



Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board

2015 Workforce Training Results

Department of Services for the Blind

Program Details

The Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) provides 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.

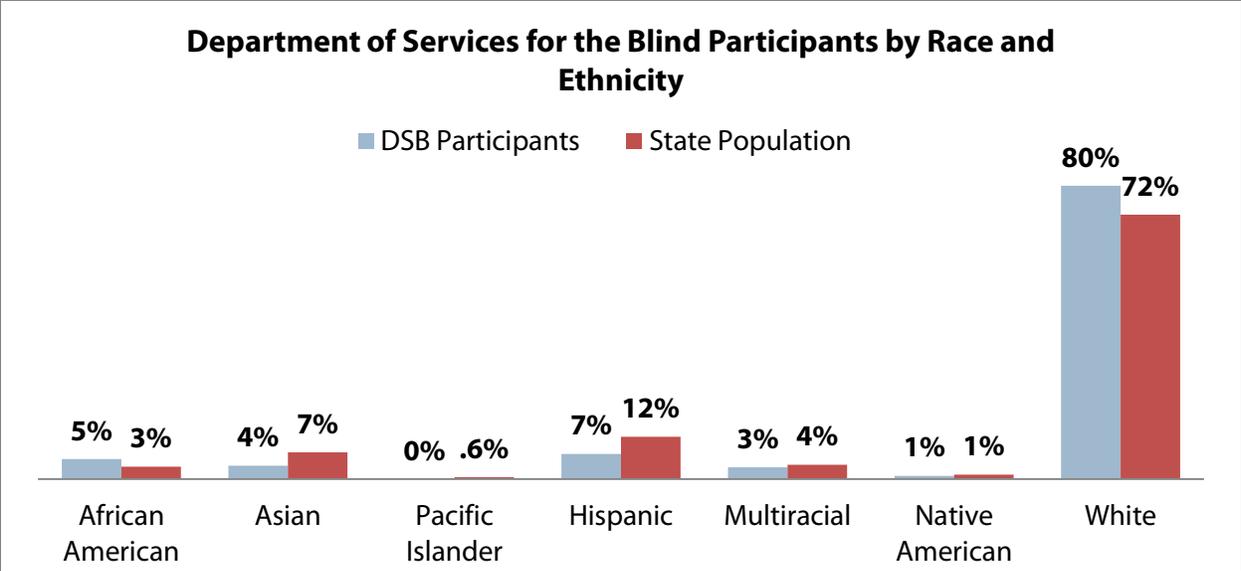
For this 2015 report, researchers studied the results of 243 clients who left DSB programs during the most recent reporting year.¹ The median length of program enrollment from application to exit was 16 months. Program participants were more likely to be white (72 percent) or African American or Multiracial (8 percent); however, they were slightly less likely to be Hispanic (7 percent) or Asian (4 percent) than the general population of Washington.² 52 percent of the DSB clients were women, down from 55 percent the prior program year.

Every year, 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.

¹ The 2015 Workforce Training Results reports are based on data observed as recently as 2013-2014 for individuals exiting programs during 2012-13.

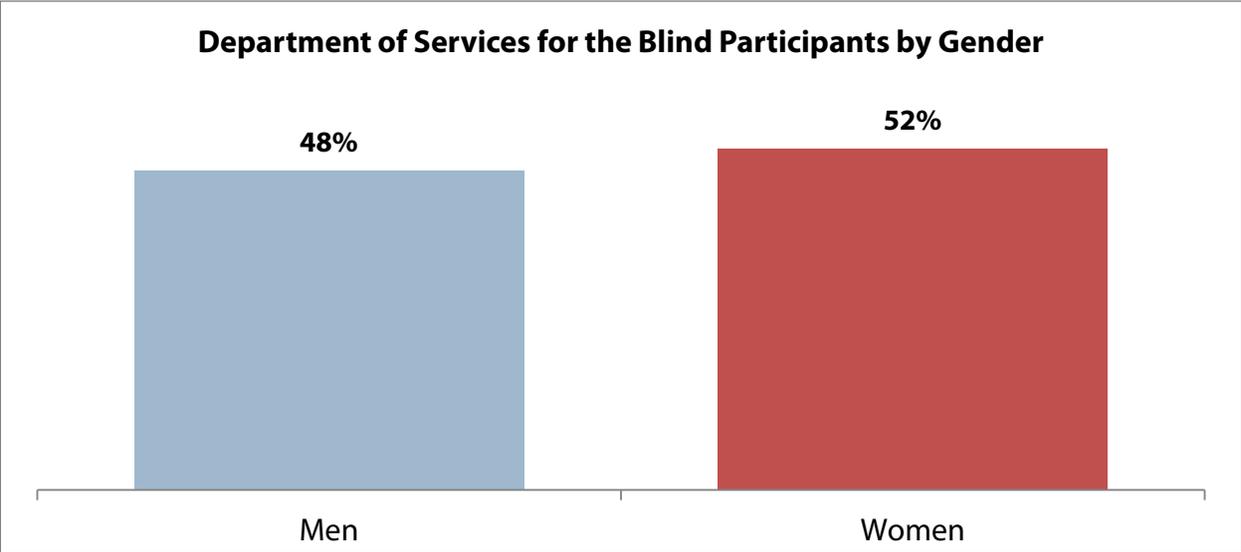
² In this report, unless otherwise stated, racial and ethnic minority groups are mutually exclusive; that is, an individual belongs to one group only. The groups include the following: Hispanics of any race (also referred to as Hispanics); non-Hispanic African Americans (also referred to as African Americans); non-Hispanic Asians (also referred to as Asians); non-Hispanic Pacific Islanders (also referred to as 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).





Source: Department of Services for the Blind Administrative Records and 2012 U.S. Census Data from the American Community Survey.

The median age upon applying for the program was 44, with one quarter under age 30 and another quarter over age 55.



Source: Department of Services for the Blind Administrative Records

When they applied for the program, 37 percent had not previously received postsecondary education, 27 percent had postsecondary education but no degree or certificate, 14 percent had an associate’s degree or a vocational certificate, and 22 percent had a bachelor’s degree or higher.

Tracking Department of Services for the Blind 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.

The Workforce Training Results report seeks to answer five core questions:

- Did participants get the skills they needed?
- Did participants get a job and how much were they paid?
- Were employers satisfied with the preparation workers received?
- Has the program made a difference in the participant's success?
- Did participants and the public receive a return on their investment?³

Data Comes From State Wage Files

The 2015 Workforce Training Results includes information obtained from Employment Security Department wage files in Washington, Idaho, and Oregon, and federal employment records for 2013-14.

Did Participants Get the Skills They Needed?

Some 54 percent of DSB clients were classified as rehabilitated upon leaving the program (that is, they were working for at least 90 days prior to completing the program), 3 percentage points higher than the last report.

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.⁴ Record matches found 45 percent of DSB clients had reported employment three quarters after program exit. Among those who were considered rehabilitated upon leaving the program (that is, those who had been working for 90 days prior to exit), 73 percent had reported employment in the third quarter after exit, about 7 percentage points more than for the last cohort of participants. Among all participants who were working during the third quarter after leaving the program, the median hourly wage

³ Due to small sample size and difficulty in identifying a comparison group, DSB participants were not included in the 2010 Net Impact Study and Cost-Benefit analysis 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 2012 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.

⁴ 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).



was \$15.46 and the median annualized earnings were \$24,362.⁵ Rehabilitated participants not only had better employment outcomes than all participants combined, they also had better earnings (\$15.97 median hourly wage; \$24,999 median annualized earnings).

2014 Employment and Earnings for Department of Services for the Blind Participants

Performance Measure	Results
Employment Rate* (State Records)	45%
Full-Time Employment **	53%
Median Hours Worked Quarterly	411
Median Hourly Wage***	\$15.46
Median Annualized Earnings***	\$24,362

* These figures apply to those 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 30 or more hours per week.

*** Earnings/wages expressed in first quarter 2014 dollars in order to account for inflation.

Employment & Earnings Trends for Department of Services for the Blind

	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Employment Rate* (State Records)	45%	43%	42%	39%	45%
Full-Time Employed**	59%	57%	48%	50%	53%
Median Quarterly Hours	411	424	370	398	411

⁵ Annual earnings are calculated as third quarter earnings multiplied by four. Quarterly earnings are the result of hourly wage rates and the number of hours worked in a calendar quarter. All wages and earnings are stated in first quarter 2014 dollars.

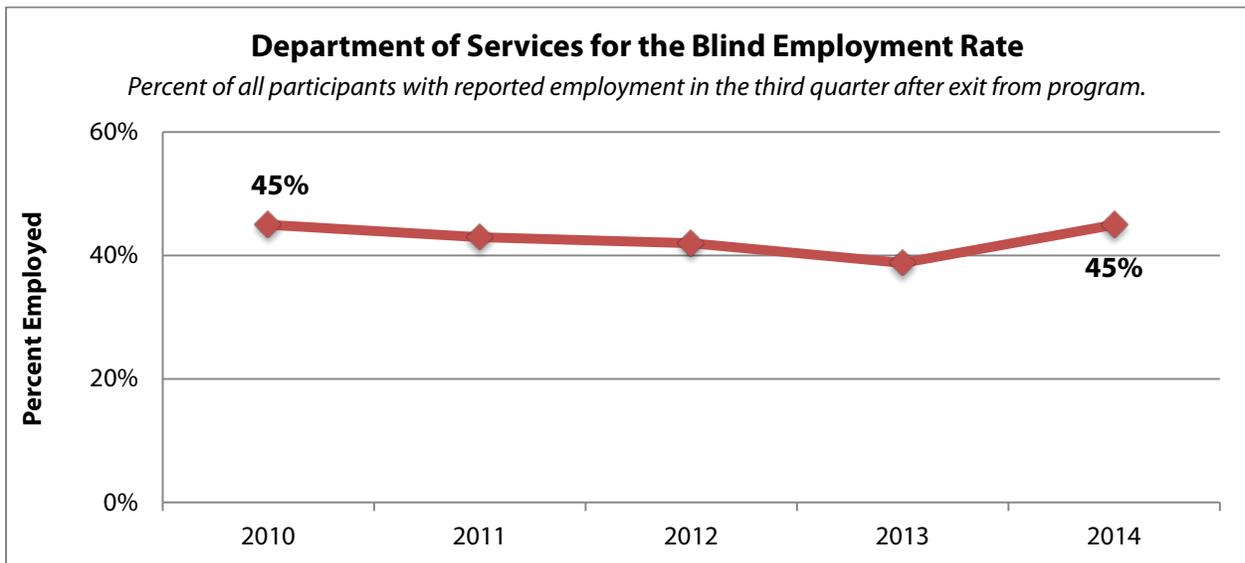


Median Hourly Wage***	\$13.44	\$16.60	\$15.15	\$14.31	\$15.46
Median Annual Earnings***	\$22,421	\$25,009	\$23,331	\$23,973	\$24,362

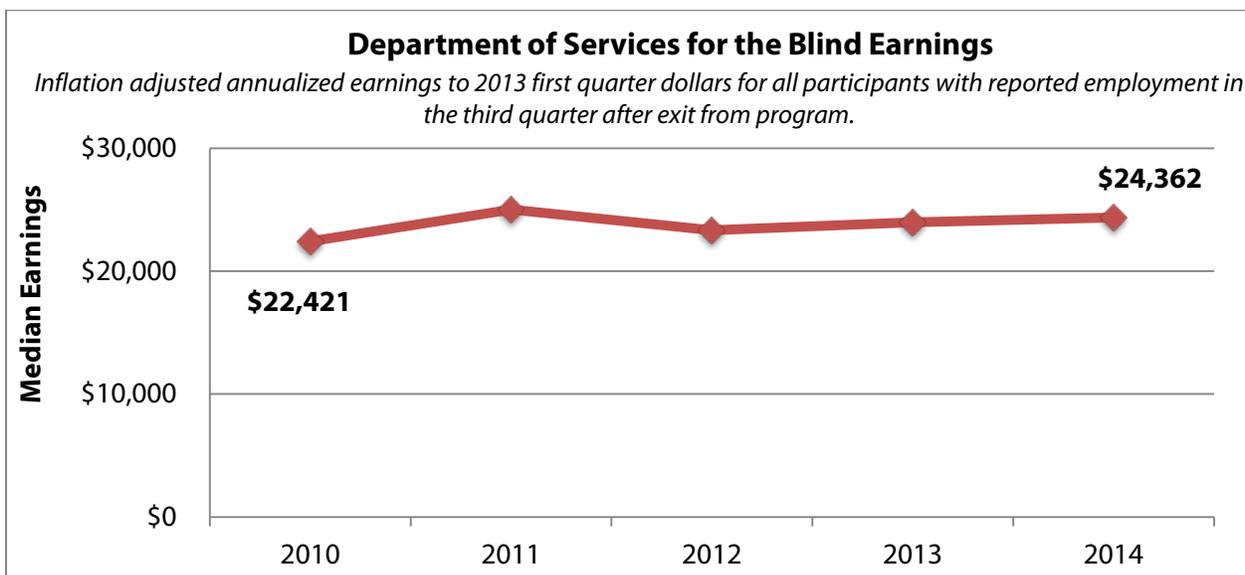
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DSB Employment by Industry

Most DSB participants were employed in Services. The next largest employment group is Manufacturing, employing almost 15 percent of DSB participants.

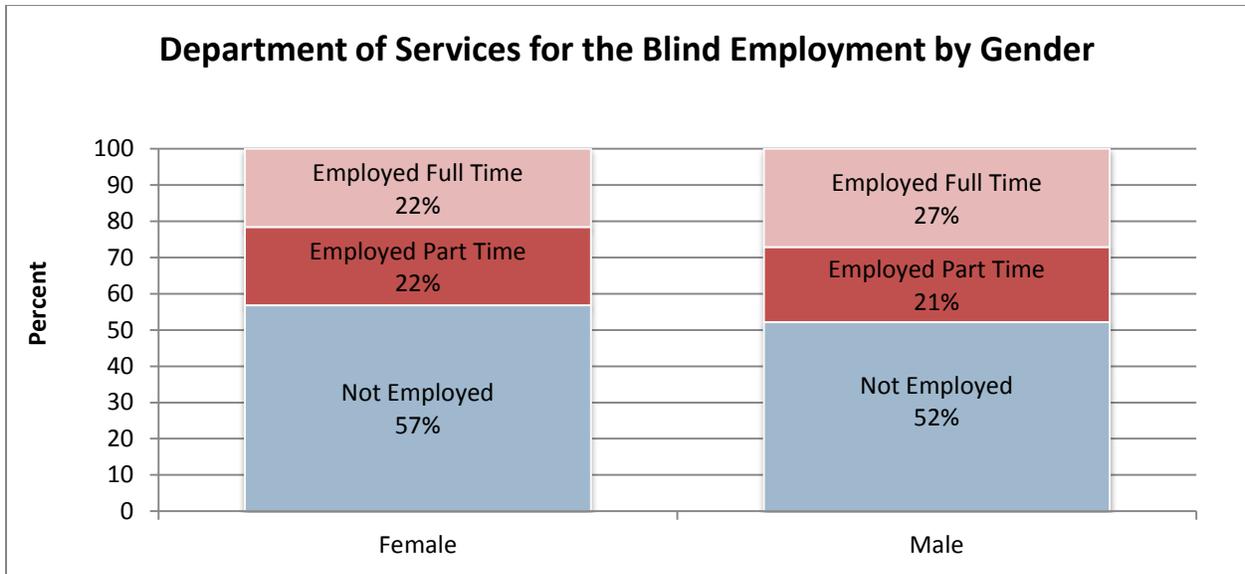
Percent	Employment by Industrial Group
17.4%	All Other Services
14.7%	Manufacturing
12.8%	Educational Services
11.9%	Social Assistance
10.1%	Public Administration
8.3%	Health Care
5.5%	Administrative & Support & Waste Management and Remediation
4.6%	All Other Retail Trade
3.7%	General Merchandize Stores
2.8%	Financial Activities
1.8%	Natural Resources and Mining
1.8%	Wholesale Trade
1.8%	Transportation and Warehousing and Utilities
0.9%	Construction
0.9%	Food & Beverage Stores
0.9%	Information

Source: Matches with Employment Security Department data in third quarter after exiting program. Industry groups based on North American Industry Classification System codes.

Wages and Employment Results by Population

Employment and earnings can vary by gender, race and ethnicity, and disability status. Twenty-two percent of women were employed full time and 22 percent part time for an overall employment rate of 44 percent. Men were more likely to be employed (overall employment rate of 48 percent) and were more likely to be employed full time than women (27 percent versus 22 percent). However, women's hourly wages were substantially higher than men's hourly wages (\$17.29 vs \$13.11). The ratio of women's median hourly wages versus men's was 132 percent, 38 percentage points higher than last year's ratio of 94 percent. Women's earnings were also higher than men's (\$24,524 compared to \$23,886). The ratio of women's earnings to men's was 23 percentage points higher during this reporting year compared to the previous year (103 percent vs 80 percent). In summary, although women had lower employment rates and were less likely to work full time, their higher median hourly wage resulted in median earnings that were more than \$600 above men's.





Source: Matches with Employment Security Department data.

Disability and Race/Ethnicity Play a Role

Although data from other chapters provide evidence that employment rates, wages and earnings vary among racial and ethnic groups and those with disabilities, the sample size for program participants was too small to make valid statistical inferences among DSB participants.

Summary, Areas for Improvement, and Further Research

The Department of Services for the Blind (DSB) provides vocational counseling; blindness rehabilitation assessment and skills-training services; blindness adaptive technology assessment, device matching and training services; blindness and low vision tools, equipment, and technological aids; a progression of services and work-based learning experiences for youth/students with a disability; internships and work experiences for adults; support for higher education and vocational training certifications; entrepreneurial training, business start-up services and occupational licenses; English as a Second Language and literacy training for individuals with visual impairment; and other goods and services that can be reasonably expected to help clients achieve successful employment or self-employment outcomes.

DSB program participants tend to be older (median age was 44 at entrance), and disproportionately white and African American, and female. Although their level of prior educational attainment tends to be high (only 37 percent had no postsecondary education), this population faces serious challenges. The employment and earnings results are relatively low (45 percent reported employment and median earnings of \$24,362), but have improved since the previous report. In addition, the pool of participants is fairly small, meaning that the data can easily be distorted by untypical performance results from just a handful of participants.



It's because of this relatively small sample size that we do not know the full impact of the DSB program on participants. A detailed net impact evaluation, which measures the performance of participants vs. a control group with similar demographics, was conducted for the majority of workforce programs the Workforce Board evaluates. However, with DSB it was not feasible to construct a comparison group because of the unique characteristics of the participant population.

DSB program participants also were not included in the most recent participant survey for similar reasons.

DSB has implemented targeted outreach and service provision efforts to close gaps in underserved populations, and has been successful since 2012 in narrowing the service gap to Washington's Hispanic/Latino residents.

A significant proportion of DSB customers who close services with an employment outcome are self-employed, and are not accounted for in the Employment Rate data within this report. For example, of the 192 employment outcomes that occurred in the most recent federal fiscal year 2014, 20 outcomes (or 10.4 percent) were individuals who were self-employed.

DSB has put considerable emphasis on serving young people with visual impairments by offering a series of independent-living and work-based programs for students with disabilities. The program works with blind youth from birth to 13, and their families, to provide advocacy, access to independent living skills resources and workshops, and pre-vocational awareness. DSB accepts vocational rehabilitation applications at age 14, and provides year-round transition services and summer vocational programs: a two-week work-experience program (ages 14-15); a six-week paid-work independent living skills experience (ages 16-19); and a five-week summer self-advocacy program to transition students with disabilities to managing disability needs in the higher education system.

