



Idaho State Rehabilitation Council
APPROVED MEETING MINUTES
Holiday Inn Airport Conference Center, Boise, Idaho
April 23, 2024

Introductions

Participants:

Darin Lindig, Chairperson, Business Industry & Labor Representative
Tim Blonsky, Representative of Disability Groups
Mark Reinhardt, Former VR Recipient
Pam Harris, Community Resource Programs (CRP's) Representative
Sarah Gornik, Idaho Parents Unlimited Representative
David "Max" Maxwell, Veterans Administration Representative
Kent Ireton, PreETS Counselor Representative
Jami Davis, State Independent Living Council Representative
Jeff Forest, Business, Industry & Labor Representative
Luke Rose, Business, Industry & Labor Representative
Diana Colgrove, Business, Industry & Labor Representative
Randi Cole, State Department of Education Representative
Angie Tuft, Business, Industry & Labor Representative
Matthew Markve, IDVR Planning and Evaluation Manager
Nanna Hanchett, IDVR Deputy Administrator
Jane Donnellan, IDVR Administrator
Linda Brown, IDVR Financial Officer
Wendy Page, SRC Secretary/IDVR Management Assistant

Absent: Ramona Medicine Horse, Nancy Grant, Stephanie Taylor
Thompson, James Pegram

Guests: Christine Meewsen – Disability Rights Idaho, Ruth Brown - Idaho
Public Television

Quorum was established with eleven voting members.

Approval of Minutes

MOTION: Tim Blonsky made motion to approve the January 23, 2024,
Meeting Minutes with no revisions, Mark Reinhardt seconded the motion.
Motion carried unopposed.

Committee Meetings

The Executive Committee and Planning, Policy and Program Effectiveness Committee met to review sub-committee work.

Committee membership lists were updated to reflect all council members as serving on a minimum of one sub-committee.

Membership

Nominations for Danielle Larsen and Janice Carson were presented to the council for consideration by the membership committee chair, Tim Blonsky.

Janice Carson is employed by the University of Idaho, which is under the State Board of Education, which would exclude her from being a voting member. Ms. Carson would represent disability groups specifically related to Assistive Technology.

MOTION: Mark Reinhardt made motion to accept the nomination of Ms. Carson. Angie Tuft seconded the motion and the motion carried unopposed.

Danielle Larsen is employed by RISE, a community rehabilitation program (CRP) and was nominated to represent CRP's. The CRPs meet every two months, and the responsibility of the member is to represent that community and share perspectives with the council.

MOTION: Luke Rose made motion to accept the nomination to of Ms. Larsen. Max Maxwell seconded the motion and the motion carried unopposed.

The council approved nominations will be submitted to the State Board of Education at their June 2024 meeting.

Membership recruitment will move forward to replace the upcoming positions whose terms will be expiring.

SRC Chair Nomination

Darin Lindig nominated Tim Blonsky to serve as SRC Chairperson. Mr. Blonsky accepted the nomination.

MOTION: Darin Lindig made a motion to elect Tim Blonsky as SRC Chair. Mark Reinhardt seconded the motion and the motion carried unopposed.

SRC Vice Chairperson

MOTION: Tim Blonsky nominated and made motion to accept Diana Colgrove as SRC Vice Chairperson. Ms. Colgrove accepted the nomination. Luke Rose seconded the motion and the motion carried unanimously.

Agency Updates

Jane Donnellan, IDVR Administrator provided the agency updates.

Fiscal issues have impacted the agency since the beginning of April. At the end of March, the agency identified that financial obligations exceeded the current spending authority, which is granted by the state legislature. Funds were available but IDVR did not have spending authority in Trustee and Benefits. An assessment was done to verify the information, immediately followed by consultation with the State Board of Education, Legislative Services Office, and the Governor's office.

The explanation provided was that the budget that was entered into the case management system and the state accounting system were not aligned and were not being compared as dollars were authorized and paid.

The growth in programs for adults and students were also contributing factors.

The agency produced and provided a letter to the co-chairs of JFAC requesting a supplemental of \$2.7 million for increased spending authority of the federal grant as well as an increase in the miscellaneous revenue to match the federal grant funds. JFAC passed the supplemental. The House of Representatives sent the proposal back to the joint committee with additional questions and requests for additional information.

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) was notified of the issues.

Additional information was provided to LSO identifying the details of what created the financial issues. The timing of how invoices were being paid has been impacting the management of the grant funds since 2021.

The inflated budget in the case management system not aligning with the state system, growth in services and the timing in which the agency pays for services from the federal grants have made a significant impact.

It was explained that the agency plan is to begin the process of establishment of an Order of Selection, which must be done if funds or personnel are not available to provide VR services to all eligible individuals.

It was explained that diagnostic services are not planned services, but the majority of authorized services are within planned services on an IPE.

There was a question as to whether P-Cards are used for purchases. It was explained that the majority of expenditures are done by issuing an Authorization for Payment to the vendor, encumbering/obligating the funds. Often times, only a portion of the funds authorized are actually used.

How much of the budgetary issues was personnel costs and benefits vs P-Card purchases vs services rendered. It was explained that personnel costs are not included in Trustee and Benefit funds.

Intensive technical assistance was requested from RSA. They are meeting with agency leadership to support and manage IDVR through this process.

A question about the varied amounts that were reported in the media. The \$4.7 million presented the current authorizations at that time, which constituted actual obligations. \$2.7 million was based on what was considered a decrease in obligations along with \$2.1 million, which was available from Trustee and Benefits. There were some calculations as to what could be rolled over into the next fiscal year, resulting in the supplemental request amount.

Council members asked how the SRC can advise and support the agency moving forward. The SRC will participate in the process of implementing an Order of Selection. Federally the law states that the agency continues to support all individuals who are eligible for the VR program until the Order is in effect. It was emphasized that the agency continues to serve all individuals within the State of Idaho until such time that an Order of Selection is implemented. The administrator stated that agency financial obligations will continue to be paid.

The priority categories are outlined in the Order of Selection policy. Individuals who are receiving planned services will continue to receive services under an order of selection. Following the question as to how vendors would be paid, it was explained that there is no priority in vendors being paid, it is related to the individual.

It is not clear as to whether the state legislature will approve an increase in appropriations, allowing the agency to capture more federal dollars. An increase in spending authority and appropriation will not be considered by the state legislature until January 2025.

IDVR is providing services as business has been typically done and customer services are not currently being impacted.

Submission of invoices in a timely manner continues to be an issue and the state is obligated to honor any invoices submitted within a two-year period from the time the service was provided.

It was stated that state legislators do not clearly understand the services VR provides to individuals with disabilities. It was recognized that SRC members need to continue to educate legislators relating to respectful language and the services provided by IDVR.

There was a question as to how the agency will remediate the current situation. The response was that it will take time to reverse the affects of the fiscal impacts. Reviewing internal practices, improvements to the case management system communication with the state system as well as a strategy of OOS to restore agency functions.

It was asked what the agency strategy will be since the \$2.7 million was not approved by the legislature. It has forced the agency to re-evaluate how to move forward in a more aggressive manner, which will result in OOS. The expenditures did not line up with the budget appropriations. It wasn't until this year that it became a significant concern.

There was a question as to whether the elimination of the Financial Needs Assessment (FNA) which required financial participation from the participants had very little impact. Moving forward, the (FNA) would be re-implemented but would not eliminate an OOS.

The management team is assessing Authorizations daily to ensure that payments are correctly entered as partial or final payments, reviewing what comparable benefits are available. The agency is fiscally evaluating all aspects.

Council members asked if there are other state agencies that can assist IDVR. IDVR is evaluating all aspects of what is needed to match the federal grant to capture the federal grant. The full federal grant is not captured. The bulk of non-federal dollars comes from the general fund which is appropriated by the state legislature.

The council was informed that there are potential impacts to the Independent living programs. Currently, IDVR provides expansion funds to the State Independent Living council from the federal grant. The Title 7 part B Independent Living Grant is managed by IDVR. Without the additional spending authority, that is an area that will need to be assessed. This is a high priority for IDVR as independent living and employment are equally important to individuals with disabilities.

It was emphasized that the way state legislators are educated about the services that individuals with disabilities within the state receive and how those services are impacted by their decisions is crucial.

Recognition of IDVR's hard work was expressed by various members of the council after seeing how other states have been impacted by Order of Selection.

It was asked if the requests for appropriations are consistent. The response was that IDVR has been very lax in how those funds have been requested.

The agency has tried to illustrate what the need is based on data and documentation. Continuation of how services are authorized needs to be understood. A wide range of services are provided to individuals that can cross over a long period of time or services may be immediate.

IDVR Financial Officer, Linda Brown provided the financial reports for the last quarter were distributed to council members.

The SRC Quarterly Budget and Expenditures and the agency Quarterly Budget to Actual reports were reviewed. The year to date as compared last year is presented within the report. The various funds were reviewed and explained. Invoices will be paid until funds for the upcoming year are received.

The Trustee and Benefits amount are reflected by the various funds and was explained in detail.

It was asked why the Miscellaneous Revenue Fund is not merged within the other funds. It was explained that it is prioritized by spending order. Federal, General and then Miscellaneous Revenue, which is typically used as match because of the shortfall of appropriation within the general funds. The agency's case management system was separate from the state financial system, which is how the problem was created.

There was a question as to the percentage expended from the SRC budget. It was explained that SRC travel is paid for prior to the actual event so those expenditures may sometimes appear in the quarter prior to the event.

Member Updates

Diana Colgrove

Diana reports having the opportunity to talk with new parents on the Project Search Team in collaboration with IDVR sharing the parent perspective. Students dropping out of school is a significant issue in their area. Developing an understanding of the next steps was helpful to the group. They are opening a new salon location and hiring new stylists soon.

They are signed up for a summer work experience this summer, hoping to have 4 locations participating.

Max Maxwell

Max works for the Department of Veterans Affairs managing Veteran readiness and employment benefits, which is a similar program to VR with the exception of serving the population of veterans. They've seen an increase up to 70% of applicants in the last fiscal year. They are mandated by federal regulations to maintain caseloads below 125 cases and they are doing well with meeting that standard as well as quality. They are running

at 94% accuracy, which means they are compliant with the law. The counselors are making sound decisions in finding veterans entitled and accepted into the program. Additionally, the Boise Station has been elected to serve as a partner station taking over cases from Oakland Regional Office where they are having difficulty hiring VR counselors in that area. Overall, 80% of their staff are new because they have provided more positions with the growing number of applicants and growing program. They have been able to hire counselors with a strong background in VR.

Luke Rose

Luke has two sons who have disabilities, and in the workforce, which is a tremendous thing. He reports that transportation is a challenge. They commute 60 miles to work from their home. This requires a significant amount of his time to provide them with the transportation. They live in a rural community where there is quality living, but resources aren't available.

He wants people to remember that there are large numbers of people who live in rural areas that don't have access to transportation.

Randi Cole

Wrote a grant with Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), which was awarded in the amount of \$10 million. The end goal is to increase competitive, integrated employment. There are several required partners including IDVR, school districts and all three centers for independent living. They also chose to partner with Idaho Parents Unlimited (IPUL) and the Center for Human Development and Disabilities at the University of Idaho. A large portion of the funds will be used to develop a competitive integrated center at the university. Three coordinators and an associate director have been hired as the "workhorses" of the grant. They will meet as a state team to develop resource mapping identifying statewide resources and needs. The centers for independent living have also been provided with the funds to hire additional staff to work on the project. The Pre-ETS supervisors will also be involved in the local teams within the school districts to provide resource mapping. They will be able to start career explorations for students as early as age 10. Opportunities within the community working with students and youth up to the age of 24. This work should result in more cases closed with independent employment.

Sarah Gornik

Sarah shared that they are excited to be one of the invited partners to the aforementioned RSA grant. They are interviewing for the additional positions and excited to be bringing the youth and family engagement and education piece to the program. They will be doing education for family members on what competitive integrated employment looks like. The Pre-Employment training services will be amazing for families and students across the state as well as helping them to build their network.

She and a colleague recently returned from completing an all-day training on Individual Educational Programs (IEPs), positive behavior image and understanding Idaho's Medicaid systems consistently across the board in northern Idaho which is a "resource desert" for families including individuals ages 14 to 26.

It was mentioned that the program is designed to serve all students with disabilities.

Sarah emphasized that they are doing a lot of networking to understand what family and children's needs are especially with the increasing number of charter schools and home-schooled students.

The Coeur d' Alene and Moscow Work of Art sessions are complete and the Boise round is in process. Work of Art is a way to provide pre-employment training services to youth with art as the vehicle for developing skills.

Darin Lindig

HP local events are D&I disability hiring lead of Boise, who is connected with a group, comprised of primarily Spanish speaking families.

They are working to promote within HP more inclusive and authentic visual images in marketing ads. They have been working to include more individuals with disabilities in national settings, authentic real people and not so staged. Darin mentioned that he came across several images of individuals in wheelchairs where the individual is using a hospital wheelchair, which is not realistic and most likely a prop. There is a broader opportunity to provide education to marketing companies for more authentic images in product promotions.

They are starting to develop a program within HP called Accessibility Champions. They have an office of aging and accessibility, which handles a lot of the accessibility requirements such as keypad and various products to ensure that they are accessible. They are also champions of inclusive access beyond what is federally required. They recognize individual achievements as they develop knowledge by assigning a knowledge badge that can be displayed within their email.

Tim Blonsky

Tim has a consulting business, and the interesting part is that he has worn various hats as he has developed the business. One of the recent issues as it relates to artificial intelligence (AI) is the deaf community and groups with language barriers. They had an event where AI was demonstrated to recognize hand shapes. AI can simulate interpreter services through signing into a camera.

A company called Translate Live hired him as a consultant to interview the platform and work with development programs in the United States. Two tablets can translate in 200 languages and dialects including American Sign Language. It can identify a language and does translation in real time.

Mark Reinhardt

Mark presented to CRP's statewide talking about disability in the workplace related to communication and how to document behaviors in an accurate fashion as well as set up tasks for people with disabilities to do work effectively.

Pam Harris

Pam plans to work for three more years and will be reaccredited one more time. She is providing PreETS and community-based work evaluations along with some job search assistance and coordination of mock interviews.

She and her son started a plant business. They grow plants to donate. They are doing plant sales in collaboration with various other individuals who have products. They are donating plants to individuals who receive food stamps.

Kent Ireton

Kent is a counselor in the Twin Falls area serving students. He serves some of the rural areas. During the school year they have a number of events including sponsoring students for Tools for Life, Launch for Future through the College of Southern Idaho introducing kids to careers as well as soft skill development and academic preparation. Reality Town is a financial literacy simulation similar to the game of Life where students are budgeting and making plans for adulthood. Currently they are planning for summer work experiences with three school districts and one CRP contractor to run the summer employment program.

Jeff DeForest

Jeff is part of the RDI progress on disability group at Simplot. They implemented a new event called Focus Days where they highlight days that are recognized such as National Caregiver Day, or World Autism Day to show people that disabilities are visible and non-visible connecting the dots between here in the US and in Australia.

Christine Meeuwsen

At Disability Rights they launched a transition app for students and educators. It is available in the Apple store or Google Play called ID Transition Forward. Transition Forward is an app that students can use to walk through and identify their goals, what service or supports are needed. The student can use it to generate a report that parents and teachers can view during the transition planning meetings. They can provide any assistance needed.

In the adult unit, one of them is working on the Extended Employment Services program, for people who need services beyond a VR case including sheltered employment. This program is now operated under the Department of Health and Welfare, and they have invited stakeholders to participate and provide feedback on policies and procedures as they are developed. Disability Right's focus through this process is on accountability for the providers and making sure that they are providing quality services so that the department have meaningful insight to ensure that individuals are making progress within their goals. Last year they did a tour around the state and visited all of the work services providers in Idaho reintroducing themselves and sharing what they do. They will pay them another visit in the upcoming year with a focus on asking them about how they are complying with their counseling requirements such as providing information

about other work opportunities when there is a desire from the participant.

NCSRC/CSAVR Conference Summary

Vice Chairperson Tim Blonsky recently attended the NCSRC/CSAVR Conference in Bethesda, Maryland. He liked that they had main concurrent sessions where you could pick subjects you wanted to learn about. Policy Practice and Performance was the theme of the conference. The big takeaway was the RSA Commissioner visit. A lot of people present had the opportunity to interact with him. There was a great presentation about service dogs.

Senator Pam Harkins former senator from Iowa was supposed to be at the conference but was unable to attend. The Harkins Institute is a think tank, a technical center that does a lot of work with VR programs around the country. Claudia Borden, a deaf individual spoke and provided a very powerful message. US Congressman were unable to attend the conference, so staffers came and although young left a very positive impression.

The Harkins institute talked about the pitfalls and positives of AI. They are developing a program for VR programs focused on positive AI interaction.

Tim encouraged SRC members to attend future conferences if the opportunity becomes available.

Expression of Appreciation

Jane Donnellan presented certificates and expressed gratitude for the service of Darin Lindig, Sarah Gorman, James Pegram and Pamela Harris as they complete their current term.

Establishment and Implementation of Order of Selection

IDVR Planning and Evaluation Manager, Matthew Markve presented the strategy for implementing Order of Selection for IDVR.

The State Rehabilitation Council must be consulted for the need to establish OOS, the priority of the order, criteria for determining the priority categories and the administration of the order of selection.

There are a number of areas that need to be addressed and applied including training of IDVR team members.

- The appeal process of the assigned category would be part of the process.
- FPA will be reimplemented. The process will need to be reviewed as to how it will operate during an OOS. The household income is considered during the financial participation assessment based on income. Social Security beneficiaries are exempt from financial participation.
- OOS can be triggered by decrease in fiscal conditions or personnel insufficiencies where the agency is no longer able to provide the full range of services, as appropriate, to all eligible individuals.
- Currently all individuals are being served. Individuals with a signed plan will continue to be served under OOS.
- Once the fiscal projections are established, the notice will be sent as to what categories will be served.
- The agency will continue to accept applications, conduct assessments to determine eligibility during an OOS.
- Priority categories are assigned according to the number of functional limitations.
- Group services can be provided to students with disabilities that would not be included in the selection process.
- Someone who is in jeopardy of losing their job could be considered as a maintenance option but could affect those within the most significant disabled category from receiving services, therefore IDVR is focused on serving MSD within this plan.
- Cost of services are not included within the OOS, it is based on disability priority of Disability, Significant Disability and Most Significant Disability (D/SD/MSD).
- There are a number of elements that would need to happen before

implementing an OOS, therefore an implementation date has not been established.

- There is no way to identify how long the agency would be operating within an OOS.
- Financial conditions indicate what categories can be opened and will be frequently monitored to determine how and when OOS would be discontinued.
- Current priority categories are somewhat evenly distributed among current cases.
- Fiscal safeguards would include strengthening current processes, procedures and policies.
- IDVR Team members will be informed of the state of the agency in an “all team meeting” and be provided the opportunity to ask questions.

Goals and Priorities for the Agency

The goals and priorities that were established as a result of the January SRC meeting were reviewed. Members were given additional opportunities to provide feedback and ask questions.

During the review, the benefits of SARA were shared, which is one of the streamlining processes to be implemented in stages.

There were various questions and discussions related to CRP monitoring, assistive technology and accommodations in the workplace.

With no objection the meeting was adjourned at 4:09 p.m.