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7/1/2026

VIA EMAIL

Felicia W. Johnson, Commissioner
South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Department
1410 Boston Avenue
West Columbia, SC 29171

Commissioner Johnson:

The Healthcare and Regulatory Subcommittee appreciates the Vocational Rehabilitation Department's participation in the oversight process. As follow-up from previous subcommittee meetings, below are questions of interest to various members of the subcommittee. Please provide this information by Tuesday, July 21, 2026.

As a reminder, formal written responses are considered sworn testimony. Additionally, please inform the Subcommittee, prior to responding, of any information requested that cannot be published online due to provisions in contract or law.

Sincerely,

John R. McCravy, III
Subcommittee Chair

cc: The Honorable Jeffrey E. "Jeff" Johnson
House Legislative Oversight Committee

Other Funds – Donations/Contributions

The Department's FY 2026 Other Funds Survey identifies donations and contributions from private entities, including the United Way, as one source of support for the Vocational Rehabilitation Basic Support Program.

1. Has the Department evaluated whether federal law, state law, or federal grant requirements would permit the creation of an independent nonprofit foundation (e.g., a "Friends of South Carolina Vocational Rehabilitation Foundation") to solicit charitable contributions, grants, corporate sponsorships, and philanthropic support to advance the agency's mission and supplement services provided to consumers?
2. What opportunities does the Department believe exist to increase private-sector, philanthropic, or charitable investment in vocational rehabilitation services, and what legislative or administrative changes, if any, would help facilitate those efforts?

Interagency Partnerships

The Department currently leverages interagency partnerships with the South Carolina Department of Mental Health, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Corrections, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Revenue, and South Carolina Retirement Systems to provide vocational rehabilitation services and receive reimbursements for program activities.

Please describe any additional existing or planned interagency partnerships that expand services, improve employment outcomes, or create new opportunities for SCVRD consumers. Specifically:

3. Are there state agencies, public institutions, or quasi-governmental entities with which SCVRD could establish new cooperative agreements to better serve consumers?
4. What barriers, if any, have limited the Department's ability to establish additional interagency partnerships?
5. Are there statutory, regulatory, funding, or administrative changes the General Assembly should consider to facilitate or expand interagency collaboration?

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

6. Please summarize the three most significant unmet needs identified in the most recent Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and explain what actions the Department has taken to address each finding.
7. How does the Department measure whether actions taken in response to CSNA findings have resulted in improved employment outcomes, reduced service delays, or increased access to services? Please provide examples.
8. The CSNA identifies underserved populations. Which geographic regions or demographic groups continue to experience the greatest barriers to accessing vocational rehabilitation services, and what targeted strategies has the Department implemented to improve outreach and participation?
9. Have there been instances where CSNA findings resulted in changes to agency policies, procedures, staffing models, or service delivery? If so, please describe those changes and their measurable outcomes.

Multiple Workforce Systems

10. The Department testified that individuals with disabilities often interact with multiple workforce systems. How does SCVRD ensure that consumers experience a coordinated system of services rather than navigating multiple agencies independently?
11. What formal agreements, memoranda of understanding (MOUs), or shared operating procedures exist among the four WIOA core partners to facilitate coordination, referrals, information sharing, and service delivery? Would new or revised MOUs yield better outcomes?
12. What challenges continue to impede seamless coordination among the WIOA core partners, and what actions are being taken to address those challenges?

Pre-Employment Transition Services

The Department stated that students transitioning from school should experience a seamless connection between education, vocational rehabilitation, and workforce services.

13. How does the Department work with local school districts and the South Carolina Department of Education to identify students who may benefit from vocational rehabilitation services before graduation?
14. What percentage of students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services ultimately enroll in the Vocational Rehabilitation program, and how many obtain competitive integrated employment after exiting school?
15. Has the Department identified geographic areas or school districts where transition outcomes lag behind statewide averages? If so, what strategies are being implemented to improve those outcomes?

Workforce Coordination

The Department indicated that coordination among workforce partners improves employment outcomes.

16. Please provide data demonstrating how coordinated service delivery has improved employment outcomes, wages, credential attainment, or job retention for individuals with disabilities.
17. Who is responsible for ensuring accountability among the WIOA core partners when performance goals are not achieved?
18. What opportunities exist to further integrate technology, data sharing, or case management systems among the WIOA core partners to improve the customer experience?
19. Has the Department identified statutory, regulatory, or administrative barriers, at the state level, that prevent greater integration among workforce partners? If so, what changes would the Department recommend to the General Assembly?

Customer Service

The Department stated that consumers should experience a seamless system rather than fragmented services.

20. Has the Department evaluated the customer experience from the consumer's perspective? Specifically, has SCVRD measured how many agencies an individual must interact with, how many referrals are required, or how long it takes to move from initial contact to employment?

21. Has the Department considered implementing a "no wrong door" approach in which an individual entering any workforce partner agency can access coordinated services without needing to navigate multiple agencies independently? If so, what progress has been made?
22. As South Carolina continues to recruit new industries and expand economic development initiatives, how does SCVRD ensure that individuals with disabilities are included in workforce planning from the outset rather than after workforce needs have been identified?

Reaching Eligible Consumers

23. Does SCVRD believe there are eligible South Carolinians with disabilities who are not receiving services because they are unaware of the program or are not being connected to it? If so, how many individuals does the Department estimate fall into this category, what characteristics do they share, and what specific strategies are being implemented to reach them?
24. Has the Department estimated the number of potentially eligible individuals in South Carolina who are not currently receiving vocational rehabilitation services? If so, please describe the methodology used and the results of that analysis.
25. What percentage of South Carolinians with disabilities who are potentially eligible for vocational rehabilitation services are currently being served by the Department?
26. How does the Department identify communities, demographic groups, or geographic areas where eligible individuals may be underserved or unaware of available services?

Referral Services

27. What are the Department's primary referral sources, and approximately what percentage of referrals originate from each source (e.g., schools, healthcare providers, workforce centers, community organizations, employers, self-referrals, or other state agencies)?
28. Have referral trends changed over the past five years? If so, what factors have contributed to those changes?
29. Which referral sources have proven most effective in connecting eligible individuals with vocational rehabilitation services, and which sources remain underutilized?

Public Awareness Strategies

30. Describe the Department's statewide outreach strategy for increasing public awareness of vocational rehabilitation services. How does the Department measure whether these efforts are effective?
31. Does the Department track individuals who begin the application process but do not complete eligibility determination or fail to engage in services? If so, what are the primary reasons these individuals do not continue?
32. How does the Department work with physicians, hospitals, rehabilitation providers, behavioral health providers, school districts, and other community organizations to identify and refer potentially eligible individuals?
33. What performance measures does the Department use to evaluate whether outreach efforts are successfully reaching underserved populations?
34. Has the Department established goals for increasing awareness, referrals, or participation among underserved populations? If so, what progress has been made toward achieving those goals?
35. How does the Department compare its service penetration rate with national averages or neighboring states to determine whether South Carolina is successfully reaching eligible consumers?

Office Locations

36. Are there regions of South Carolina where consumers must travel significantly farther than the statewide average to access an SCVRD field office? If so, how does the Department mitigate those access barriers?
37. Has the Department evaluated whether additional satellite offices, co-located offices, or mobile service delivery models would improve access for consumers in rural or underserved communities?
38. How does the Department ensure individuals with transportation challenges can access services if they live a considerable distance from an SCVRD office?

Job Readiness Training Centers

39. The Department operates Job Readiness Training Centers throughout South Carolina. How does the Department determine where these centers are located and whether they align with regional labor market demands?
40. Are there specialized rehabilitation services that are geographically concentrated and therefore less accessible to consumers living in certain regions of the State?
41. How does the Department evaluate whether the skills taught at each center reflect the workforce needs of employers within that region?
42. To what extent does the Department utilize virtual counseling, tele-rehabilitation, or other technology to improve access for consumers who cannot easily travel to a field office?

Facilities Management/Planning

43. Has the Department developed a long-term facilities or field office master plan to address anticipated population growth, workforce changes, and future consumer demand?
44. If the Department were designing its statewide service delivery system today, would it locate offices in the same communities, or would it recommend changes to better serve South Carolinians?

Mental Health

The Department testified that the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) program serves individuals with the "most significant mental health disabilities."

45. Please define what the Department means by a "serious mental health disability." Specifically:
 - Is this term defined in federal law, state law, regulation, or agency policy?
 - What clinical or functional criteria must an individual meet to qualify?
 - Does eligibility depend upon a specific diagnosis, the severity of functional limitations, or another standard?
 - Which mental health conditions are most commonly represented among consumers participating in the IPS program?

- Must an individual be receiving services through the South Carolina Department of Mental Health (SCDMH) to participate in IPS, or may individuals receiving treatment from other behavioral health providers also qualify?

Case Review

46. Why does the Department perform only random follow-up rather than systematically evaluating long-term employment outcomes for all consumers?
47. Has the Department evaluated the feasibility of conducting standardized follow-up at six months, one year, and two years after case closure?
48. Have findings from post-employment follow-up resulted in changes to vocational rehabilitation services, training programs, job coaching, or employer engagement strategies? If so, please provide examples.
49. Does the Department survey consumers following case closure to assess their satisfaction with services and their preparedness for long-term employment?
50. What have consumers identified as the greatest challenges to maintaining employment after their cases are closed?

Counselor Caseload Management

51. SCVRD testified that there is no standard counselor caseload due to differences in case complexity. In the absence of a standard caseload, how does the agency manage counselor workloads across its offices to ensure case assignments are equitable, consistent, and aligned with each counselor's capacity to provide timely, quality services?

Addiction and Employment

SCVRD testified that substance use disorders may qualify as disabilities for purposes of vocational rehabilitation services, while DEW may disqualify individuals from receiving unemployment benefits when their separation from employment is attributable to drug-related misconduct.

52. How do SCVRD and DEW coordinate to identify and refer individuals who may be eligible for vocational rehabilitation services but are ineligible for unemployment benefits? Specifically,

are there formal referral protocols, data-sharing agreements, or cross-agency case management processes to ensure these individuals receive timely access to employment and rehabilitation services?

Residential Services

53. Please provide the maximum licensed and operational capacity of each SCVRD residential facility, including the West Columbia Evaluation Center, the Information Technology Training Center residential program, and the Palmetto Center. For each facility, provide the average daily census, occupancy rate, average length of stay, and any periods during the past five fiscal years in which staffing or other operational constraints reduced available capacity.

Rehabilitation Technology Department

54. How many positions comprise the Rehabilitation Technology Department, by classification (engineers, engineering assistants, technicians, etc.)?
55. What has been the annual turnover rate for Rehabilitation Technology staff during the past five fiscal years?
56. How long does it take, on average, to recruit and fill a vacant rehabilitation engineering position?
57. How many qualified applicants typically apply for rehabilitation engineering vacancies?
58. Have vacancies or recruitment challenges delayed worksite evaluations, assistive technology assessments, vehicle modifications, or other consumer services? If so, please quantify the impact.

Performance Accountability

59. Which offices have experienced persistent performance challenges, and what corrective actions have been implemented?
60. How does the Department ensure consumers receive consistent services regardless of which field office serves them?
61. Which field offices consistently outperform statewide averages, and what best practices have been replicated across the agency?

62. What standardized performance measures are tracked across field offices (e.g., successful case closures, employment outcomes, consumer satisfaction, etc.)?

Area Office Structure and Geographic Coverage

63. When was the agency's regional and area office map last comprehensively reviewed or updated?
64. When was the last time the agency opened a new area office or relocated an existing office?
65. Has the agency conducted a geographic access study to determine whether current office locations adequately serve South Carolina's population?
66. Have population shifts and economic growth within the state been considered in determining whether additional area offices are needed?
67. Which counties have experienced the largest increases in population and consumer demand since the current office structure was established?

Succession Planning and Retirement Risk

68. How many employees within the Grants and Funds Management Division and Field Operations Division are eligible for retirement within the next five years?