

BIENNIAL REPORT

2019-21



**Building Skills, Empowering People**

The Honorable Tony Evers  
Office of the Governor  
115 East, State Capitol Building  
Madison, WI 53702

Oct. 15, 2021

Wisconsin State Legislators  
State Capitol Building  
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Governor Evers and Members of the Legislature:

At the Department of Workforce Development, we're building skills and empowering people to meet Wisconsin's diverse workforce needs and support a thriving economy.

During the 2019-21 biennium, COVID-19 profoundly affected those we serve as well as our own operations. In the pages that follow, you'll see how DWD navigated these challenges to continue delivering critical services to job seekers, employers, and employees.

The department's six divisions – Employment and Training; Vocational Rehabilitation; Unemployment Insurance; Worker's Compensation; Equal Rights; and Administrative Services – implemented dramatic program changes to meet Wisconsin's diverse workforce needs. The result? DWD is better positioned than ever before to leverage innovation and drive economic success.

Among the division highlights from the biennium:

- ◆ The Division of Employment and Training enrolled 6,067 youth apprentices while working with 4,297 employers during the 2019-20 fiscal year as well as 5,407 youth apprentices with 3,939 employers during the 2020-21 fiscal year. In other measures, from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2021, Job Center of Wisconsin gained 383,075 new job seeker registrations and the Job Service call center handled 116,516 calls over the biennium.
- ◆ The Division of Vocational Rehabilitation made eligibility determinations for 10,116 people and achieved 3,451 successful employment outcomes at an average hourly wage of \$14.20 during FY 2020 and made 7,547 eligibility determinations and 3,095 successful employment outcomes at an average hourly wage of \$14.84 in FY 2021.
- ◆ The Unemployment Insurance Division saw initial claims surge from 292,493 in calendar year 2019 to 1,479,879 in 2020. The number of weekly claims processed rose from 1.6 million to 9.7 million during the period. UI benefits paid rose from \$394 million to \$4.81 billion, including \$1.6 billion in state and \$3.2 billion in federal and extended programs.
- ◆ The Worker's Compensation Division reported an Uninsured Employer Fund balance of \$31.9 million at the end of the biennium and completed 47,445 employer investigations. The division paid out \$4.8 million to workers injured while working for illegally uninsured employers.
- ◆ The Equal Rights Division investigated 5,232 civil rights complaints and 2,851 labor standards complaints over the biennium. The division was able to collect over \$2.5 million in wages owed to Wisconsin workers through its investigations and enforcement.
- ◆ The Administrative Services Division implemented numerous technology, staffing, building maintenance, procurement, budgeting and customer-focused solutions as the agency transformed its operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

While DWD accomplished much during the biennium, the hard work to modernize the legacy UI system and further enhance our services to connect job seekers and employers will continue into the years ahead. Looking forward, DWD welcomes opportunities to proactively engage with elected officials, employers, labor representatives, and others as it continues to innovate and improve its effectiveness in advancing Wisconsin's economy.

Sincerely,



Amy Pechacek, Secretary-designee  
Department of Workforce Development

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## Department Overview

The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) is the state agency charged with building and strengthening Wisconsin's workforce in the 21st century and beyond. DWD efficiently delivers effective and inclusive services to meet Wisconsin's diverse workforce needs, and advocates for the protection and economic advancement of all Wisconsin workers, employers, and job seekers. The Department's vision is a thriving Wisconsin economy in which:

- ▶ All workers are treated fairly, with dignity and respect;
- ▶ Employers, government, educational institutions, and workers collaborate to ensure workforce programs meet current and future needs; and
- ▶ Every job provides the wages and benefits necessary to support workers' basic needs, invest in their future, and actively engage with their families and communities.

DWD supports a broad spectrum of employment programs and services available throughout the state at numerous service locations and on the internet at [dwd.wisconsin.gov](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov). These programs and services provide specialized training, recruitment, and retention assistance to potential employees and private-sector businesses. DWD is also responsible for administering the state's Unemployment Insurance program, investigating complaints of workplace discrimination, and coordinating Worker's Compensation insurance.

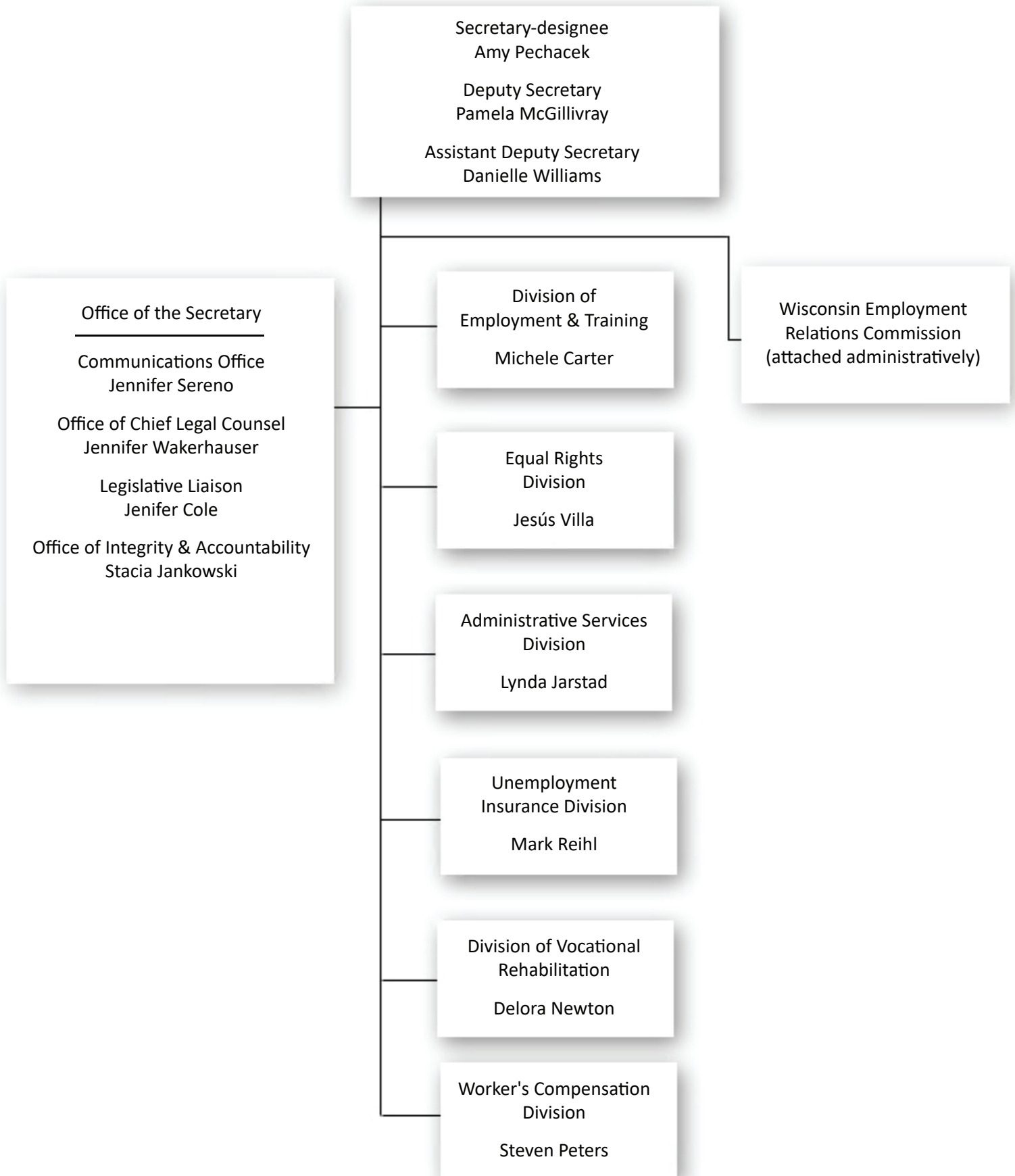
Staff at DWD are committed to ensuring training and employment opportunities are aligned to high-wage, high-growth jobs, and encourage active and engaged participation from the private sector in developing Wisconsin's workforce to meet current and future talent demands.

The Department is led by Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek, appointed by Gov. Tony Evers in December 2020.

Frito-Lay hired its first youth apprentices in 2020. The Beloit facility was the company's first among more than 30 manufacturing facilities across the U.S. and Canada to have a Youth Apprenticeship Program. Frito-Lay intends to promote the bridge from Youth Apprenticeship to Registered Apprenticeship positions as part of its strategy to develop a talent pipeline to recruit, train and retain local talent.



# DWD Organization



## Internal Structure and Department Management

### Office of the Secretary

The Office of the Secretary is responsible for day-to-day management of the department. This includes promoting the department's mission to provide a system of employment-focused programs and services that enables individuals and employers to fully participate in Wisconsin's economy and remain globally competitive.

The Office of the Secretary is also responsible for carrying out Gov. Evers' vision for workforce development by developing, implementing, and enhancing programs and policies that increase economic stability and opportunity for all Wisconsinites.

The Office of the Secretary includes:

#### ***Secretary***

Appointed by Gov. Evers, Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek works in close collaboration with all Cabinet members; the Legislature; state agencies; community, business, and labor leaders; and other public and private organizations and interest groups to ensure the department's overall mission and goals provide value to Wisconsin's residents.

#### ***Deputy Secretary***

Deputy Secretary Pamela McGillivray serves as a surrogate for Secretary-designee Pechacek and is responsible for the day-to-day internal operations of the department, including the department's budget, resolution of all critical issues, and oversight of major contracts.

#### ***Assistant Deputy Secretary***

Assistant Deputy Secretary Danielle Williams serves as a surrogate for Secretary-designee Pechacek and is the chief policy advisor to the Secretary, managing external relations for the agency, including legislative, communications, and legal affairs.

#### ***Legislative Liaison***

Legislative Liaison Jenifer Cole is the agency's primary contact for the state's 132 legislators, as well as Wisconsin's Congressional delegation. She responds to legislative inquiries made on behalf of citizens from Wisconsin. She tracks legislation that has the potential to impact the agency and she meets with lawmakers and other stakeholders to educate them on DWD's mission and core services.

#### ***Office of Communications***

The responsibility of the Office of Communications, run by Communications Director Jennifer Sereno, is to share department information and to ensure the department responds to requests for information from the news media in an accurate, timely, and comprehensive fashion. The office also works with each of the divisions to build awareness of the many programs, innovations, achievements, and issues related to DWD.

### ***Office of Chief Legal Counsel***

DWD Chief Legal Counsel Jennifer Wakerhauser provides legal advice to the Office of the Secretary and the department's program managers, acts as the legal custodian for public records purposes, oversees Rulemaking and privacy for the department, supervises attorneys in the Office of Chief Legal Counsel and the director of the Office of Integrity and Accountability, represents the department before administrative tribunals, and acts as department's litigation contact with the Department of Justice.

### ***Office of Program Integrity and Accountability***

The Office of Integrity and Accountability (OIA) is responsible for evaluating the agency's resources to ensure they are being used efficiently, effectively, and appropriately for the advancement of the agency's mission and objectives. OIA conducts internal and external review activities and furnishes DWD with high quality analyses, appraisals, and recommendations.



DWD Secretary-designee Amy Pechacek joins Wisconsin Apprenticeship Director Joshua Johnson, Worker's Compensation Division Administrator Steve Peters, and DWD Safety and Risk Manager Dave Leix to discuss safety in construction and Apprenticeship during National Safety Month at Boldt's Ascendum construction site in Madison.

## PROGRAMS, GOALS, OBJECTIVES, AND ACTIVITIES as Outlined in DWD's 2021-23 Biennial Budget Request

### Program 1: Workforce Development

- ★ **Goal 1.a:** Provide job applicants with access to available jobs in Wisconsin.  
**Objective/Activity:** Increase employers' access to available labor pools and job seekers' access to available jobs by increasing the number of job orders posted on [JobCenterofWisconsin.com](http://JobCenterofWisconsin.com).
- ★ **Goal 1.b:** Provide high school students with school-based and work-based instruction to assist them to directly enter the workforce with occupational skills needed by Wisconsin employers.  
**Objective/Activity:** Increase the employability of high school graduates through youth apprenticeship.
- ★ **Goal 1.c:** Prepare individuals for skilled occupations through apprenticeship participation that combines on-the-job training, under the supervision of experienced journey workers, with related classroom instruction.  
**Objective/Activity:** Improve access to quality training and family-supporting careers by increasing the number of new apprenticeship contracts each year through new program development and program expansion.
- ★ **Goal 1.d:** Maintain the efficiency of worker's compensation programs.  
**Objective/Activity:** Monitor promptness of first indemnity payment of worker's compensation injury claims to ensure compliance with the performance standard that 80 percent of first indemnity payments are issued within 14 days of injury, as set forth under DWD 80.02(3)(a), Wis. Admin. Code.
- ★ **Goal 1.e:** Provide temporary economic assistance to Wisconsin's eligible unemployed workers and stabilize Wisconsin's economy by paying unemployment insurance benefits as quickly and accurately as possible.  
**Objective/Activity:** First payment promptness for paying intrastate worker claims for unemployment insurance will meet or exceed the federal standard established by the secretary of the U.S. Department of Labor.

### Program 5: Vocational Rehabilitation Services

- ★ **Goal 5.a:** Obtain, maintain, and improve employment for people with disabilities by working with vocational rehabilitation consumers, employers, and other partners.  
**Objective/Activity:** Provide high-quality employment preparation, assistive technology, and placement services to eligible individuals and improve employment outcomes for people with disabilities.



## Performance Measures

### 2019 AND 2020 GOALS AND ACTUALS

Program Number	Performance Measure	2019		2020	
		Goal	Actual	Goal	Actual
1.a.	Number of new jobs posted on JobCenterofWisconsin.com.	424,295	457,185	514,067	331,313
1.b.	Number of students enrolled in Youth Apprenticeship program.	4,600	5,088	4,750	6,063
1.c.	Number of new registered apprentice contracts.	3,200	3,999	3,500	3,247
1.d.	Percentage of worker's compensation claims with first indemnity payments made within 14 days of injury.	80%	80%	80%	80%
1.e.	Federal performance metric for intrastate unemployment insurance first payment. <sup>1</sup>	87%	87%	87%	78%
5.a.	Number of employment outcomes for job seekers with disabilities.	4,000	3,590	4,025	3,451

**Note:** Based on fiscal year.

<sup>1</sup>The performance period for this measure is from the beginning of April through the end of March.

### 2021, 2022 AND 2023 GOALS

Program Number	Performance Measure	Goal 2021	Goal 2022	Goal 2023
1.a.	Number of new jobs posted on JobCenterofWisconsin.com.	360,000 <sup>1</sup>	378,000	396,900
1.b.	Number of students enrolled in Youth Apprenticeship program.	4,850	4,950	5,050
1.c.	Number of new registered apprentice contracts.	3,900 <sup>1</sup>	4,200	4,600
1.d.	Percentage of worker's compensation claims with first indemnity payments made within 14 days of injury.	80%	80%	80%
1.e.	Federal performance metric for intrastate unemployment insurance first payment.	87%	87%	87%
5.a.	Number of employment outcomes for job seekers with disabilities.	3,100 <sup>1</sup>	3,100	3,100

**Note:** Based on fiscal year.

<sup>1</sup>Goals for 2021 have been revised.

## Nonstandard and/or Flextime Schedules, Permanent Part-time Positions; and Other Alternative Work Patterns

The Department of Workforce Development (DWD) policy manual outlines available options for employees regarding the use of nonstandard work schedules: Hours of Work (Policy 429) and Telecommuting (Policy 431). These policies provide DWD employees options for making both long-term ongoing changes and short-term ad hoc changes.

In addition, the Department continues to maintain permanent part-time positions ranging from 50% FTE to 90% FTE. Position control records show that DWD had 1,361 people in permanent full-time positions and 17 people in permanent part-time positions on March 31, 2020, and 1,358 people in permanent full-time positions and 40 people in permanent part-time positions on March 31, 2021.

## Division of Employment and Training (DET)

### Mission

Provide a seamless continuum of services accessed by employers and members of the workforce and their families with the following results:

- ▶ Employers have the talent they need; and
- ▶ Individuals and families achieve economic independence by accessing job search, training and related services, making sound employment decisions, and maximizing their workforce potential.

### Program Summary

DET oversees all workforce services administered by DWD, including the state labor exchange system and Job Center of Wisconsin (JCW). DET also analyzes and distributes labor market information, monitors migrant worker services, manages the Wisconsin Fast Forward (WFF) grant program, and operates the state apprenticeship programs.

### Summary of Accomplishments

#### Key Metrics

- ▶ Registered Apprenticeship (RA) received a \$9 million U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) grant to increase diversity and inclusion in Wisconsin Apprenticeship. The grant began July 1, 2020 and goes until June 30, 2023.
- ▶ Youth apprenticeship (YA) continued to serve youth and employers despite school closures:

	Goal 2019-20	Actual	Goal 2020-21	Actual
Students enrolled in Youth Apprenticeship (YA)	4,769	6,067	5,956	5,407
Participating YA Employers		4,297		3,939

- ▶ In April 2020, DET was awarded a \$999,000 COVID-19 disaster recovery Dislocated Worker Grant (DWG), followed by a \$4,995,000 employment recovery DWG in September 2020. The disaster recovery DWG will expire on June 30, 2022, and the employment recovery DWG will expire on Sept. 30, 2022.
- ▶ During program year 2020 (July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021):
  - A total of 7,383 unique individuals were served in Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title I-B Programs, including 2,312 dislocated workers and 2,124 youth.
  - JCW had 383,075 new job seeker registrations.
- ▶ Between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2021:
  - Job Service call center calls totaled 116,516. Between March 2020 and June 2021, the call center received 2,000 more calls per month than average.
  - DET's Migrant Seasonal Farm Worker (MSFW) program completed 6,525 MSFW outreach contacts, certifying 340 migrant labor camps (including housing for H-2A workers) and 105 migrant labor contractors.

- Foreign Labor Certification (FLC) program processed 242 H-2A applications (temporary agricultural worker visas) and approved 4,202 workers.
- 2,006 Veterans received individualized career services (Disability: 1,211; Reentry: 269; Unemployed: 1,480; Low income: 1,039), and Local Veterans Employment Representatives (LVERs) provided 11,164 employer services to 3,823 companies registered on JCW related to Veteran focused employment.

During the biennium ending June 30, 2021, DET's Office of Skills Development awarded approximately \$9.8 million in WFF grants to assist 47 workforce training projects with increasing high-demand job skills for more than 2,866 trainees at more than 68 businesses.

### ***Workforce Service Delivery***

- ▶ In April 2021, DWD's team was competitively selected into the DOL Employment & Training Administration (ETA) Winter 2021 Applied Data Analytics program through the [Coleridge Initiative](#).
- ▶ In December 2019, DET introduced a new, state-led eligible training provider list. This has led to the vetting of nearly 2,000 high-quality training programs.
- ▶ In April 2020, DET awarded \$260,243 in COVID-19 Virtual Support Supply grants to local workforce development boards.
- ▶ During the COVID-19 pandemic, DET quickly transitioned its Re-employment Service and Eligibility Assessment (RESEA) program from in-person group sessions to one-on-one tele-sessions to serve unemployment claimants with re-employment services and job search assistance.
- ▶ DET adopted virtual service delivery during the COVID-19 pandemic. Job Service launched virtual job seeking assistance workshops in December 2020, with attendance surpassing 200 by May 2021. In January 2021, Job Service obtained a virtual job fair tool. From January to June 2021, more than 3,000 job seekers and over 1,000 employers participated in more than 50 recruitment events.
- ▶ DET collaborated with the Department of Corrections (DOC) to launch five additional correctional job centers and one mobile career lab between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2021.

### ***Unlocking Workforce Opportunities***

- ▶ Five Apprenticeship Navigators were added throughout the state with one housed within DOC.
- ▶ The YA program implemented curriculum modernization efforts, completing eight of the three-year goal's 11 clusters in two years, representing 44 individual pathways.
- ▶ During the biennium, the \$999,000 COVID-19 disaster recovery DWG served 48 of the 72 participants planned to be served by June 30, 2022.
- ▶ The \$4,995,000 employment recovery DWG served 334 participants during the biennium.
- ▶ DET's Office of Skills Development developed and administered the Workforce Equity Grant program to provide education, skills training, and job placement services to underserved populations in southeastern Wisconsin to reduce racial disparities, narrow the education gap in the state's workforce, and place trained individuals in high-demand, family-supporting jobs. In 2021, DWD awarded two businesses grants totaling \$369,650 to benefit 124 underserved trainees.
- ▶ DET partnered with DOC to establish four mobile training classrooms between July 1, 2019 and June 30, 2021.

***Worker Protections and Rights***

- ▶ DET's Bureau of Job Service, in consultation with the Wisconsin Department of Health Services and interested stakeholders, promulgated emergency rules under the state's administrative code that provided extra COVID-19 related protections for migrant workers living in migrant labor camps. Housing provided under the H-2A temporary agricultural worker visa program is also covered by these emergency rules.
- ▶ Once a COVID-19 vaccine became available, DET's Bureau of Job Service collaborated with health care partners to support vaccine clinics where migrant and seasonal farm workers live and work.
- ▶ DET's Office of Veteran Employment Services Disabled Veteran Outreach Program staff connect veterans who may wish to file a claim for potential violation of the Uniformed Services Employment and Reemployment Act to a DOL Veterans' Employment and Training Service (VETS) representative. Local veteran employment representatives respond to inquiries from DOL's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs to respond to requests for information on possible employer violations of the Vietnam Era Veterans' Readjustment Act.

***Customer Service***

- ▶ In March 2020, DET worked closely with local workforce development boards (WDBs) to swiftly pivot to virtual service delivery models. DWD provided an additional \$260,243 and WDBs used the funds to purchase technology and implement virtual delivery models consistently statewide.
- ▶ After being closed to the public since March 2020, 14 job centers opened their doors to customers by appointment only on March 1, 2021. About 1,300 customers took advantage of the appointment service. In June 2021, services expanded to walk-in customers at all 19 comprehensive job centers and several affiliate job center sites. About 3,000 customers visited job centers during June 2021 alone.

***Career Pathways***

- ▶ The 2019-2021 Biennial Budget added two new career pathway programs: Shipbuilders and Workforce in County Jail Facilities. A \$1 million grant was awarded in each fiscal year to a shipbuilder, and grants for \$74,916 in 2020 and \$74,755 in 2021 were awarded to a county jail facility.
- ▶ DET's Office of Skills Development awarded \$500,000 in June 2021 to the University of Wisconsin System to promote and coordinate internships in high demand fields throughout the state.

***Operating Effectively and Efficiently While Enhancing Program Integrity***

- ▶ In response to COVID-19 and the resulting surge of unemployment claims, in late March 2020, DET quickly reallocated 50 staff to assist with UI claims processing.

## Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR)

### Mission

The mission of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) is to obtain, maintain, and improve employment for people with disabilities by working with consumers, employers, and other partners.

DVR serves:

- ▶ Individuals with disabilities, assisting them in maximizing their employment opportunities by helping them develop the skills that today's businesses are seeking in the workforce of the future; and,
- ▶ Wisconsin businesses, offering employers access to a pool of qualified job candidates with disabilities and disability-related information and resources to help them meet their workforce needs.

### Program Summary

DVR operations are located throughout Wisconsin, with many DVR offices co-located with Wisconsin Job Centers. DVR's central administrative office is in Madison.

DVR's primary services for job seekers with disabilities include:

- ▶ Career guidance and counseling.
- ▶ Disability and employment assessment.
- ▶ Job search and placement assistance.
- ▶ Information and referral services.
- ▶ Pre-employment transition services for students ages 14 to 21.
- ▶ Employment service support for individuals with significant disabilities.

All DVR services are developed in collaboration with the job seeker and written into an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE). At any given time, roughly 13,000 individuals with disabilities are actively working toward an IPE goal with DVR.

DVR works with Wisconsin businesses, assisting them to effectively recruit, hire, and retain workers with disabilities. During the biennium, 12 DVR Business Services Consultants were positioned across the state to develop relationships with Wisconsin businesses and help support their hiring and recruitment efforts.

DVR's primary services for businesses include:

- ▶ Recruitment of pre-screened and qualified applicants.
- ▶ Development of strategies to retain employees with disabilities.
- ▶ Access to financial incentives for hiring qualified applicants with disabilities.
- ▶ Assistance to increase accessibility of business products and services for employees and customers.
- ▶ Education for managers and staff related to disability and employment.

## Summary of Accomplishments

### Key Metrics

Thousands of job seekers with disabilities in Wisconsin became employed because of DVR services and thousands more applied and were determined eligible for DVR services, as illustrated in the table below.

DVR Outcomes Data	SFY 2020	SFY 2021
Applicants for services	10,328	8,591
Successful employment outcomes	3,451	3,095
Eligibility determinations	10,116	7,547
Average hourly wage	\$14.20	\$14.84
Average hours worked per week	25	25.8

The global pandemic was a significant factor in overall decreases in DVR applicants and successful employment outcomes between SFY 2020 and 2021, as individuals with disabilities temporarily stopped receiving DVR services or did not apply due to health concerns related to COVID-19.

### Workforce Services Delivery

#### COMPETITIVE INTEGRATED EMPLOYMENT

On March 28, 2018, the 2017 Wisconsin Act 178 was enacted into law, requiring DWD, the Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS), and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to work together to increase the competitive integrated employment (CIE) of working age people with disabilities who receive public services outside their home. Since this date, DVR has partnered with DHS and DPI to write two CIE biennial plans and produce three annual reports. Each CIE plan includes an executive summary, guiding CIE principles from each agency, and targets for CIE performance improvement. See the [CIE website](#) for more information.

### Worker Protections and Rights

Beginning in mid-March, DVR switched to virtual consumer meetings, and encouraged service providers to do the same to keep everyone safe during the COVID-19 pandemic. DWD and DVR leadership worked quickly to ensure that all staff had necessary equipment to work efficiently work from home. DVR employed accountability measures to ensure staff productivity and created support mechanisms to ensure that staff had access to tools and resources for medical and emotional support.

### Unlocking Workforce Opportunities

#### CORRECTIONAL INSTITUTIONS

DVR and DWD's Division of Employment and Training partnered to provide workforce services to individuals at nine correctional institutions, with DVR most recently serving individuals at Chippewa Valley Treatment Correctional Center and Prairie du Chien Correctional Institution.

#### REDUCING THE DVR WAITLIST

Beginning December 2020, DVR began monthly activations of the Category 3 waitlist and activates these cases regularly.

## ***Career Pathways***

### PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES

DVR has continued to increase its role in providing transition services to students with disabilities over the biennium. Under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), 15 percent of federal VR funds must be used for pre-employment transition services. In Wisconsin, DVR is required to fund approximately \$9.76 million per year for these transition services. In federal fiscal year 2020, DVR expended \$9,757,998 on these services.

### PROJECT SEARCH

The number of active sites participating in Wisconsin [Project SEARCH](#) grew from 27 during the 2019-2020 school year to 30 in the 2020-2021 school year. Despite local business closures and schools adopting virtual instruction due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Wisconsin was able to successfully operate 20 of its 30 Project SEARCH sites during the 2020-21 school year. The program proudly graduated 160 interns during the pandemic who are now prepared members of the Wisconsin workforce. Compared to Project SEARCH programs nationally, Wisconsin exceeded national averages in both graduation and employment rate during the 2019-2020 school year.

## ***Customer Service***

### ENHANCED VIRTUAL SERVICE OPPORTUNITIES

Beginning in March 2020, DVR switched to virtual consumer meetings and encouraged service providers to do the same. DVR worked quickly to ensure all staff had laptops and cell phones so they could efficiently work from home. Throughout the rest of the year, DVR counselors worked closely with consumers to determine their comfort and interest in searching for work. Depending on individual consumer needs, some continued with job search efforts while others either requested a temporary pause or focused their efforts on developing job readiness skills to be better prepared for work following the pandemic. Despite the obstacles presented by COVID-19, hundreds of DVR consumers successfully achieved their employment goals during this period.

### EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Consistency and continuity are key components of quality customer service for DVR consumers. To ensure service consistency and continuity, DVR has focused on increasing employee retention. Over the biennium, DVR has implemented the following strategies:

- ▶ DVR has worked diligently to address compensation concerns and continues to work with DWD's Human Resources staff to focus on retention efforts that will adequately compensate DVR staff.
- ▶ In 2021, DVR issued a bid to engage the services of an outside organization for diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) consulting services. These services will include assessment of the division's baseline for DEI and plan development for DVR to address and implement recommendations to improve DEI statewide.

### TRIBAL OUTREACH

DVR has assigned tribal liaison staff for each of Wisconsin's 11 federally recognized tribes. These liaisons provide scheduled hours on each tribal reservation to improve outreach and access to services for individuals with disabilities who are Tribal members. DVR developed and published a [tribal liaison staff directory](#) indicating the DVR staff person serving as liaison for each Wisconsin Tribe. As of June 2021, 2 percent of current DVR consumers self-identify as Native American.

## ***Operating Effectively and Efficiently While Enhancing Program Integrity***

### DATA COLLECTION

Over the biennium, DVR improved its data collection, security, and quality through enhancements to its case management system, IRIS. DVR:

- ◆ Implemented systems to allow electronic invoices to be attached to consumer records. These enhancements allowed DVR to leverage technology to streamline processes.
- ◆ Automated batch processing of Social Security reimbursement claims. This improved staff efficiency and expedited payment collection for this important revenue stream.
- ◆ Improved processes for exchanging data with post-secondary educational institutions.

### DATA DASHBOARDS

DVR made several improvements to its data dashboard during the biennium to improve efficiency, reduce maintenance costs, and update the division's management and reporting of fiscal resources. Additional demographics were added to track and understand the diverse makeup of DVR consumers. DVR is now tracking consumer information by race, age, ethnicity, disability, and gender.

### EXISTING BUSINESS POLICY UPDATES

DVR updated the standard policy that DVR staff follow when working with people with disabilities who want to maintain self-employment through their existing business. Revisions to the policy expanded the criteria for determining whether a DVR eligible self-employed individual is eligible to receive services under this policy. Updates to the policy will make it easier for DVR consumers to access DVR services and assistive technology.

### CONTINUITY OF SERVICE PROVIDER SUPPORT

Early in the pandemic, DVR recognized that its valued network of service provider partners would be in a better position to retain staff if DVR provided short-term subsidies to assist with expensive technology upgrades necessary to efficiently transition to remote consumer services. On March 30, COVID-19 supplemental fees were made available to DVR service providers for the delivery of several key services. These extra payments were offered until previously planned permanent fee increases and contract efficiencies were implemented for all service providers on July 1, 2020.

### TRAUMA INFORMED CARE TRAINING AND POLICIES

DVR implemented new staff training requirements focused on enhancing trauma awareness among all DVR personnel. This training has improved service delivery and successful employment outcomes for DVR consumers, including minority consumers.



## Unemployment Insurance Division (UI)

### Mission

To facilitate financial stability and a prosperous Wisconsin economy by delivering high-quality, innovative, customer-driven unemployment services.

### Program Summary

The UI program's primary roles are to provide:

- ▶ **Temporary economic assistance** to individuals who find themselves unemployed through no fault of their own and who are actively seeking work.
- ▶ **Economic stability** in the community during periods of economic downturn.

UI benefits are financed by federal and state taxes paid by employers who are subject to federal/state UI laws. Wisconsin was the first state to enact a UI law in 1932 to help stabilize the effects of the Great Depression.

During the reporting period, the program was called upon to respond to COVID-19. The program responded by providing billions of dollars of economic relief to Wisconsinites through the regular unemployment insurance and federal pandemic unemployment insurance payment programs.

The UI Division's areas of responsibility include:

- ▶ **UI Administration** - Handles the development of strategic plans, operating budgets, system modernization, information technology coordination, communications, and legislative and customer relations. UI Administration is also responsible for Quality Control (QC), providing statistically valid estimates of the accuracy of both benefit payments and decisions and auditing UI Tax operations to ensure accuracy and timeliness.
- ▶ **Benefit Operations Bureau (BOB)** - Processes claims, adjudicates disputes, and ensures proper payment of benefits.
- ▶ **Bureau of Tax and Accounting (BTA)** - Collects, controls, and accounts for flow of funds into and out of the UI program; establishes tax liability; maintains employer accounts; audits employers to promote and verify employer compliance with state laws, regulations, and policies; and collects unpaid employer taxes and benefit overpayments.
- ▶ **Bureau of Legal Affairs (BOLA)** - Provides legal advice and services for the division, handles internal security, processes UI benefit and tax appeals, represents DWD in court and administrative proceedings, conducts research and analysis on UI laws and policies, investigates and educates employers on worker misclassification, and provides support to the Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council (UIAC).
- ▶ **Bureau of Management and Information Services (BMIS)** - Handles project management, imaging and document management, business analysis and automation, telecom, and data services.

## Summary of Accomplishments

### Key Metrics

Thousands of job seekers with disabilities in Wisconsin became employed because of DVR services and thousands more applied and were determined eligible for DVR services, as illustrated in the table below.

Unemployment Insurance Key Metrics	Calendar Year 2019	Calendar Year 2020
Funded by Employer Contributions		
Taxable Employers	143,700	148,210
UI Taxes Collected	\$553.6 million	\$499.9 million
UI Trust Fund Balance	\$1.960 billion	\$1.137 billion
Provide Temporary Economic Assistance to Eligible Workers		
UI Initial Claims Processed	292,493	1,479,879
UI Benefits Paid	\$0.394 billion	\$4.811 billion
Workers Filing Weekly Claims	169,623	722,223
Regular Weekly Claims Processed	1,633,244	9,720,964
Average Telephone Calls per Week (includes calls that were received but were not placed in queue.)	6,903	162,970
Administrative Oversight		
UI Benefit Appeals Filed	16,721	48,088
UI Tax Appeals Filed	418	211

### Workforce Service Delivery

#### PANDEMIC RESPONSE

In 2019, UI paid under \$400 million in benefits, less than any year since 1990. In 2020, UI paid an unprecedented \$4.8 billion in benefits: \$1.6 billion in state UI and \$3.2 billion in federal and extended programs.

#### CLAIMANT PORTAL REDESIGN

In March 2021, UI launched a new My UI Home page and redesigned My UI Summary page on the Claimant Portal. Images of the redesigned features can be found on the [New Portal Features page](#).

#### SECURE MESSAGING

To enhance services and communicate effectively to all customers, UI implemented a secure messaging exchange between UI staff and claimants in March 2021.

#### CLAIMANT DOCUMENT UPLOAD CAPABILITIES

In March 2021, UI introduced functionality to allow claimants to submit select documents to UI staff using an 'Upload Documents' option in the Claimant Portal Message Center.

### Unlocking Workforce Opportunities

#### WORK-SHARE

The Work-Share program (also called Short-Term Compensation or STC), is designed to allow employers to avoid layoffs during times of reduced business activity. Participating in the Work-Share program

benefits both employers and employees, allowing qualified employers to retain their trained staff while employees maintain partial income and their full health benefits. At the program's peak during the pandemic, UI had 680 active Work-Share plans with approximately 22,000 participants.

### ***Worker Protections and Rights***

#### WORKER CLASSIFICATION

Protecting the rights of workers and employers through proper worker classification is a priority mission for the Unemployment Insurance Division. In April 2019, Gov. Evers created the Joint Enforcement Task Force on Payroll Fraud and Worker Misclassification.

During the past two fiscal years, DWD has worked with the Task Force's Interagency Coordinated Enforcement Team to address interagency coordination of worker classification investigations and data sharing between DWD, other state agencies, and stakeholders representing workers and the business community. DWD has also worked with the Task Force to develop recommendations on law changes to strengthen the state's ability to investigate worker misclassification. DWD will continue to work with the Interagency Coordinated Enforcement Team in the development of solutions to combat worker misclassification.

### ***Customer Service***

In 2020 with an unprecedented volume of claims, UI responded with additional customer service:

- ▶ Extended call hours for the general assistance line to 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Monday through Friday and 7 a.m. to 2 p.m. on Saturdays.
- ▶ Created an identity hotline to assist with taking statements from potential victims of identity theft.
- ▶ Contracted with a vendor to provide 500 agents to assist with claimant inquiries.
- ▶ Created a Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA) hotline to answer inquiries from claimants regarding the PUA program.
- ▶ Responded to over 41,000 legislative inquiries between March 2020 and June 30, 2021.

To improve claimants' understanding of UI benefits and the process to apply for benefits, UI has rewritten application questions in plain language. UI will continue reviewing claimant applications to improve the experience for those who file for UI benefits. Additionally, the UI Division is reviewing the UI claimant handbook to improve readability and aesthetics.

### ***Operating Effectively and Efficiently While Enhancing Program Integrity***

#### UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE ADVISORY COUNCIL (UIAC)

The UIAC advises DWD and the Legislature on policy matters concerning the development and administration of UI law. Council deliberations and negotiations resolve difficult issues and tend to efficiently balance the interests of employers and employees, while providing long-term stability for the UI program. UIAC activities and related UI reports can be found on the [Unemployment Insurance Advisory Council page](#).

#### SAVING EMPLOYER'S TAX DOLLARS

Tax rates for 2022 and 2023 will remain in the lowest rate schedule, Schedule D. Wisconsin's 2021-23 biennial budget included \$60 million each year of the biennium to support employers and the Unemployment Insurance Trust Fund. The budget keeps tax rates low for 2022 and 2023 to help employers recover from the effects of the pandemic.

## Worker's Compensation Division (WCD)

### Mission

The mission of the Worker's Compensation Division is the promotion of healthy, safe work environments by maintaining a balanced system of services to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Wisconsin Worker's Compensation Act.

### Program Summary

WCD administers programs designed to advance worker protections by ensuring that injured workers receive prompt payment of required benefits from private insurance companies or self-insured employers. WCD also encourages rehabilitation and reemployment for injured workers and promotes the reduction of work-related injuries, illness, and deaths. The division ensures compliance with the Worker's Compensation Act, which includes, among other efforts, advancing worker protections and providing exceptional customer service.

Highlights of key functions include:

- ▶ Division staff manage the worker's compensation claims program, provide claimant assistance, set permanent disability ratings for claimants, and monitor accuracy and promptness of payments, health cost disputes, and return-to-work programs.
- ▶ Division attorneys resolve disputes related to health care service fees, necessity of treatment, and pharmacy fee schedules.
- ▶ WCD oversees the insurance functions of the worker's compensation program by managing the self-insurers program, the Uninsured Employers Fund, and the wrap-up insurance program.
- ▶ WCD also serves as a liaison to the Wisconsin Compensation Rating Bureau and the Office of the Commissioner of Insurance.

In fulfilling these responsibilities, WCD maintains a commitment to the delivery of exceptional customer service through streamlining services, empowering staff, and providing robust outreach and education.

The Worker's Compensation Division (WCD) conducted two virtual workshops in 2020, including one in November 2020 that drew more than 180 remote attendees from 14 states. Conducted via WebEx, WCD Dispute Resolution Specialist Frank Salvi (top right) moderated several of the workshop sessions.



## Summary of Accomplishments

### Key Metrics

Selected Uninsured Employer Fund Metrics	2019-21
Uninsured Employer Fund (UEF) June 30 Balance (end of biennium)	\$31.9 million
Completed employer investigations by UEF Staff	47,445
Payments through UEF on behalf of workers injured while working for illegally uninsured employers	\$4.8 million

Selected Claims Program Metrics	2019-21
Number of claims created for claim applications, third parties, and hearing loss	3,429
Number of non-litigated claims scrutinized for accurate and timely payments	57,351
Number of verified/processed litigated and non-litigated claims for wage information	8,990

Selected Legal Services Metrics	2019-21
Number of processed and closed disputes involving reasonableness of fees, necessity of treatment, or pharmacy fee schedule	9,668
Number of processed hearing requests	7,334
Number of orders issued by DWD/WCD Administrative Law Judges	2,763

### Worker Protections and Rights

WCD reviewed 57,351 non-litigated claims for accuracy and action, making prompt payments of over \$726 million in total benefits; resolved 9,668 disputes involving reasonableness of fees, necessity of treatment, and the pharmacy fee schedule; and monitored the Uninsured Employer Fund (UEF) balance. The UEF ended the biennium with a balance of \$31.9 million, a \$5.4 million increase over the past biennium, ensuring available resources to satisfy existing and future claims, thereby advancing both worker protections and quality customer service.

Additionally, to advance worker protections, WCD accomplished the following:

- ▶ Assessed penalties on 4,139 employers for operating without worker's compensation insurance.
- ▶ Collected penalty assessments of \$8.4 million from illegally uninsured employers.
- ▶ Investigated and processed 33 claims for the Uninsured Employers Fund (UEF).
- ▶ Monitored 162 private and 60 public self-insured Wisconsin employers as a part of our self-insurance program.
- ▶ Approved two new wrap-up projects - large construction projects with a single policy covering all contractors. Wrap-up projects are designed to provide a coordinated project safety program.
- ▶ Calculated Permanent Partial Disability (PPD) estimates for more than 6,952 litigated and non-litigated claims.
- ▶ Processed 78,409 pieces of litigated mail.

- ▶ Received and processed, through the Kofax Fax Importation application, 69,231 documents on non-litigated claims. Kofax allows the faxed information to remain electronic while claim entries are made and information is sent to other staff through electronic workflow.
- ▶ Received 281,090 electronic transmissions of claim-related information by users of the division's Pending Reports internet application. This is a secure login, real-time application for both viewing claim information and submitting required reports.
- ▶ Reviewed 603 claims, many of them on an ongoing monthly basis, for the purposes of fulfilling the division's federal Medicare Secondary Payer Mandatory Reporting requirement as laid out in Section 111 of the Medicare, Medicaid, and SCHIP Extension Act (MMSEA) of 2007. WCD completed necessary claim entries and reported further information to the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services when applicable.
- ▶ Issued written orders resolving and responded to legal mail and other inquiries involving non-litigated cases.
- ▶ Managed the fraud reporting program.
- ▶ Provided support for the Worker's Compensation Advisory Council and Health Care Provider Advisory Committee. WCD proposed amendments to the law and to DWD 80 and 81 of the Wisconsin Administrative Code, promulgated administrative rules, and provided staff assistance for ad hoc and statutory committees.

### **Customer Service**

WCD demonstrates an ongoing commitment to the delivery of exceptional customer service including, amid significant challenges over the biennium during the pandemic, the following:

- ▶ In March 2020, all WCD staff members rose to meet the unprecedented challenges of COVID-19. In just five business days, WCD transformed itself from a division with only one member working from home on a part-time basis to a division with all but eight members, whose core job functions could not be performed outside of GEF-1, working remotely full-time.
- ▶ In April 2020, WCD transformed its semiannual in-person training workshops for insurance adjusters, WC specialists, and others to 100 percent virtual, garnering an unprecedented attendance of over 100 participants from within and outside Wisconsin. Subsequent all-virtual trainings in November 2020 and April 2021 each drew upwards of 200 participants from more than a dozen states.

### **IT ENHANCEMENTS**

WCD leveraged 21st century technology solutions to streamline and provide more timely and accurate services to all WCD stakeholders. Select examples include:

- ▶ Implemented barred claims in State Funds Tracking (SFT), resulting in 99 percent of Work Injury Supplemental Benefit Fund (WISBF) award payments being made through and tracked in SFT. This reduced the number of direct invoices processed by staff and allowed for more audit controls.
- ▶ Updated certified databases and forms necessary for the health care services reasonableness of fee dispute resolution process.
- ▶ Completed phase 2 of the eDocs upgrade, migrating this database to Oracle 18C on Exadata.
- ▶ Completed conversion of Electronic Data Interchange (EDI) batch jobs to .Net, eliminating WCD's use of PowerBuilder.

## Equal Rights Division (ERD)

### Mission

To protect the rights of all people in Wisconsin under the civil rights and labor standards laws we administer, to achieve compliance through education, outreach, and enforcement by empowered and committed employees, and to perform our responsibilities with reasonableness, efficiency, and fairness.

### Program Summary

The Equal Rights Division (ERD) helps make Wisconsin a fair and just place for people to work. Wisconsin was among the first states to enact child labor laws, anti-discrimination laws, and protections for family and medical leave.

ERD enforces over 40 state laws protecting the people of Wisconsin. These include laws that:

- ▶ Protect individuals from harassment and other discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodation.
- ▶ Provide workers with job-protected leave for family and medical needs.
- ▶ Regulate minimum wages, hours worked, and other terms and conditions of work.
- ▶ Regulate the safe employment of minors.
- ▶ Require timely payment of wages.
- ▶ Require appropriate notification of plant closings to workers and state agencies.

ERD's dedicated staff investigates complaints, identifies violations, resolves disputes if possible, and makes determinations of liability. Additionally, ERD offers resources and develops and implements educational programs to help workers and employers understand their rights and responsibilities.

### Summary of Accomplishments

#### Key Metrics

- ▶ ERD equal rights officers investigated 5,232 civil rights complaints during the biennium. These complaints included 4,483 on fair employment law, 201 on family and medical leave law, 244 on fair housing, 150 on public accommodations, and 104 on health care retaliation. In over 500 of those cases, ERD investigators found probable cause to believe the law had been violated.
- ▶ Over 2,160 civil rights complaints were certified to hearing. Parties voluntarily agreed to prehearing mediation before ERD Administrative Law Judges in 829 of those cases. Of those mediations, 64 percent resulted in settlement.
- ▶ Officers investigated 2,851 labor standards complaints, over 2,300 of which involved claims for owed wages.
- ▶ Through ERD's investigation and enforcement, the division was able to collect over \$2.5 million in wages owed to Wisconsin workers.

#### Workforce Service Delivery

ERD began focusing on increasing access to services well before the COVID-19 pandemic, however the pandemic fueled urgency to deliver services without dependence on physical offices and in-person contact. The pandemic made it impossible to conduct in-person administrative hearings, so

ERD developed and rolled out an online hearing process that allowed parties to participate in evidentiary hearings using an online platform, and, by October 2020, all ERD administrative law judges were conducting online hearings and mediations. Customer feedback has been positive, and ERD continues to conduct its hearings online and develop solutions to allow individuals without internet access or who have other barriers to participate in online hearings.

Online complaint forms also make it easier for people to exercise their rights and for ERD to investigate complaints. ERD rolled out [online labor standards complaint forms](#) in April 2021.

Many child labor permit offices closed during the pandemic, making it difficult for 14- and 15-year-olds to obtain legally required labor permits. In addition, child labor permit requirements were suspended under Emergency Order #13. ERD provided up-to-date information on changing requirements allowing these critical workers to work, and as permit offices began to reopen, ERD rolled out an [interactive online map](#) that made it easy for people to find open permit offices.

Finally, to expand its service delivery partnerships, ERD updated its roster of community partners and is currently reaching out to identify resources and services ERD can provide to help them advocate for worker rights.

### ***Unlocking Workforce Opportunities***

Today's workforce is less dependent on physical offices than ever before, and more workers and employment professionals rely on online resources to understand their rights and responsibilities. In the last two fiscal years, ERD has responded by developing more online and mobile-friendly resources.

The [DWD eWorkboard](#) offers an alternative to standard workplace posters by making the information readily available online and quickly accessible using QR codes. ERD also regularly publishes eNewsletters, such as the [Know Your Rights newsletter](#), to deliver timely updates to workers, employers, and employment professionals directly to their email inboxes.

ERD also expanded its collaboration with other DWD divisions during the biennium to meet the needs of Wisconsin residents with barriers to employment. ERD increased training and resources for frontline staff to help them identify opportunities for ERD to serve and updated anti-discrimination and anti-harassment training for local apprenticeship boards.

### ***Worker Protections and Rights***

ERD developed new resources during the biennium to make it easier for Wisconsin workers to know and exercise their rights. These new resources also help employers understand their responsibilities to make employment fair and accessible to all. New resources not previously mentioned in this report include ERD's [60-Second Questions videos](#), which provide timely answers to workplace rights questions using digital video.



## Customer Service

In addition to increased digital access, ERD has improved its customer experience through enhanced communication efforts, ensuring clear, concise, and positive language to make processes more transparent and effective. ERD developed standardized language to use in email correspondence with complainants to improve complainant understanding and ensure quality customer service.

ERD also made it easier for division partners and frontline staff to direct employees and job seekers to labor standards and civil rights resources online using the [QR Code Print On-Demand page](#).

ERD continued to improve its call handling and intake processes during the biennium, leveraging modern technology to allow remote staff to answer calls efficiently. ERD also conducted customer surveys to identify opportunities to build awareness of ERD offerings and improve customer service.

## Career Pathways

ERD's greatest asset is its dedicated and knowledgeable staff. During the biennium, ERD streamlined its onboarding and training of new equal rights officers to help them more efficiently learn the wide range of laws ERD enforces to more quickly take on a full caseload of investigations. ERD also increased team touch bases and regular communications to build employee engagement and peer support. Given the division's largely remote workforce, this increase in communication would not have been possible without leveraging improved online collaboration technology, such as SharePoint and MS Teams.

Employee engagement remained a strategic priority for ERD and key to its continued success. ERD continued to use stay interviews to help measure employee engagement, find opportunities to improve, and better support employee development. Other engagement tools, such as an internal newsletter, kept ERD employees feeling connected as a team as workplace realities evolved throughout the pandemic.



Keep your workforce informed.  
Add our QR Code to your documents.



## ERD Debuts DWD eWorkBoard

In July 2020, ERD published the DWD eWorkBoard, a virtual collection of workplace posters and the first DWD application to use a QR Code to improve access. The DWD eWorkBoard and QR Code make it possible for all employees, no matter where they are, to access a collection of workplace posters through their personal devices. Additionally, employers can share the QR Code with their remote workforce by placing it on any document.

## Administrative Services Division (ASD)

### Mission

Provide strategic vision, leadership, and solutions with our business partners to empower clients and customers.

### Program Summary

The Administrative Services Division (ASD), formerly Division of Operations prior to its July 1, 2021 name change, provides administrative and operational support to DWD divisions and programs. The division ensures issues are identified and analyzed, and that recommendations and actions are appropriate, coordinated, and consistent with DWD policies, goals, and objectives. The division performs the following functions:

- ▶ **Agency-wide financial management:** financial reporting, accounts payable, accounts receivable, financial transactions, allocations, and rate creation.
- ▶ **Budget and policy:** budgeting, biennial budget preparation, and draft fiscal estimates for legislative bill analysis.
- ▶ **Information technology services:** IT security, compliance and risk management, application development, business intelligence, document processing and management, IT Help Desk, workstation support services, IT Infrastructure support services, and computer batch processing services.
- ▶ **General services:** facilities management, telecommunications management, fleet coordination, mail processing, and imaging services.
- ▶ **Procurement and information management:** purchasing, webpage creation and management, and records and forms management.
- ▶ **Enterprise solutions:** project management, contract management, lean/continuous improvement, facilitation, strategic planning, business analysis, negotiation, budget and data analysis, emergency management, policy development, health, safety, and wellness program development, and workforce planning.

### Summary of Accomplishments

#### Key Metrics

- ▶ Completed 79 fiscal notes for legislative bills and Legislative Reference Bureau drafts.
- ▶ Developed and submitted DWD's biennial [Agency Budget Request](#).
- ▶ Processed 19,354 vouchers for suppliers, sub-recipients, and benefit payments during this period.
- ▶ Prepared and submitted monthly COVID-19 trackers to DOA to report expenditures incurred as the result of the pandemic. DWD received \$88 million in reimbursements from Coronavirus Relief Funds (CRF) for expenditures incurred between March 2020 and June 2021.

#### Workforce Service Delivery

ASD implemented and expanded the DWD Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's SARA office assistance artificial intelligence tool to provide DVR consumers greater flexibility and options by allowing them to access DVR services through mobile devices.

ASD worked with DWD's Equal Rights Division to modernize the Labor Standards Online Compliant system allowing external users to submit complaints online and streamline the review process, including an informational public-facing webpage for available grant programs.

### ***Unlocking Workforce Opportunities***

ASD deployed business intelligence solutions by implementing numerous internal and public-facing dashboards and forecasting and predictive modeling tools. The BITS business intelligence team, with support from the Workforce Data Quality Initiative, completed development of the Longitudinal Workforce Database, an enterprise research and analytics tool that provides information on how individuals are being served through multiple programs in different systems.

### ***Worker Protections and Rights***

In coordination with the Equal Rights Division, ASD developed and deployed the SAFE Employers system which helps employers allow employees subject to domestic abuse or sexual violence seek needed assistance without fear of adverse job consequences.

### ***Customer Service***

During the biennium, ASD delivered on its commitment to exceptional customer service through the following activities:

- ▶ Activated the department's pandemic Continuity of Operations Plan (COOP) plan on March 12, 2020. Between March 12 and March 31, more than 80 percent of DWD staff transitioned to remote work. At the same time, incident command staff worked with divisions and service partners to develop sustainability and reintegration plans that permitted a safe, measured approach to in-person services and eventual reintegration.
- ▶ Introduced a peer support program in September 2020 to help staff cope with issues presented by the pandemic. Over 50 staff were directly supported by a DWD Peer Support Specialist during the biennium.
- ▶ Expanded and redesigned the Employee Engagement (EE) program to provide a more comprehensive plan to retain employees and boost morale. Each division was assigned an EE liaison to support employee engagement and workplace satisfaction initiatives.
- ▶ The Health, Safety and Wellness Committee created a weekly communication during the pandemic called Wellness Weekly. Issues of Wellness Weekly cover topics related to physical, mental, and emotional health.
- ▶ Secured and relocated office space across the state to enhance employment and training and vocational rehabilitation outreach services to better serve consumers and achieve cost savings.
- ▶ Assisted with procurement and delivery of cleaning and sanitizing supplies, signage, plexiglass, and other PPE to maintain safety protocols at the height of the pandemic.
- ▶ Developed the Request for Information (RFI), Request for Proposal (RFP), and contract language for UI Modernization project, a \$16.5 million investment for the Unemployment Insurance program to replace its antiquated mainframe platform.
- ▶ Redesigned and modernized the internal DWD WorkWeb to make it easier for employees to locate information.
- ▶ Worked on 508 compliance requirements to ensure DWD form accessibility for people with disabilities.
- ▶ Developed new functional Retention Disposition Authorizations (RDA) for UI call data and recordings.

### ***Career Pathways***

ASD coordinated an internal career pathways strategy for DWD staff to advance their government careers:

- ▶ Hosted Careers, Coffee & Conversation and Moving Up, Down, and Around in State Government sessions.
- ▶ Led a continuous improvement event to streamline the DWD hiring process.
- ▶ Created a mentorship program that will be introduced in the fall of 2021.
- ▶ Introduced a new leadership development program in 2020 when Aspiring Leaders training was halted due to the pandemic. Six courses were conducted virtually, both live and instructor led, in partnership with UW-Continuing Studies. In total, 181 participants completed the courses.

### ***Operating Effectively and Efficiently While Enhancing Program Integrity***

- ▶ Reconciled DWD's 1,655.55 full time equivalent (FTE) positions and developed base funding requests for 53 appropriations for the 2021-23 Biennial Budget.
- ▶ Modeled a five percent reduction in operations as required under 2015 Act 201 and a base budget review report as required under 2017 Act 212 and submitted these items with submission of DWD's 2021-23 [Agency Budget Request](#).
- ▶ Deployed project managers to UI to manage the Google projects for recharging, Doc AI (artificial intelligence), reducing the UI backlog, and security hardening. ADS's Bureau of Enterprise Solutions served as the program manager for all UI IT projects, which also included projects for plain language, Splunk, Lexus Nexus, and civil rights compliance.
- ▶ Coordinated with the UI Division to successfully implement new federal UI programs under the CARES Act and American Rescue Plan Act, including: Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC), Pandemic Emergency Unemployment Compensation (PEUC), Pandemic Unemployment Assistance (PUA), and Mixed Earners Unemployment Compensation (MEUC).
- ▶ Completed a continuous improvement project streamlining processes for paying for multi-functional devices. This resulted in an improved error rate by reducing the number of purchase orders from over 100 to one per division.
- ▶ Assisted with enhancements to the Worker's Compensation State Funds Tracking System (SFTS). The enhancements allowed more payments to be interfaced to STAR, reducing manual entry, increasing efficiencies, and reducing the error rate.
- ▶ In response to the pandemic, effectively coordinated with DWD divisions, agency partners, and external vendors to deliver virtual services to manage increased workloads, ramp up additional call centers for the influx of call volume, and implement necessary technologies for telecommunications connectivity and safeguards to ensure continuity of service and secure remote access.
- ▶ Established approximately 1,200 Skype for Business telephony accounts.



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