



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION  
OFFICE OF SPECIAL EDUCATION AND REHABILITATIVE SERVICES  
REHABILITATION SERVICES ADMINISTRATION

COMMISSIONER

Date: May 20, 2024  
DCL-24-03

Dear Colleagues:

As we observe Mental Health Awareness Month throughout May, please join me in recognizing the importance of mental health and the power of the vocational rehabilitation (VR) program to help individuals with mental health conditions live fulfilling and meaningful lives.

As President Biden noted in his recent [proclamation](#), our country faces an unprecedented mental health crisis among people of all ages. Rates of anxiety and depression have increased significantly in recent years, driven by trauma related to the COVID-19 pandemic, social injustice, and other stressors. Furthermore, we know that nearly a third of VR program participants have psychological or psychiatric disabilities. The effects of these conditions act as barriers to competitive integrated employment and integration into the community.

Fortunately, VR agencies are ready and able to support eligible individuals with disabilities who are seeking to enter the workforce, maintain their employment, or advance in their careers. Through the provision of supported employment services and other VR services, VR agencies collectively serve as a key part of the national network of Federal, State, and local government agencies and other stakeholders that help to ensure mental health care is readily available to all Americans.

There are many mental health resources from across the spectrum of Federal government agencies, including:

- The National Institute of Mental Health: [Caring for Your Mental Health](#)
- Centers for Disease Control & Prevention: [Promoting Mental Health & Well-Being in Schools](#)
- Substance Abuse & Mental Health Services Administration: [The Food and Mood Project](#)
- Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services: [Addressing & Improving Behavioral Health](#)

I encourage you to leverage the VR program and its resources, and other tools at our disposal, to help VR program participants navigate the challenges they are facing. By acting together—in true partnership—we can achieve the best outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

Sincerely,

Danté Q. Allen