized to Tracie's new job and her disability-related limitations. OVR provided items such as a sit-to-stand desk, ergonomic keyboard and mouse, standing mat and ergonomic chair.

Tracie's new career allows her to work from home, decreasing frequent travel that often can be difficult due to her physical impairments. Her income has allowed her to obtain stable housing and pay for essential needs such as groceries, clothing and utilities. The health insurance included in her employer-sponsored benefits package now allows Tracie to receive quality medical care. Help and support from OVR made the difference in Tracie regaining stability in her life and moving forward with a new career that meets her needs.

## Field Services Success: Donna



Donna began services with OVR on Sept. 27, 2024. She receives Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) but wanted help increasing her earning potential to better meet her financial needs. Donna had earned a bachelor's degree in sociology and had a strong work history, but after experiencing a severe medical event in April 2002 that led to progressive physical and mental health challenges, she found herself not only struggling with her health, but also professionally.

After the medical event, she took various jobs that included part-time work in childcare and janitorial roles. None of these positions helped her financially and they took a toll on her physical health. Donna needed a job aligned with her work history that met her physical and mental health needs and provided a consistent income to supplement SSDI.

Donna was referred to assistive technology, benefits analysis counseling and an OVR employment specialist. Donna and the employment specialist updated her resume and applied for a Social Service Aide I position with the commonwealth of Kentucky. She got the job and began work on April 16, 2025, earning \$21.82 per hour at 17 hours per week.

After successfully completing 90 days in CIE, she was referred to Partnership Plus for continued support to maximize her earnings and strengthen the likelihood of continued employment.

## Division of Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center

### Perkins Training Success: Kyle



Kyle's career journey started when he was referred to the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center in January 2023 by a counselor from the Louisville district. He participated in a comprehensive vocational evaluation from Jan. 23-30, 2023. By March, he enrolled in the Job Readiness Training (JRT) program. Kyle successfully completed JRT and entered training in the CVS Pharmacy program at the center on April 24, 2023.

While enrolled in the CVS Pharmacy program, Kyle was an excellent student who followed instructions well, maintained a positive attitude and proved to be a hard worker. Kyle completed his training in the CVS Pharmacy program in May 2024, earning his retail and pharmacy tech certifications.



During his final two weeks at the center, job placement staff helped him create a resume, develop interview skills and submit job applications.

Kyle returned home and landed a job with CVS working 20 hours a week earning \$17 per hour. He credits this success to the skills that he learned in the CVS Pharmacy program at the center.



## **Perkins Training Success: Shane**

Shane's referral to the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center by a counselor from the Bluegrass district started him on the road to success in the food service industry. After completing two training programs at the center, Shane started a job at a restaurant on March 17, 2025.

Shane was recommended for the job readiness training (JRT) program at the center after he participated in a vocational evaluation in October 2023. He completed the JRT program on Jan. 15, 2024, and entered the food service training

program on Feb. 26, 2024. In addition, he built onto his resume by completing the barista training program.

Equipped with the food service and barista skills he needed, Shane worked with the job placement staff at the center to develop his resume and start looking for a job in his home area. Shane is now utilizing the skills he learned at the center at his job at Applebee's in Frankfort. To top it all off, Shane obtained his driver's license in May 2024.

## **Division of Kentucky Business Enterprises**

### **2025 Coke Scholarship Winners**

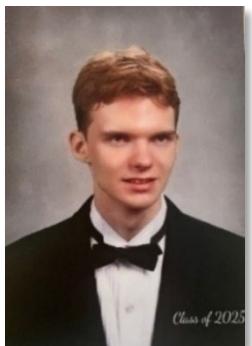
Kentucky Business Enterprise administers the \$20,000 Coca-Cola scholarship funded as part of the state soft drink contract. The scholarship applicants must be legally blind, OVR consumers, enrolled in an accredited educational program, meet other established criteria such as grade point average and recommendations from teachers or employers. They also need a recommendation from their vocational rehabilitation counselor. Applicants also must submit an essay based on their vocational goal. Each student received an award in the amount of \$5,000 toward their educational expenses. This year the awards recipients are:



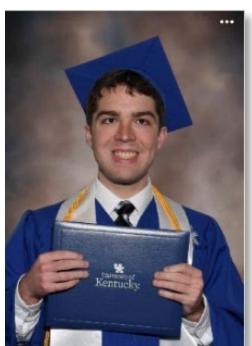
**Amanda** – Associates Degree in Counseling/Art Therapy at Jefferson Community and Technical College



**Analisa** – Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration at Loyola University, Chicago



**Jackson** – Associates Degree in Computer and Information Technology from Southcentral Kentucky Community and Technical College



**Robert** – Masters' Degree in History, University of Kentucky

## Entrepreneurship – Pre-ETS

Across the commonwealth of Kentucky this summer, blind and visually impaired youth gained valuable work experience through the Pre-ETS program, a federally funded initiative that OVR administers. Through partnerships with Randolph-Sheppard Vendors and various hospitality employers, these young business leaders are building essential workplace skills and preparing for future careers.

These youth are exposed to real-world experiences in food service, vending and retail management. These placements provide not only employment but mentorship from successful blind entrepreneurs, fostering confidence and independence.

In addition, many blind youths are employed in hospitality roles—such as front desk operations, housekeeping, customer service and kitchen support—at military bases, restaurants and car dealerships throughout Kentucky. These job opportunities help participants develop communication, teamwork and time-management skills, while also promoting inclusion and accessibility within the state's workforce. In the summer of 2025, eight youth participated in this first-time entrepreneurship program experience.

Through these experiences, blind youth are empowered to pursue long-term employment, higher education or further vocational training, demonstrating the impact and success of the Pre-ETS program in building a more inclusive and skilled workforce across Kentucky.

## Division of Blind Services

### Low-Vision Clinic



**Lindy Lamkin**  
Executive Director  
Kentucky Lions Eye Foundation  
[www.kylionseye.org](http://www.kylionseye.org)

The Kentucky Lions Eye Foundation (KLEF) is a nonprofit dedicated to improving vision through education, detection, prevention, treatment and empowerment. It operates a no-cost Low Vision Clinic that provides comprehensive exams to

individuals living with low vision from across Kentucky and neighboring states and is located inside the Charles McDowell Center in Louisville.

The Low Vision Clinic opened in November 2024 and initially ran two days per month. Due to rapid demand, it expanded to three days per month beginning in August 2025. Since opening, the clinic has served 150 patients—from young children to adults nearing their 100th birthday—each receiving a personalized low vision exam at no cost. Patients have come from all corners of Kentucky, Indiana and Tennessee, referred by professionals, families, friends or themselves. So far, 58 patients have been male and 92 females. Ages range from 6 years old to 90+, including individuals heading to college, working adults, retirees and many in their 70s and 80s seeking new ways to stay independent.

What happens in the clinic goes far beyond an exam. Many patients enter feeling discouraged, but leave rediscovering joy, confidence and possibilities for their future. Patients have been thrilled to leave our clinic knowing they can get back to enjoying some of their hobbies such as reading, baking, knitting, quilting, cooking, coloring, doing crossword puzzles, traveling and more. A few of the memorable moments include.

- A husband who could finally see his wife again for the first time in many years. She said, "I hope you like what you see!"
- A great-grandmother able to get back to knitting and even successfully knitting a blanket for great-granddaughter.
- A patient thrilled to leave our clinic knowing she would be able to play bridge for the first time in many months.
- A gentleman able to read the Bible for the first time in a long time, which brought tears to his eyes.
- A patient when asked if she was working, thought about the question before excitedly responding, "I never thought about working because I did not think I could do any work. Since my diagnosis more than 30 years ago, no one has really ever talked to me about working."

## McDowell Center Success Story



Mercedes Payne completed blind skills training in all areas at the McDowell Center, including 32 hours of paid work experience. She was part of the Information and Resources team through the ConnectCenter with American Printing House. Mercedes visited the ConnectCenter website to access the master online Directory of Services. She used her developing skills from assistive technology, work readiness and career exploration training to verify the contact and description information about vision rehab directory resources against the website information for each resource. Mercedes utilized professional phone communication and outreach as well as internet navigation and administration skills to accomplish these verifications.

After completing blind skills training at McDowell, Mercedes connected with work as a social and human services assistant with a well-known human services provider in Louisville. Since then, she has advanced into a role as a payroll support specialist earning \$17 an hour.