

# Department of Services for the Blind (DSB)

## Program Details

DSB programs provide vocational rehabilitation services including information, assessment, and referral; vocational counseling including guidance, referral, and placement; and rehabilitation training in adaptive skills, job skills, and assistive technology. DSB also provides occupational licenses, tools, equipment, technological aids, and other goods and services that can be reasonably expected to help clients achieve successful employment outcomes.

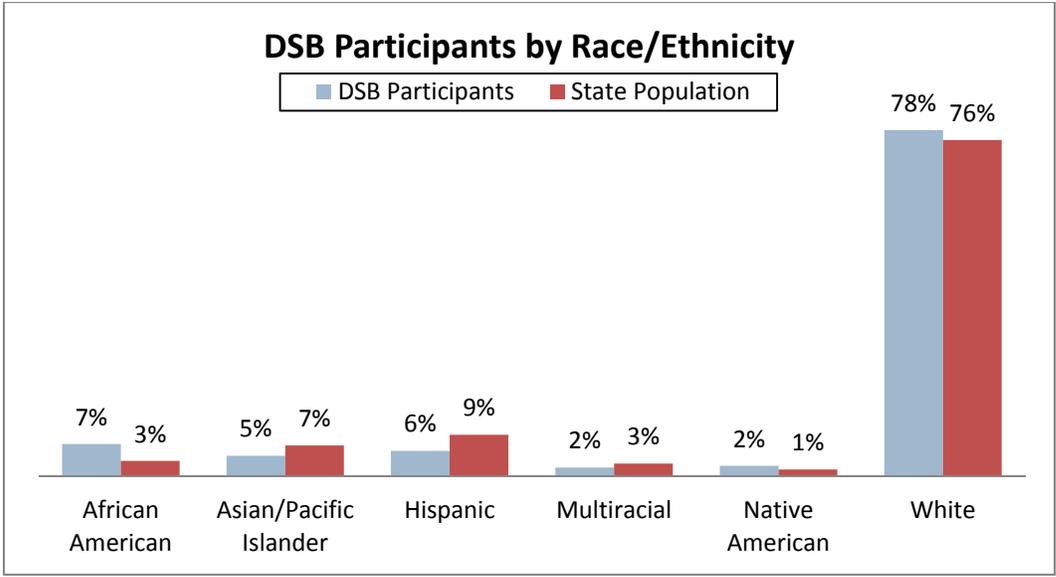
To receive services, an individual must be legally blind or have a visual disability that causes an impediment to employment, and vocational rehabilitation services are required for the individual to prepare for, enter, engage in, or retain employment.

For this report, researchers studied the results of 264 clients who left DSB programs during the 2007-2008 program year. The median length of program enrollment from application to exit was 23 months. These participants were slightly more likely to be Native American or African American and slightly less likely to be Hispanic or Asian/Pacific Islander than the general population for Washington.<sup>1</sup> Forty-six percent of the 2007-2008 DSB clients were women. The median age upon applying for the program was 42; one quarter was over age 52.

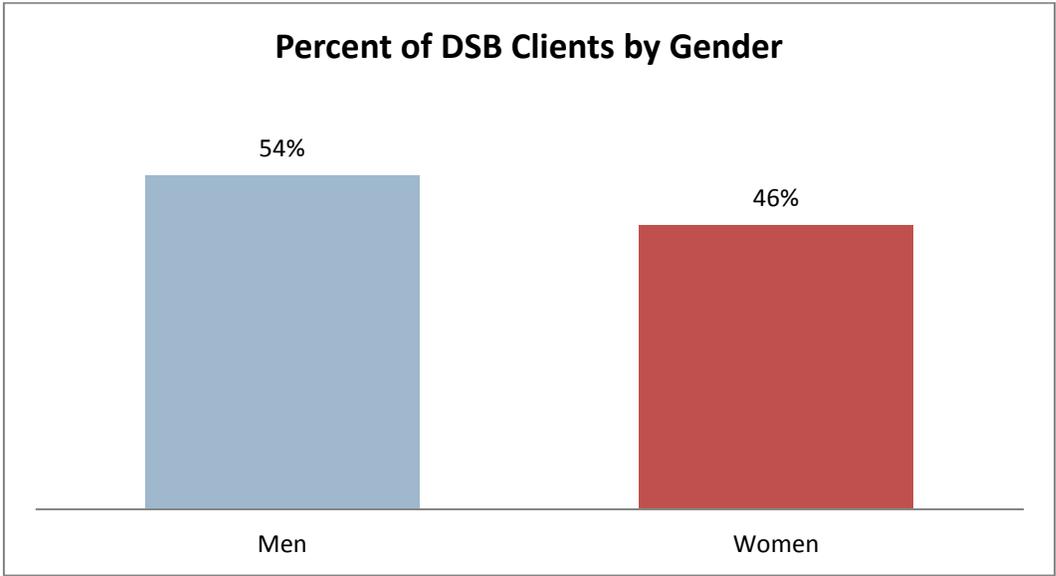
*Every two years, the Workforce Board measures the performance of key workforce programs. In this report, you'll find out more about the program and who is served, the metrics used to measure performance and how the program performed.*

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<sup>1</sup> In this report, unless otherwise stated, racial and ethnic minority groups are mutually exclusive; that is, an individual belongs to one group only. The groups include the following: Hispanics of any race (also referred to as Hispanics); non-Hispanic African Americans (also referred to as African Americans); non-Hispanic Asians/Pacific Islanders (also referred to as Asians/Pacific Islanders); non-Hispanic Native Americans and Alaskan Natives (also referred to as Native Americans); non-Hispanic multiracial (also referred to as multiracial); and non-Hispanic whites (also referred to as whites). According to the 2008 *State Population Survey*, 76 percent are whites; 3 percent are African Americans; 1 percent are Native Americans; 7 percent are Asians/Pacific Islanders; 3 percent are multiracial; and 9 percent are Hispanics.



Source: Department of Services for the Blind Administrative Records



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When they applied for the program, 34 percent had not previously had postsecondary education, 25 percent had postsecondary education but no degree or certificate, 16 percent had an associate’s degree or a vocational certificate, and 26 percent had a bachelor’s degree or higher.

## **State Core Measures: Tracking DSB Progress**

The Workforce Board routinely measures the performance of our state's largest workforce programs. As a customer-focused advocate for Washington's workers and employers, the Workforce Board strives to provide performance accountability, verifying whether worker education and training programs provide a return on investment for participants and taxpayers.

Workforce Training Results seeks answers to five core questions:

- Did participants get the skills they needed?
- Did they get a job and how much were they paid?
- Were employers satisfied with the preparation workers received?<sup>2</sup>
- Has the program made a difference in the participant's success?
- Did participants and the public receive a return on their investment?

## **Data Comes From State Wage Files**

The 2010 Workforce Training Results includes information obtained from Employment Security Department wage files in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, and federal employment records for 2008-2009.<sup>3</sup>

## **Did Participants Get the Skills They Needed?**

Fifty-five percent of DSB clients were classified as rehabilitated upon leaving the program (that is, they were working for at least 90 days prior to leaving the program). This is the same percentage as in 2005-2006.

## **Did Participants Have a Job and How Much Were They Paid?**

To find out whether participants had jobs and how much they earned, participant records were matched with Employment Security Department wage files from Washington and neighboring states.<sup>4</sup> Record matches found 45 percent of DSB clients had reported employment during the third quarter after leaving the program during the 2007-2008 program year. Among those who were considered rehabilitated upon leaving the program (that is, those who had been working for 90 days prior to exit), 60 percent still had reported employment the third quarter after exit, about 15 percent lower than for the 2005-2006 participants. Among participants who were working

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<sup>2</sup> Workforce Training Results usually includes a survey that measures the satisfaction of workforce participants, in addition to employers. The survey was not conducted this time because of budget constraints.

<sup>3</sup> Due to small sample size, DSB participants were not included in the 2010 Net Impact Study that detailed the performance of several of Washington's workforce programs by comparing participant outcomes with non-participants. Also, DSB participants were not included in the Workforce Board's 2010 Employer Survey, which provides feedback on how well workforce program participants perform in the workplace in areas such as job skills; reading, writing and math, and teamwork, among others.

<sup>4</sup> These files contain quarterly earnings and hours-worked information on those individuals with employment reported for UI benefits purposes (approximately 90 percent of in-state employment, with self-employment, active duty military, and those working for religious nonprofit organizations being the major groups of employers not included).

during the third post-program quarter, the median hourly wage<sup>5</sup> was \$14.19 and the median annualized earnings was \$21,056.<sup>6</sup> As expected, rehabilitated clients had better employment and earnings outcomes than all clients combined.

### 2007-2008 Program Year Performance for DSB

Performance Measure	Results
Employment Rate*	45%
Percentage Employed Full Time**	50%
Median Annualized Earnings	\$21,056
Median Hourly Wage***	\$14.19
Hours Worked Quarterly (Median)	388

\*These figures apply to those with employment reported to Employment Security Department six to nine months after leaving program. Rate does not include self-employment, employment outside the Northwest or military service and thus understates total employment by approximately 10 percent.

\*\*Full-time employment averages 30 or more hours per week. \*\*\*Earnings/wages expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars.

To put earnings in context, the median number of dependents DSB participants were able to support at the poverty level after leaving the program in 2007-2008 was 3.7 people. However, for those considered to be rehabilitated, that support level rose to five people. At the 200 percent of poverty level, this worked out to a little less than one person for all DSB participants but rose to 1.5 people among rehabilitated participants.<sup>7</sup>

### Self Sufficiency Level for DSB Participants – Previous Years

Performance Measure	2001-2002		2003-2004		2005-2006		2007-2008	
	All	Rehab.	All	Rehab.	All	Rehab.	All	Rehab.
Household size – poverty level	4.4	4.4	4.5	5.2	2.9	3.2	3.7	5
Household size – poverty level at 200 percent	1.3	1.3	1.3	1.6	.5	.6	.9	1.5

<sup>5</sup> All wages and earnings are stated in 2009 Q1 dollars.

<sup>6</sup> To derive annualized earnings, third quarter earnings are multiplied by four. Quarterly earnings are the result of hourly wage rates and the number of hours worked in a calendar quarter.

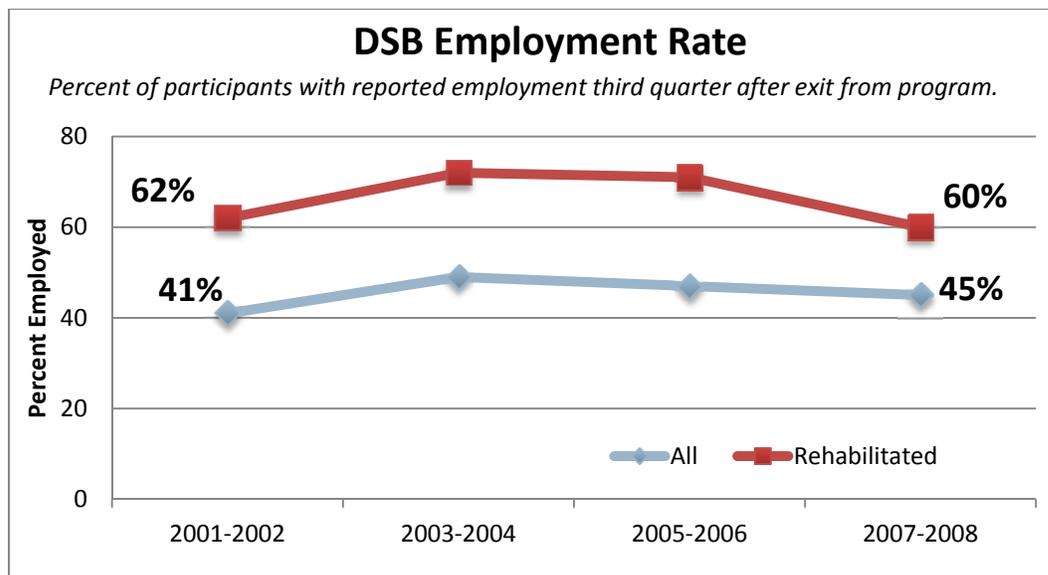
<sup>7</sup> In 2009, the poverty level for one person was \$10,830 per year. The 200-percent-poverty level that year was \$21,660 for one person.

The following table shows employment and earnings information over the course of four study periods.

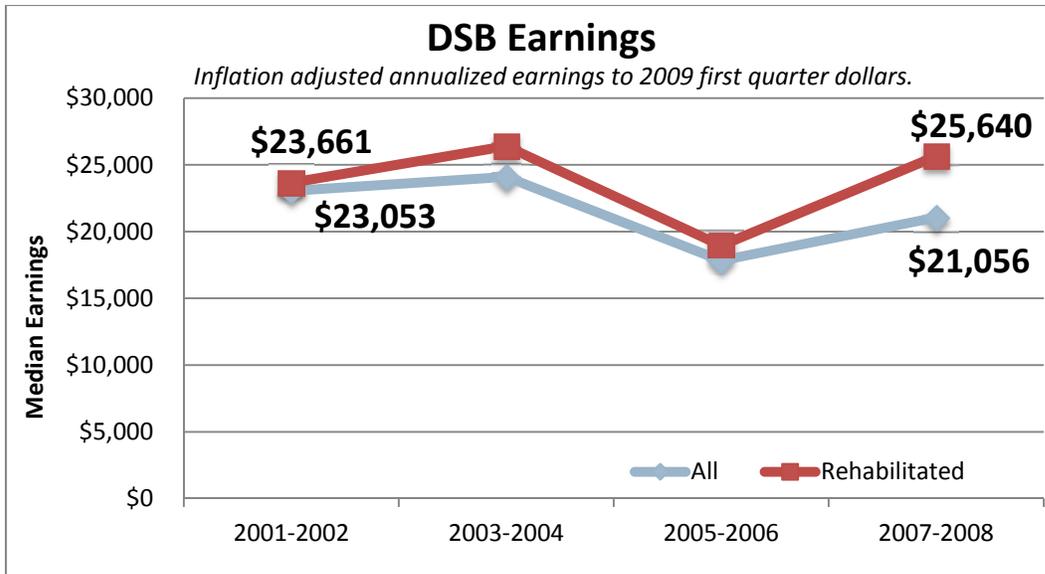
### Program Performance for DSB Participants – Previous Years

	2001-2002		2003-2004		2005-2006		2007-2008	
	All	Rehab.	All	Rehab.	All	Rehab.	All	Rehab.
Employment Rate*	41%	62%	49%	72%	47%	71%	45%	60%
Percentage Employed Full Time **	61%	61%	55%	55%	51%	49%	50.4%	51.2%
Median Annualized Earnings	\$22,160	\$23,661	\$24,091	\$26,391	\$17,824	\$18,954	\$21,056	\$25,640
Median Hourly Wage***	\$15.01	\$16.05	\$14.04	\$14.38	\$12.22	\$13.79	\$14.19	\$15.72
Median Quarterly Hours	430	430	411	425	389	384	388	387

\* These figures apply to show with employment reported to state employment agencies six to nine months after leaving the program. Rate does not include self-employment, employment outside the Northwest or military service and thus understates total employment by approximately 10 percent. \*  
 \*\*Full-time employment averages at least 30 working hours weekly. \*\*\*Earnings/wages expressed in first quarter 2009 dollars in order to control for inflation.



Source: Workforce Training Results 2001-2008.



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As in the past, employment among DSB clients was heavily concentrated in services, primarily education and health care and social assistance services. A substantial number were also employed in manufacturing.

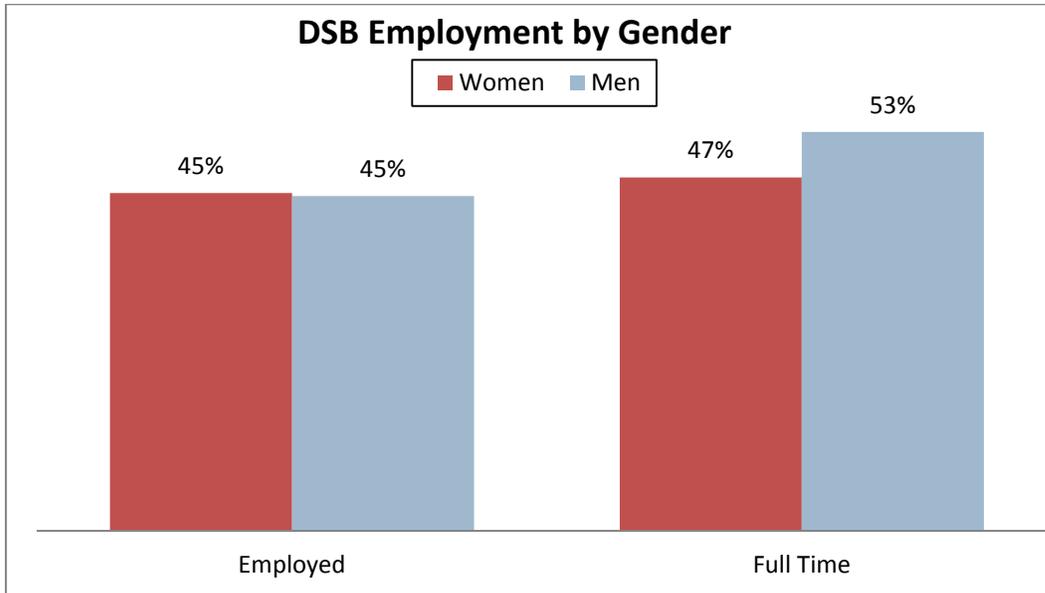
<b>DSB Employment by Industry</b>	
<b>Industry Group</b>	<b>% Employment</b>
Services (see breakout below)	45.8%
Manufacturing	18.3%
All Other Industries	17.5%
Retail Trade	9.2%
Public Administration	9.2%
<b>Breakout of Services</b>	
Education Services	14.2%
Health Care	12.5%
Social Assistance	9.2%
All Other Services	9.2%
Accommodation and Food Services	0.8%

Note: Industry groups based on North American Industry Classification System codes.

Source: Matches with Employment Security Department data third quarter after exiting program.

## Wages and Employment Results by Population

Women and men had nearly identical employment rates.<sup>8</sup> The median hourly wage for women was lower than for men by about 10 percent.



*Source: Matches with Department of Services for the Blind and Employment Security Department data*  
*Note: The percentage employed and percentage full-time are calculated from different bases. The percent employed is percent of all participants; the percent full-time is percent among those employed.*

Although we did conduct an analysis of DSB participant performance by race and ethnicity, these differences were not statistically significant.

In summary, since 2001, DSB participants' employment rates were highest in the middle of the decade when the state's economy was relatively healthy, and then declined with the beginning of the recession in 2008. Earning levels have fluctuated widely, although increasing since the previous study two years before.

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<sup>8</sup> The difference in employment between men and women participants was not statistically significant.