



**COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION  
AND  
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**GARY MOLLOY  
COMMISSIONER**

**May 9, 2025**

Good morning, Honorable Senator Kurt Vialet, Chairman of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, Honorable Members of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development, distinguished Senators of the 36<sup>th</sup> Legislature of the Virgin Islands, and listening and viewing audiences. I am Jean Forde, Assistant Commissioner of the Virgin Islands Department of Labor (VIDOL).

I am here with Charlene Hodge, Director of Workforce Development and Shenika Sebastien, Director of Youth and Apprenticeship. Thank you for inviting us to provide testimony regarding individuals with disabilities and employment in the Territory.

## **WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS**

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) emphasizes equitable access to employment and training services for individuals with disabilities. Individuals with disabilities are designated as a core priority under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), identifying them as a key target population for inclusive workforce development services and supports. The Act also encourages collaboration with Vocational Rehabilitation and other partners to deliver customized employment, career pathways, and work-based learning opportunities. WIOA ensures that individuals with disabilities receive the resources and support necessary to achieve meaningful employment outcomes.

Under WIOA, American Job Centers (AJCs) and state Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) agencies are mandated partners in the public workforce system. This collaboration is designed to streamline service delivery, reduce duplication, and ensure individuals with disabilities receive comprehensive and coordinated support toward employment.

Key components of the collaboration include:

- **Co-Location or Coordination of Services:** VR staff are physically present at AJCs once a month, facilitating direct access to VR services. In addition, AJC and VR staff maintain ongoing communication to ensure seamless referrals and effective case management.
- **Shared System:** Both agencies utilize the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS) system to improve data sharing and service coordination.

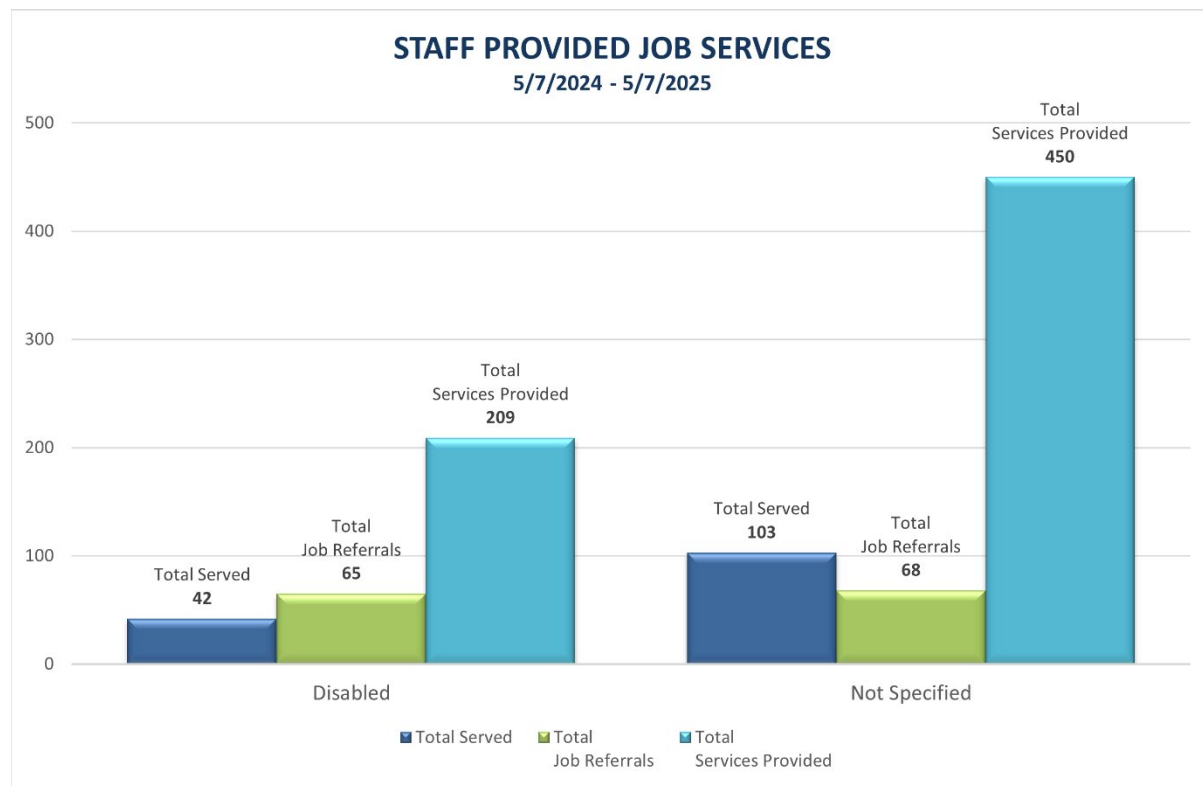
Additionally, VIDOL works in close collaboration with Special Education programs under the Department of Education to support youth with disabilities in transitioning successfully from school to post-secondary education or employment. As part of this effort, VIDOL staff attend Exit Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings for graduating seniors, when invited, to help align workforce services with students' transition goals.

## **DATA ON INDIVIDUALS WITH DISABILITIES**

Data about individuals with disabilities is recorded in the Virgin Islands Electronic Workforce System (VIEWS). Individuals can disclose their disability status during registration or on the VIEWS profile. Over the past 12 months, the Workforce Development team has provided various services for individuals with disabilities. The types of services provided include job search activities, individual counseling, and initial assessment (skill levels, aptitudes, abilities, and supportive service needs).

Data outlines the number of individuals served and job referrals categorized by disability status. Among the 991 individuals served, 848 were not disabled, 42 were disabled, and 103 did not specify their disability status. In terms of job referrals, 1,036 were for individuals without disabilities, 65 were for those with disabilities, and 68 were for individuals whose disability status was not specified.

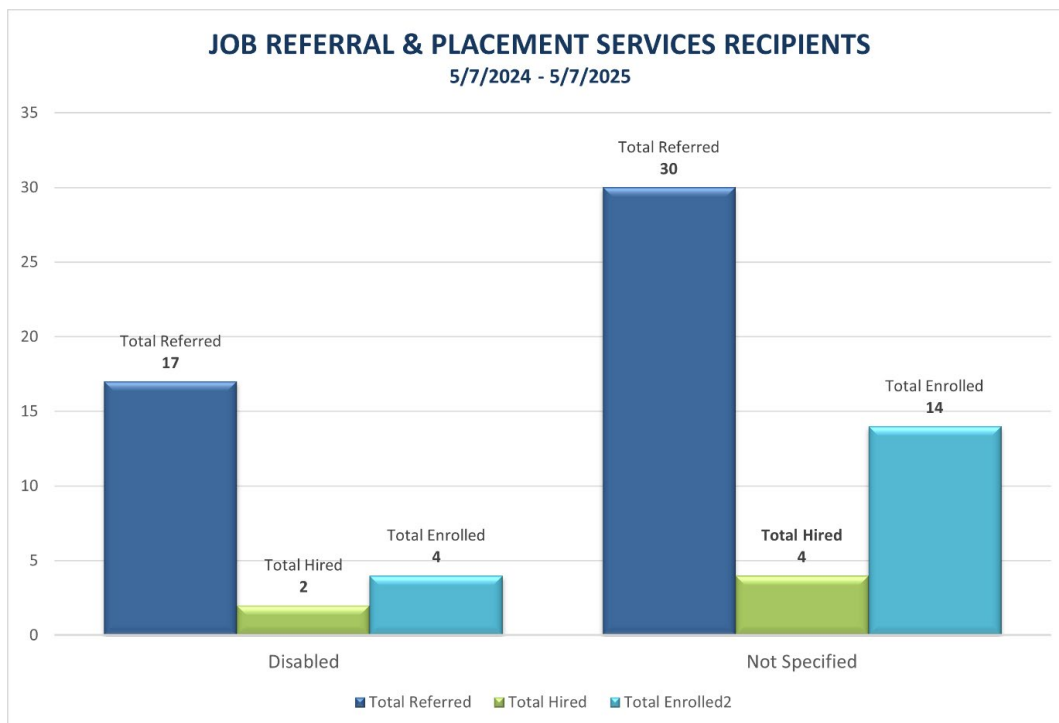
The following graph specifically illustrates the job services provided to individuals that identified as disabled or individuals whose disability status was not specified.



Additional data provides insights into the number of individuals referred, hired, and enrolled based on their disability status. Out of a total of 400 individuals referred, 355 were not disabled, 17 were disabled, and 30 did not specify their disability status. Regarding hiring, out of a total of 33 individuals hired, 27 were not disabled, 2 were disabled, and 4 did not specify their disability

status. In terms of enrollment, out of a total of 173 individuals enrolled, 155 were not disabled, 4 were disabled, and 14 did not specify their disability status.

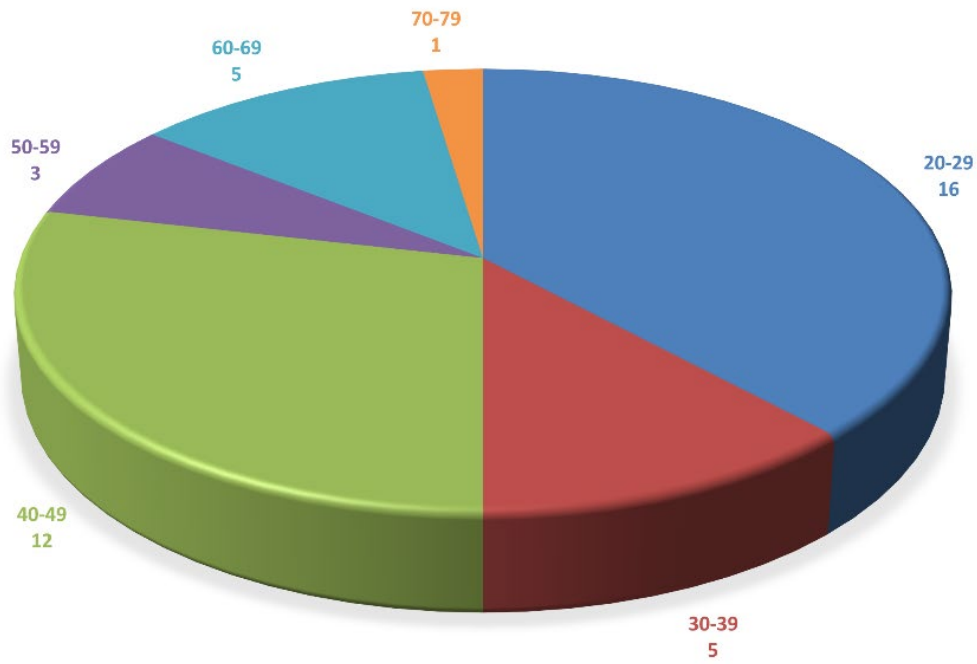
The following graph specifically illustrates the job referral and placement service recipients including individuals that identified as disabled or individuals whose disability status was not specified.



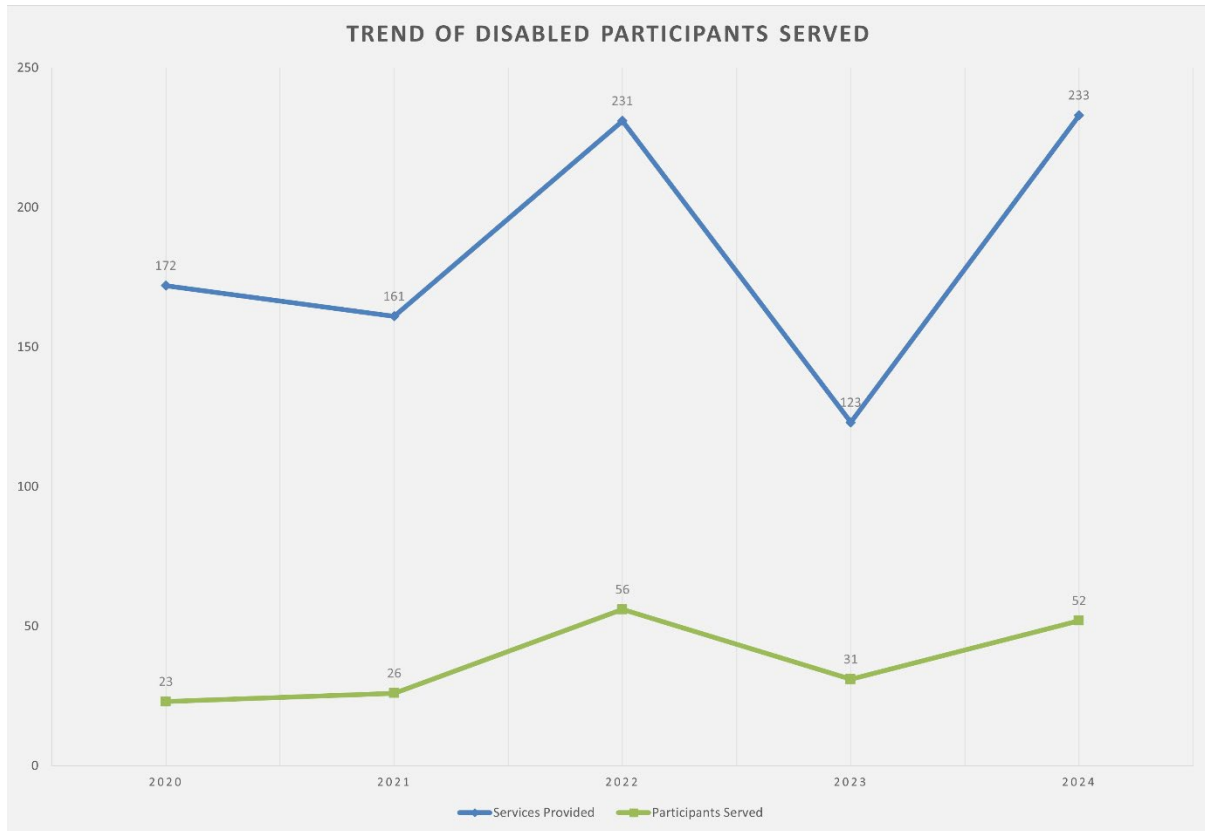
The following graph highlights the age range of individuals with disabilities that participated in Workforce Development programs. Out of a total of 42 participants, 16 were aged 20-29, 5 were aged 30-39, 12 were aged 40-49, 3 were aged 50-59, 5 were aged 60-69, and 1 was aged 70-79.

### DISABLED PARTICIPANT AGE RANGES

5/7/2024 - 5/7/2025



The following illustrates the trend of staff-assisted disabled participants over a five-year period from 2020 to 2024. In 2020, 172 services were provided to 23 participants. The following year, 161 services were provided to 26 participants. In 2022, there was a notable increase, with 231 services provided to 56 participants. However, in 2023, the number of services dropped to 123, serving 31 participants. In 2024, the services increased again to 233, assisting 52 participants. Overall, a total of 920 services were provided to 188 participants throughout these five years.



## **CONCLUSION**

The Virgin Islands Department of Labor is dedicated to continued collaboration with our partners. On behalf of VIDOL, I express gratitude to the staff at VIDOL for their continued dedication and hard work, and the members of the Committee on Education and Workforce Development for allowing us to testify about this subject. This concludes my testimony. My team and I are prepared to answer any questions you have.