

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Department: Social Services

HB Section(s): 11.215

Program Name: Services for the Visually Impaired

Program is found in the following core budget(s): Services for the Visually Impaired

1a. What strategic priority does this program address?

Move individuals to economic independence

1b. What does this program do?

The Department of Social Services, Family Support Division administers seven service programs to help blind and visually impaired Missouri citizens by delivering services necessary to obtain employment and independent living skills commensurate with their goals and abilities.

Rehabilitation Services for the Blind (RSB) administers the following seven service programs: Vocational Rehabilitation (VR), Business Enterprise Program (BEP), Children's Services (CS), Prevention of Blindness (POB), Readers for the Blind, Independent Living Rehabilitation (ILR), and Independent Living- Older Blind (ILR-OB).

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR)

The VR program provides the services necessary to enable blind and visually impaired individuals to retain, maintain, or obtain employment.

Services are provided in accordance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 2014 by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). Through partnerships with the WIOA core partners and a combined state plan, RSB began braiding employment services including job assessment, job training, and job development across agencies. The impact of the new regulations includes redefining employment outcomes and eliminating specific employment categories, new staff training and qualification standards, new performance measures, and an emphasis on the Pre-Employment Transition services for Students with a Disability, which requires 15% of the grant be dedicated to these specific services.

Services are provided either directly by RSB staff or outsourced. Direct services provided by staff include: adjustment and vocational counseling and guidance; job development and placement; travel; job training; and instruction in communication, personal management and independent living skills. Supported Employment services, including customized employment, are provided for the most significantly disabled individuals. Equipment and services such as physical restoration, adaptive aids and devices, and training are purchased for blind and visually impaired consumers.

WIOA reforms and modernizes the public workforce system and enhances several key employment, education, and training programs. WIOA also implemented new federal performance measures. Beginning in SFY 2018, RSB began capturing data to develop a baseline to determine the federal level of performance required beginning in SFY 2021. RSB was recognized by the Rehabilitation Services Administration as the top performing blind-services agency in the Nation in 2018. Those who received services through RSB had a 68.5% employment rate after services were completed. The national rate for all agencies (both blind and general) was 49.2%.

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Business Enterprise Program (BEP)

This program provides self-employment opportunities for Missourians who are blind or visually impaired. Services are provided in accordance with the Randolph-Sheppard Act establishing vending, convenience stores, snack bars, or full-service cafeterias in state and federal buildings, including dining services for military troops at Ft. Leonard Wood. RSB staff provide comprehensive training, technical assistance in the set-up of new or existing facilities, and assist facility managers in analyzing the business effectiveness of service, profitability, design and efficiency. In SFY 2020, this program consisted of 33 facilities, generating \$41,001,603 in gross sales, and employed 982 Missourians.

Prevention of Blindness (POB)

The Prevention of Blindness Program arranges for and provides eye care to medically indigent persons. Services provided for eye care include treatment, surgery, hospitalization, medication and other physical restoration services, a glaucoma screening program, and full scale screening clinics for glaucoma and vision. In addition, based on the availability of funds, the Blindness Education, Screening and Treatment (BEST) program fund, provides for blindness education, screening and treatment for eligible medically indigent persons.

Children's Services (CS)

Provides early identification/intervention, educational advocacy, parent education referral and resource information, and counseling and guidance services to families with visually impaired children from birth to transition to an adult program. Staff also provides consultation to schools serving blind and visually impaired children.

Readers for the Blind

The program provides up to \$500 per year to meet the cost of those who are readers for legally blind individuals who are attending eligible post-secondary institutions.

Independent Living Rehabilitation (ILR-Adult)

Provides the services required by eligible consumers to obtain their maximum level of independence. Services include training provided by staff in areas of communication, personal management, and homemaking skills. Equipment and services such as physical restoration and other training are purchased.

Independent Living Rehabilitation - Older Blind (ILR-OB)

Provides eye exams, peer counseling, low vision aids, training in orientation and mobility, communication and other activities of daily living for blind and visually impaired individuals over age 55. This program strives to improve the individual's ability to function independently and safely in the home and community.

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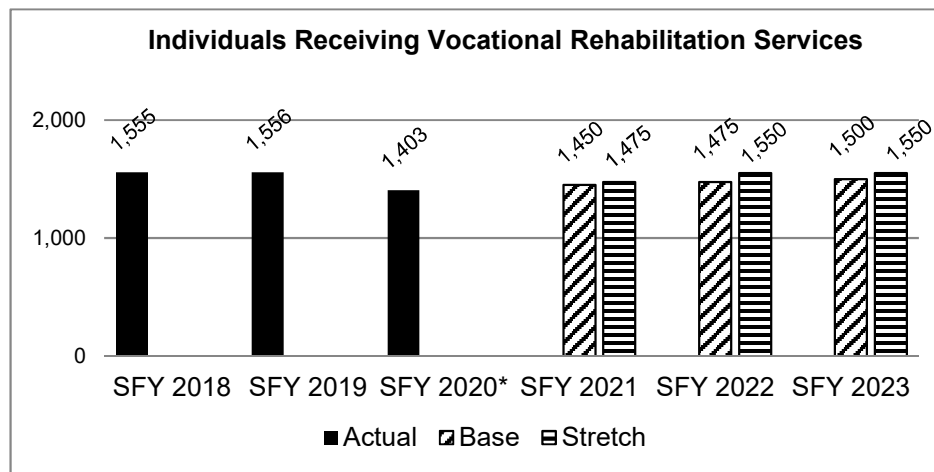
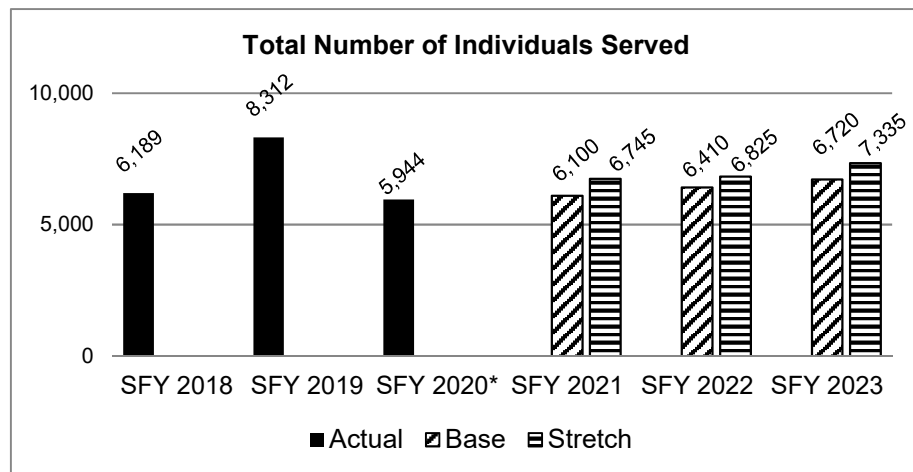
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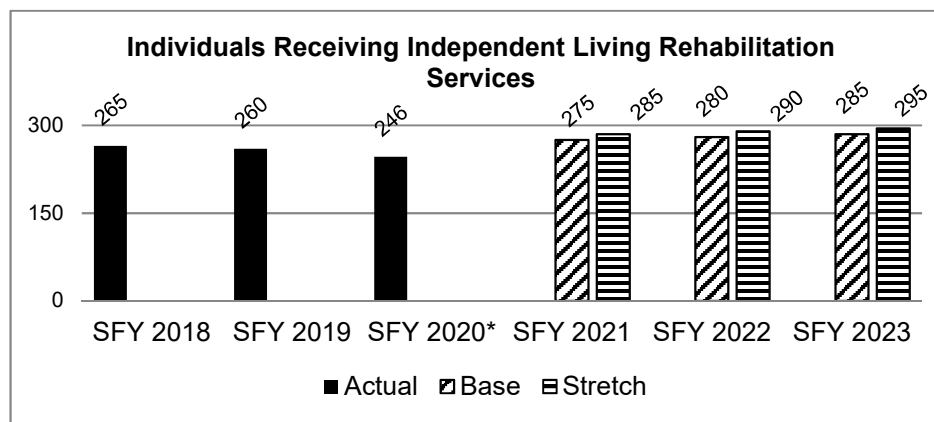
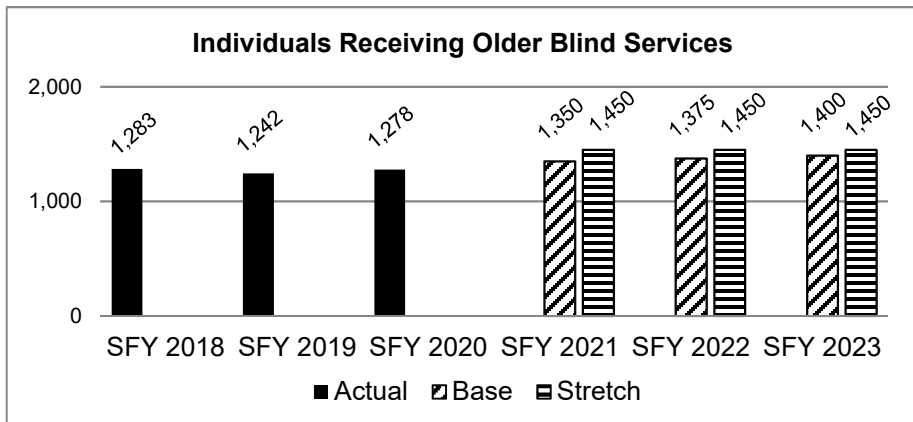
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2a. Provide an activity measure(s) for the program.



*The total number served declined due to COVID-19. The Prevention of Blindness Glaucoma Screening events were temporarily discontinued showing a significant decline in individuals served. New referrals decreased for vocational rehabilitation and independent living services during the pandemic.

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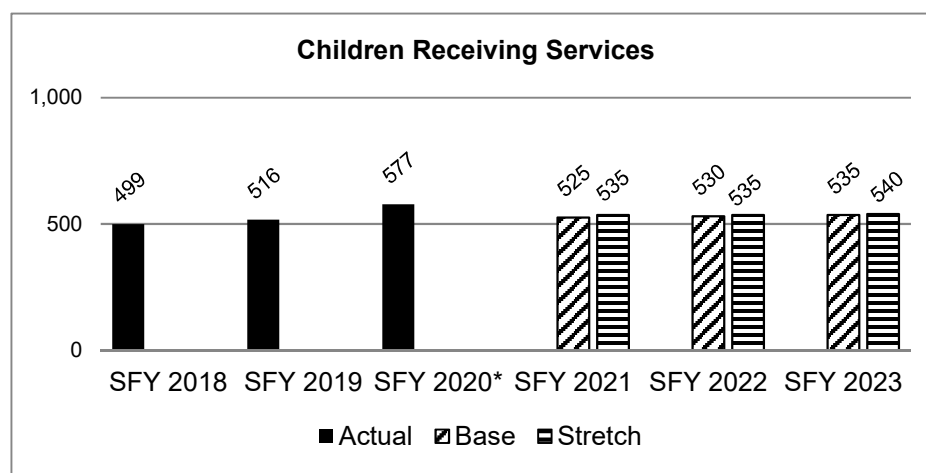
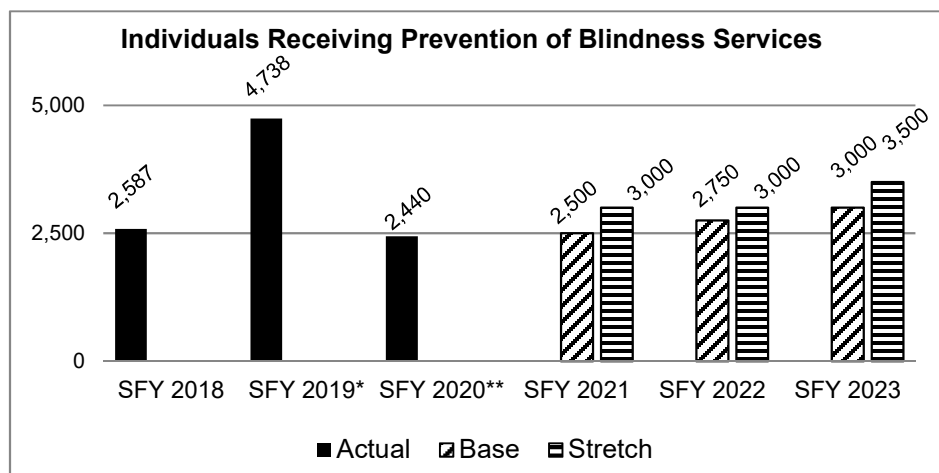
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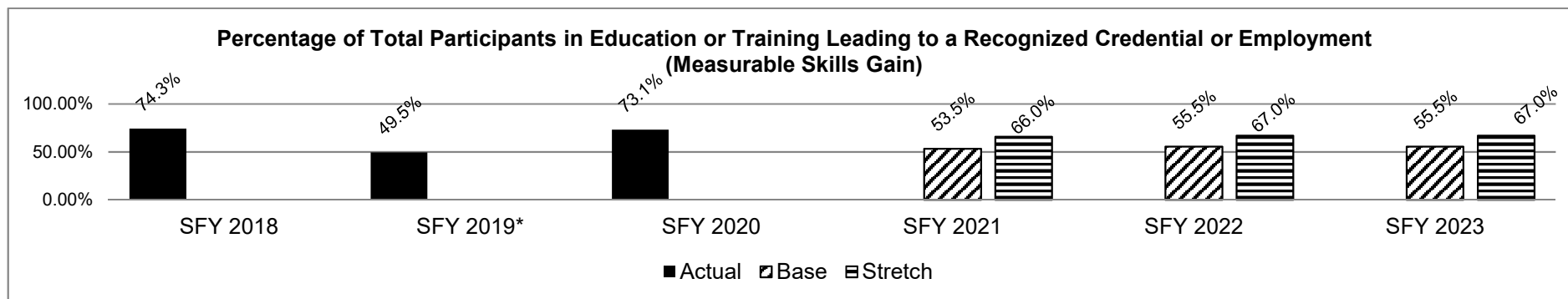


* In SFY 2019, new outreach activities resulted in additional glaucoma screenings increasing the number of individuals served.

** In SFY 2020 the total number served declined due to COVID-19.

*Blindness is a low incident disability in children. The number served stays somewhat stagnant since most people lose vision as adults. The increase in SFY 2020 is an anomaly that is not expected to continue.

2b. Provide a measure(s) of the program's quality.



New measure. Data prior to SFY 2018 is not available.

*The decrease from SFY 2018 to SFY 2019 is due to a change in reporting requirements.

This measure is expected to be negatively impacted by COVID-19 due to reduced availability of in person education programs. Goals are much higher than the statistical adjustment model and used by federal partners and expected federal performance.

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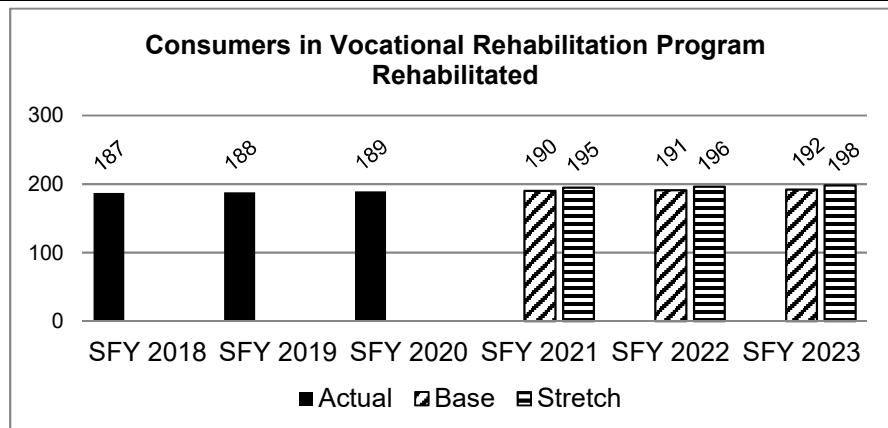
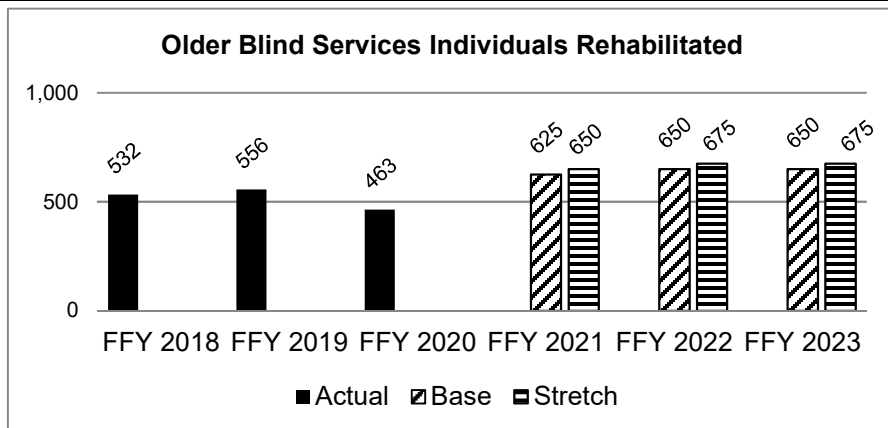
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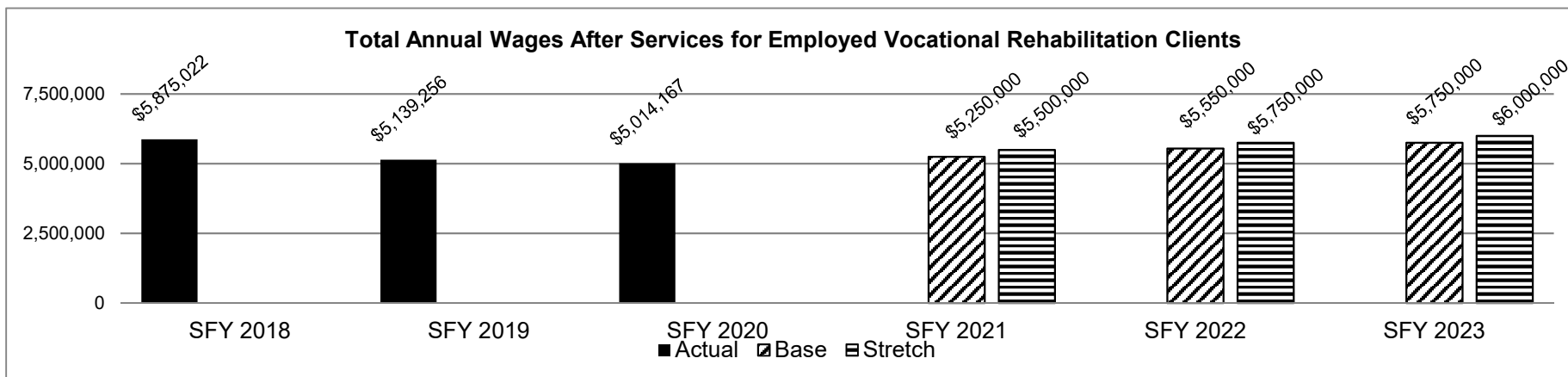
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2c. Provide a measure(s) of the program's impact.



The number of individuals rehabilitated can fluctuate as a result of life events preventing completion of the rehabilitation program, such as medical/health decline.



Employment outcomes are based on client choice. The type of employment, wages, and hours worked can impact Total Annual Wages.

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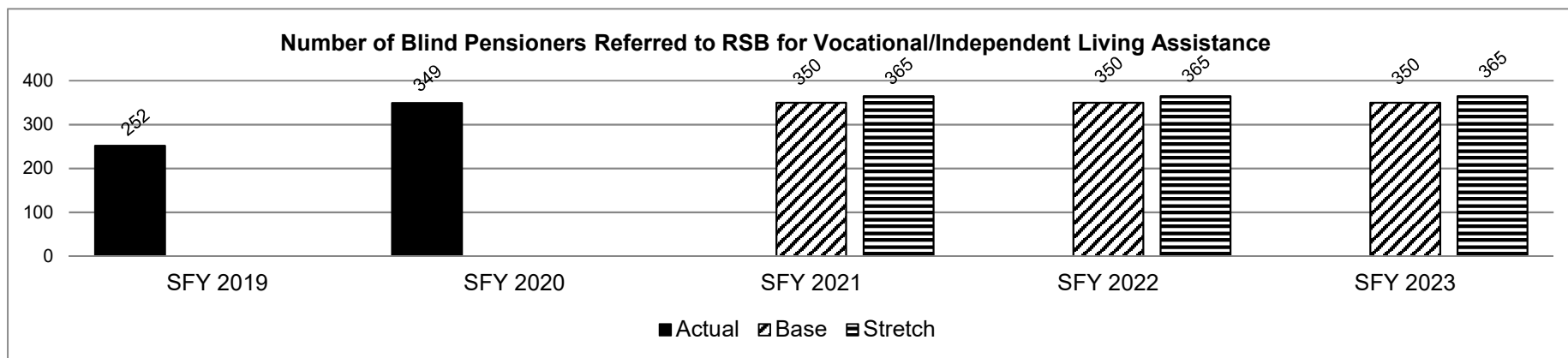
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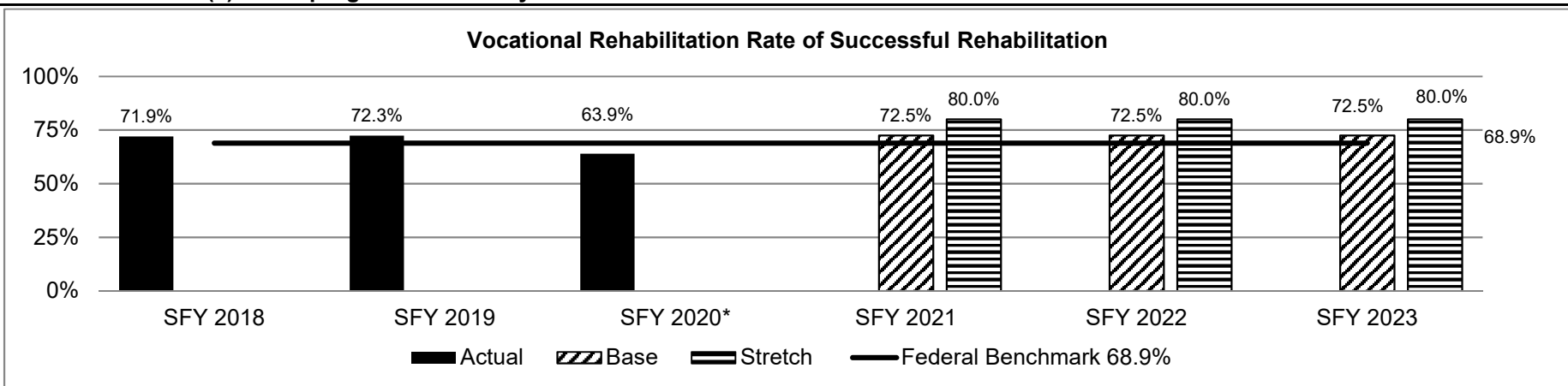
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The Family Support Division began referring newly approved Blind Pension recipients and current recipients, upon request, to Rehabilitation Services for the Blind in SFY 2019. Participation in RSB services is not required for individuals to receive Blind Pension.

2d. Provide a measure(s) of the program's efficiency.



Successful Rehabilitation is a measure that is difficult to meet, therefore the federal level benchmark is 68.9%.

*The number of unsuccessful closures increased due to the COVID-19 pandemic and individuals losing employment or no longer interested in seeking employment causing the rate of successful rehabilitation to decrease. This is not expected to continue.

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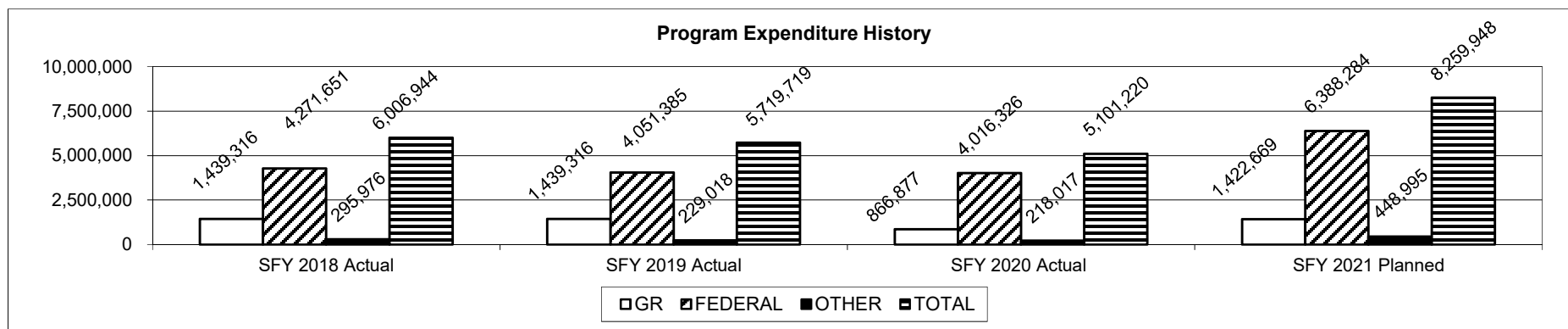
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3. Provide actual expenditures for the prior three fiscal years and planned expenditures for the current fiscal year. (Note: Amounts do not include fringe benefit costs.)



SFY 2021 Planned expenditures are net of reverted and restricted.

4. What are the sources of the "Other " funds?

Family Services Donations Fund (0167) and Blindness Education Screening and Treatment Fund (0892).

5. What is the authorization for this program, i.e., federal or state statute, etc.? (Include the federal program number, if applicable.)

State statute: RSMo. 8.051, 8.700-8.745, 207.010, 207.020, 209.010, 209.015, 209.020, 178.160-178.180; Federal law: Randolph-Sheppard Act as amended through 1974, 34 CFR 395, Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended by WIOA-Title VII-Part B and Chapter 2, and the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act of 2014 upon full implementation.

6. Are there federal matching requirements? If yes, please explain.

Vocational Rehabilitation funding is 78.7% Federal and 21.3% State.
Older Blind Services (OBS) funding is 90% Federal and 10% State.

7. Is this a federally mandated program? If yes, please explain.

Yes, except for funding of Prevention of Blindness, Reader Services, Blindness Education Screening and Treatment (BEST) Program, and the Children's Services Program. See #5 above for the listed Federal statutes.