



# Idaho State Rehabilitation Council QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

Holiday Inn Airport Conference Center, Boise, Idaho  
July 23, 2024

**Note:** Meeting was streamed through virtual platform to allow for public viewing.

Attendees and guests were welcomed and the agenda was reviewed.

## **Council Members Present:**

Tim Blonsky, Council Chair/Disability Groups Representative  
Diana Colgrove, Council Vice Chair/Business, Industry & Labor Representative  
Mark Reinhardt, Former VR Recipient Representative  
Danielle Larsen, Community Resource Programs (CRP's) Representative  
Jami Davis, State Independent Living Council Representative  
Janice Carson, Disability Groups Representative  
Luke Rose, Business, Industry & Labor Representative  
Randi Cole, State Department of Education Representative  
Angie Tuft, Business, Industry & Labor Representative  
Ramona Medicine Horse, Idaho Native American Tribes Representative  
Nancy Grant, Client Assistance Program Representative  
Stephanie Taylor Thompson, Former VR Recipient Representative

## **Ex officio members**

Judy B. Taylor, IDVR Interim Administrator  
Kent Ireton, PreETS Counselor Representative

## **Absent:**

David "Max" Maxwell, Veterans Administration Disability Groups Representative  
Jeff Forest, Business, Industry & Labor Representative

## **Guests:**

Darrell Quist, IDVR Field Services Chief  
Linda Brown, IDVR Fiscal Officer  
Linda Thomas, Idaho Parents Unlimited, council member nominee

Lauren Noble, IDVR Transition Manager  
Matthew Markve, IDVR Planning and Evaluation Manager  
Wendy Page, Council Secretary/IDVR Management Assistant  
Sarah Gornik, Idaho Parents Unlimited

A quorum was established.

### **Meeting Minutes**

The April 23, 2024 SRC Meeting Minutes were reviewed.

**MOTION:** Mark Reinhardt made a motion to approve the April 23, 2024 Minutes with no revisions, Stephanie Taylor-Thompson seconded the motion. Motion carried unopposed.

### **Committee Meetings**

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

### **Member Nominations**

Nominations for Clay Long, Feather Holt and Linda Thomas were presented to the council for consideration by the membership committee chair.

Clay Long is the State Administrator for the Division of Career Technical Education and will serve as a representative of the Workforce Development Council.

**MOTION:** Stephanie Taylor-Thomas made a motion to accept the nomination of Clay Long. Mark Reinhardt seconded the motion, and the motion carried unopposed.

Feather Holt is the director of the Nez Perce Tribe Vocational Rehabilitation Services Team. She is responsible for creating policy and procedure, following grant guidelines and serving individuals with disabilities within a vulnerable population.

**MOTION:** Mark Reinhardt made a motion to accept the nomination of Ms. Holt. Jami Davis seconded the motion, and the motion carried unopposed.

The nomination for Linda Thomas was considered. Ms. Thomas has an extensive background in advocating for children as a guardian ad Litem volunteer and is currently employed by Idaho Parents Unlimited as their Southwest Transition Coordinator.

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

### **Order of Selection**

Matthew Markve, IDVR Planning and Evaluation Manager, reported updates on the agency's intent and plan to implement Order of Selection (OOS). Agency leadership is receiving intensive technical assistance and continues to work with RSA to identify across grant management and federal requirement issues as defined under WIOA.

RSA has not yet approved the State Plan corrections that will allow the agency to implement OOS.

Under OOS, individuals that are receiving services under an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) will continue to receive services. Individuals who receive social security benefits will remain presumptively eligible under the categories of Significant Disability at the minimum.

- Order of Selection Draft Policy – an update to the IDVR OOS policy has been provided to Rehabilitation Administration Services (RSA), the federal funding stakeholders. IDVR has been collaborating regularly with RSA to complete the requirements to implement OOS. They approved the submitted language with some minor corrections. Dr. Markve reported that 95% of the work is done, 80% of the checklist processes are completed. Recommendation included:
  - Amendment to the current policy which references “requires multiple primary individualized plans for employment services over a period of time” and the preference would be “requires multiple services over an extended period of time” for the service category priority of most significant disabilities (MSD).

The Idaho State Board of Education rules coordinator has since

indicated that there would not be an issue removing this language from within the rule.

Most significant disabilities will be served first from the waitlist once OOS is implemented. An updated definition of disability categories will be provided to the SRC at a later date upon RSA's final approval.

- There was a recommendation to reinforce Social Security presumptive eligibility including individuals receiving benefits due to a disability, which would classify that individual within the Significant Disability priority category.
- It is important that there is language stating that the agency will be opening one category at a time.
- A classification of disability priority could be re-evaluated with sufficient evidence.
- Communication related to case closure includes that individuals are notified when they are removed from the waitlist and that they have been sufficiently notified of the agency's intent prior to case closure, which would inevitably remove that person from the waiting list.
- Information and Referral needs to be offered to applicants and eligible individuals in their preferred method of communication. Counseling and guidance cannot be provided to individuals being placed on the waiting list.

It was explained that information and referral is not a VR service, but rather a referral to another agency/entity that could provide assistance, or services. Agency partners have received communication so they can anticipate the referrals and avoid re-directing the individual back to IDVR.

IDVR's intent is to make referrals to the appropriate agency for the individual's needs.

### **Maintenance outside of Order of Selection**

Idaho Code (IDAPA 47.01.01.206.04) references that IDVR will serve maintenance outside of Order, which lengthens the time for individuals to be served within the MSD disability priority category. It does not consider priority category.

Changes to current “Rule” will be submitted to the State Board of Education for consideration. There will be an update on whether that language has been removed from Idaho Code at the next SRC meeting.

- Individuals will be notified in writing of their removal from the wait list. If an individual chooses to be removed from the wait list, the case will be closed. If six months have passed with no communication from the customer, the case will be closed after multiple attempts to contact have been made. The waitlist is maintained in the Aware Case Management System.
- Once an individual is determined eligible, information and referral services will be made, and comparable resources will be sought. Training is scheduled to be provided to workforce partner agencies.

### **MSD Priority Service**

Minor language changes requested by RSA to the SD category noted above have also been applied to the MSD section of the Administrative Code.

Once RSA provides finalized guidance as to Disability Priority Service Categories, they will be provided to the council members.

### **Financial Participation Assessment**

Dr. Markve reported that RSA is reviewing the proposed policy changes related to the Financial Participation Assessment (FPA) and that public comment has been completed. RSA has concerns about the FPA calculator because of the complexity of the process. They were focused on a percentage table that is based on applicable income. (i.e., the applicable income that is considered after Federal Poverty Guidelines have been deducted, substantially reducing the customer impact)

It was explained that 2/3 of VR customers will not be impacted and it is designed on a sliding scale with only the highest income being the most impacted.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (PreETS) are exempt from FPA. If the student is claimed as a dependent on their household taxes, for other applicable VR services the entire household income is considered unless there is an exception. An example of an exception to policy would be when the parent(s) are not providing any financial support to the student even though they are claiming their child on the income taxes.

### **Intake Process**

Darrell Quist, IDVR Field Services Chief, explained that the agency has moved to a process where VR assistants (VRAs) are conducting the intake interview with applicants within two weeks of initial contact. They are collecting the documentation for the counselors who are processing the eligibility determinations. Information and referral is a federal requirement of the application process under OOS.

There is one counselor statewide who is conducting the eligibility determinations who has a considerable amount of experience, and the training specialists are assisting if the workload becomes unmanageable for one counselor. This provides a high degree of reliability and consistency in the eligibility determination process. Once the individual comes off the waitlist, then they will connect with the counselor and that relationship can be established.

This process is significantly different from the counselor conducting the intake and determining eligibility prior to development of the Plan for Employment. In OOS, the individual will go directly to the waitlist after eligibility is determined.

A council member asked how fidelity would be evaluated and whether checks and balances are in place to ensure intakes are being conducted appropriately. The Division referenced the strong inter-rater reliability created by a core eligibility counselor and backup team of center-based trainers.

It was explained that scenario training has been provided to VRAs responsible for conducting intakes and they will consult with counselors as

situations arise within the intake process.

In regard to a question about checks and balances, the agency response is that the modified monitoring process has not been established at this time but it will look different than the Pre-OOS processes. While the current process does specifically monitor eligibilities, a focused review with the new process could be more easily conducted at central office.

The IDVR Program Analyst has been tasked with management of the waiting lists within the case management system based on disability priority category and the date of application. Team members in the field will not have access to adjust the wait list as an internal control on the process. Geographic location is not considered when determining which individuals will be served per federal requirements.

Potentially eligible students with disabilities will continue to be served until such time as they request to apply for general VR services and then they would apply for services and an eligibility determination will be made. If they are determined eligible, they would be placed on the wait list.

The eligibility determination will not change with the implementation of OOS. The agency is required to support ongoing assessment expenditures for all applicants for the purpose of determining eligibility and priority category (where indicated).

Council members made various recommendations for the agency to consider as it relates to specific disabilities. Training and guidance will be provided to the frontline team members, so they have a clear understanding of how to best serve the applicant. How the disabilities impact the individual's ability to obtain, maintain, or advance in employment.

Individuals who received previous services from VR and are in danger of losing their job would have to apply for services and be placed on the waiting list, however a referral to another agency would still be part of the process to assist them in maintaining their employment.

It is not anticipated that service provision would be affected, however there is some concern about cultural impacts among the tribes. It was stated that the cultural nuances are important and having a relationship with the local

members of the community is important. There was a question as to whether that collaboration will be lost within the new intake process. There was a response indicating that the agency would consider this concern. The agency can have a collaborative relationship with a counselor from the 121 Program when serving individuals.

There was a proposal to develop an Ad-Hoc committee with the intent to make recommendations to the Executive Committee of the Council. The council was informed that more than 50% of the member participation constitutes a public meeting and is subject to Open Meeting Laws. A committee with less than a quorum does not have the requirements of open meeting requirements. It was agreed that Chairman Tim Blonsky, Vice-Chair Diana Colgrove, Janice Carson, Jami Davis and Angie Tuft would serve on the Ad-Hoc Committee. This number of individuals would not constitute a quorum.

It was explained that the State Board of Education and the Governor's office would be responsible for the hire of a permanent Administrator for the agency. The current interim administrator would be responsible for making recommendations and onboarding for the position. The executive director of the State Board of Education is the immediate supervisor for the Administrator, who has also recently been hired to replace the previous executive director. If there are any changes to the current interim administrator's responsibilities, she will report that at the next scheduled SRC meeting.

The chairperson expressed interest in providing input into the hiring process for the new administrator. There would need to be a formal request submitted to the interim administrator and that would be forwarded to the State Board of Education for consideration.

**MOTION:** There was a motion by Stephanie Taylor-Thompson, which was seconded by Mark Reinhardt to formulate an Ad-Hoc committee for the purpose of advising the Executive Committee and the Agency.

The motion was unanimously unopposed.

### **IDVR FINANCIAL REPORT**

Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) constituted focus on two additional customer groups: Students with Disabilities and Businesses.



The mandates focusing on these groups were not supported with additional funding and there was no supporting guidance on how to expend funds but mandated financial requirements of fifteen percent of the current budget to go toward services to students also known as Pre-employment Transition Services (PreETS). Services to businesses was represented through personnel.

IDVR Interim Administrator, Judy B. Taylor provided data showing how the agency served higher numbers of customers, with no additional state appropriations. Over the past few years, the agency expended funds that eventually nearly all of the state appropriation, which inevitably will put the agency in a financial deficit.

IDVR is under special conditions with Rehabilitation Services Administration and scheduled to receive technical assistance and training. A consultant will be necessary to adapt the case management system to correct the errors in federal grant reporting.

Prior to asking the Idaho Legislature for supplemental funding the following will need occur:

- Modification of the State Plan to implement Order of Selection
- Personnel and Operational Costs will be moved to the budget that funds the services to customers.
- Implementation of the Financial Participation Assessment, requiring those that can afford to contribute to their plan financially to do so. A cost of the service cannot be so high as to deny the service.

By December 2024, the agency will have a clearer picture of the financial obligations, how much of the award is left, the rate of participation as well as identifying when Order of Selection can be implemented.

The agency is tightening how much money is being spent and how many vacant positions will be filled. The governor's office, the Division of Financial Management, Legislative Services Offices will be consulted.

It is anticipated that there will be a management budget for 2026. It will be impossible to resolve the fiscal issues within one year.

Ms. Taylor proposed questions for council members to consider for the next

scheduled meeting.

1. What should the spending strategies be for general, PreETS and businesses?
2. Should the agency consider the recommendations from the rate analysis vendor, which would increase the costs for services provided by Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs)?

Council members were directed to speak with the people they represent but not to consult with each other at this stage of consideration.

A council member asked for details of how many dollars were reverted back to RSA, the matching strategy and an explanation as to why the appropriations can't be higher. It was explained that those numbers are not readily available and that there is still some investigation into some of those questions. There were not enough match dollars to capture the entire federal grant.

IDVR Financial Officer, Linda Brown presented the SRC Quarterly Budget to Actual Match Report and SRC Expenditures Report. If there is not enough cash to match the federal grant funds, it will lock up the program where no additional federal funds can be drawn. 99.6% of the budget has been expended. \$650,000 have been transferred from other budgets to continue paying invoices for customer related expenses. Currently there is \$7.7 million in outstanding Authorizations out of a \$10.9 million budget for State Fiscal Year 2025.

Council members made comments stating that before making decisions on budget cuts, PreETS needs to be evaluated. Also noted is that the programs were increased but not the funding.

Ms. Taylor explained that the agency's budget strategy should align with the governor's budget. Every dollar that comes in must be justified. It is every state agency's job to make a very well-crafted and supported ask of the legislative partners. Budget cuts are being made wherever possible and the agency will move forward to overcome the challenges.

### **PreETS Update**

IDVR Transition Manager, Lauren Noble provided an update on Pre-ETS

for Program Year 2023 (July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024). IDVR received applications from 1561 potentially eligible students, 337 students applied for general VR services, which was a significant increase from the prior year. IDVR serves students ages 14 through 21.

With the required Pre-ETS services of counseling on enrollment opportunities, instruction in self-advocacy, job exploration counseling, work-based learning experience, and workplace readiness training, IDVR counselors continue to provide these services to students with disabilities through either direct service provision or authorized services.

IDVR increased school district summer work experiences to 28 school districts, with many located in rural communities. Teachers and paraprofessionals become the work readiness trainers and there is a great connection established with the students. There were many school districts participating for their first year.

Program expansion included Career Technical Education (CTE) programs including healthcare, construction, culinary and cosmetology.

Idaho Parents Unlimited hosted Work of Art, where students create an original piece of art under the guidance of a professional teaching artist.

Boise State PREP Academy had 20 students participate in the program. Boise PREP is a program for students with disabilities interested in attending a two- or four-year college after high school. This experience helps students to understand how to be a successful college student with the assistance of BSU student mentors. Uses STEM Instruction to help prepare students for life after high school.

The University of Idaho Vandal Academy had 12 students participate. Vandal Academy is a program for students with disabilities interested in attending a two- or four-year college after high school. This experience helps students to understand how to be a successful college student with the assistance of college student mentors. Allows students to choose which degree programs that they want to learn more about and meet with those programs.

Idaho State University had two programs that took place in June. The first week was on the ISU campus. The second week was done virtually. The

program offers the opportunity to learn job and college skills using web-quests and Minecraft. It helps students develop and practice communication and time management skills that support college and career readiness through the integration of technology. Uses STEM Instruction to help prepare students for life after high school.

The Pathways to Partnerships Grant is funded by RSA and led by the State Department of Education. IDVR is a required partner. The two agencies will be working together building local partnerships, coordinating services, and creating a support system.

The next steps in strengthening the PreETS program include:

- Scaffolding services to increase quality successful transition
- Mindful and intentional with service delivery
- Ensure that students are ready for the services
- Joint effort between IDVR counselors and school personnel
- Continue to expand areas we serve and provide needed services to students in Idaho

### **Customer Satisfaction Data Review**

IDVR Planning and Evaluation manager, Matthew Markve presented data including customer satisfaction survey results for the last quarter.

Applications, number of individuals served, those who were successfully employed, median hourly wage increased from the 3<sup>rd</sup> quarter results.

### **Member Updates**

**Lucas Rose** has six children of which, two sons have developmental disabilities, and they are in jobs that were obtained through IDVR. They are doing well, and working has had a significant impact on their lives by giving them a sense of accomplishment. He supports the VR program because of what it has done for his sons.

**Janice Carson** reports that she is the interim associate director of the Center on Disabilities and Human Development. They are a Center for Excellence for Developmental Disabilities located within the University of Idaho. They provide training and technical assistance for individuals with development disabilities. They are partners with Disability Rights and the DD Council. Ms. Carson previously served on the SRC is happy to return to service. Ms. Carson is also involved in the Pathways to Partnerships Grant collaboration.

**Nancy Grant**, transition aged IPE online applications are being implemented. The website will have the produced commercials. As a senior advocate, they are starting a statewide tour monitoring 14C certificate holders.

**Stephanie Taylor-Thompson**, prison ministry manager and director of re-entry transformation for Workbay. They develop workforce readiness and learning software for prisons nationwide. She also serves as an advocate for individuals who have been victims of human trafficking across the country as well as assisted impacted individuals.

Stephanie is deeply passionate about Vocational Rehabilitation. She receives a tremendous amount of positive feedback from justice-involved individuals. They feel that they are getting the support that they need. She is appreciative of the team members at IDVR.

**Diana Colgrove**, Sportsclip Owner reports that they are opening a new store. Summer work programs are a big deal for them. They had one student in which they were able to provide intensive training one on one. Daily hours are nice because job supports were available. She felt like the student was able to learn a lot of beneficial information, which can be applied in the classroom. Getting the school district involved had a positive impact. She loves seeing the Project Search program results.

**Angie Tuft** with Create Common Good is getting ready to launch the WinCo Wins program in collaboration with IDVR.

**Linda Thomas** has been recently hired by Idaho Parents Unlimited not long after her son was diagnosed with autism. She is looking forward to serving on the council while she learns her job.

**Ramona Medicine Horse** has completed 16 years of service on the SRC. They missed the deadline for submitting the 104 Programs grant request and lost their funding. They will continue to serve individuals within the tribe with tribal assistance. They are doing a job fair in March, Disability awareness in October including emphasis on invisible disabilities. This year they will be doing a “Big Foot Walking across the Moon” event.

**Mark Reinhardt** recently held a training for job coaching association relating how to better provide job coaching for individuals with disabilities. He is an independent journalist on a volunteer basis. The intersection of science and politics are his main interests.

**Danielle Larsen**, her team is in the middle of providing a summer work program to 80 students. It has been stressful but it’s a great program with a lot of challenges.

**Jami Davis** reports that they are working on Idaho’s strategy for providing Able accounts, which is one of 3 states nationwide that don’t provide the program. The age for eligibility is raising to being diagnosed to age 46. SILC has met with Treasurer Ellsworth about the importance of the program, and they are very supportive. The first draft of legislation for next year is in process. They are doing community meetings in the Treasure Valley and Magic Valley areas educating the importance of Able accounts.

**Kent Ireton** reports a busy summer. They had a summer work program with Rise. Jerome School District, Twin Falls School District and a charter school in Kimberly also had summer work experiences for students, who learned a lot through that program. There was great feedback from teachers and parents. Individual employment programs with employers are also a focus of the summer.

**Tim Blonsky** has been invited to two events. CACI wants to have an event to talk about how they can work on federal highways nationwide. He consulted with another company that does telephone translation including ASL. He is working with the contractor to allow FEMA to provide translation in real-time including ASL. He came back from a conference about AI products where translation in real time can occur rather than depending on other resources. He serves as the President of the Idaho Association for the Deaf and they have an event coming up called “Story Night” done through the city of Boise. This will help people to understand what individuals with

deafness experience.

**Randi Cole** reports that summer has been busy this year. They are preparing for back-to-school events. They will be presenting to the Idaho Association of School Administrators sharing information about the Partnership to Pathways Grant. They anticipate participation from them at some point. She will be presenting at the annual CTE conference to high school teachers about special education collaboration mostly focusing on accommodations. She will be presenting to the Waypoint Conference a joint conference between the State Board of Education and the Department of Education – Student Services. Career counselors are the target audience for this presentation to provide information about supports as students transition into post-secondary education. The Department’s transition team will be collaborating with IPUL, Post-Secondary Institutions, ICBVI and IDVR on planning the Transition Institute in October. They will be focusing on the grant to get more parents, community partners and possibly businesses more involved. This also provides an opportunity for VR counselors and educators to network.

The next meeting will include some of the topics that came up during the meeting today and is scheduled for October 29, 2024, in Boise at the Holiday Inn – Boise Airport. There will be discussion follow up related to transportation issues.

Without objection, the meeting was adjourned.