



State Rehabilitation Council Quarterly Meeting

January 12, 2021 | Virtual WebEx Meeting

9:30 am- 2:45pm MST

January 12, 2021 Meeting:

Present [alpha order]: Janice Carson, Randi Cole, Jane Donnellan, IDVR Administrator, Pam Harris, Mike Hauser, Mel Leviton, Darin Lindig, David “Max” Maxwell, Christine Meeuwsen, Ramona Medicine Horse, Ron Oberleitner, Danielle “DR” Reff, Paul Tierney, Sarah Tueller, David White.

Guests: IDVR’s Teresa Pitt and Kean Miller.

Absent: Lynn Jorgensen, and Nathan Ogden.

Welcome

Mike opened the meeting by welcoming council members. Members were asked to introduce themselves and their role in the SRC.

Approval of Minutes – October 27, 2020 Members were given time to review the minutes from the October 27, 2020 meeting; no changes / revisions were requested.

Motion: DR moved to approve the October 27, 2020 Meeting Minutes with as is version; Sarah seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote.

Agency Update:

VR Field Services Update:

Jane went over report provided to SRC members by Darrell Quist, Field Services Chief. The report included field services update and impact of Covid-19 on IDVR operations:

- We have reduced the number of staff in the office while keeping effectiveness.
- We are pleased to announce that we hired a permanent Assistant Regional Manager (ARM) in Region 2 – Lamisse Williams. The ARM position is crucial especially when it comes to training and supporting HR duties. Assistant Regional Managers have a small caseload, but they also provide support to the regional manager and all staff in the region through training.
- Created new Pre-ETS Counselor positions, one in North Idaho, one in Southeast Idaho, and one in Southwest Idaho. This is additional outreach especially to schools where we have not seen significant referrals in previous years. These positions

were filled internally with VR Counselors who are familiar with IDVR Pre-ETS and service delivery strategies.

Janice – question: Are new Pre-ETS positions new FTEs?

Answer: No, we evaluated demands and used free FTEs to create the Pre-ETS positions. Nanna Hanchett oversees and Alison Lowenthal manages these three positions.

Ron – comment: What services need to be done in-person between a customer and a VR Counselor? (Based on Ron's personal experience), most could be done remotely.

Jane: We sometimes require signatures. It depends on individual. We need to review customers' survey and feedback. We can brainstorm and identify the obstacles so customers can obtain services virtually.

Teresa: Some customers do not have a computer/internet access. We do have electronic signature protocols, but technology can still be an obstacle.

Janice: Important to give customers options; everything depends on individual and their preference.

Jane's Update:

- Jane recognized Mike Hauser, departing SRC Chair, for his contributions, efforts, and commitment to the field of Vocational Rehabilitation.
- Covid-19 Customer Satisfaction Survey: we sent out 3500 surveys to current customers. Feedback that we received:
 - 17% return rate
 - 92% stated they have had access to their VR Counselor.
 - For those who did not feel they had access: major reasons cited were fear of Covid-19 and challenges with technology.
 - Around 50% stated they can access employment opportunities.
 - About 85% of the individuals responded that they felt like they can access the services they needed to move forward with their employment plans.
 - In summary, most customers felt that VR was available and accessible, and interactive and supportive, recognizing that there were some of their own fears to engage in the process.
 - We have not reported back to Regional Managers yet, but we will share this feedback with them to improve our service delivery.
 - Full report on the customer survey have been sent to the SRC members prior to the meeting.

Janice asked whether the customer survey was anonymous, and can we reach out to

individuals? Answer: Respondents had a choice, some decided to self-identify. Janice added that for customers who cited hearing problems, assistive technology may help. Please send Janice information on what barriers customers are facing –she can provide a list of supports and resources.

Sarah stated that her organization may have helpful resources as well. We can collaborate to alleviate barriers. Jane said that we will share these resources with our managers.

Darin commented that phone call may be effective for getting feedback, sometimes more than a letter because it is more personal. Jane agreed it is effective, but we need to balance the time effectiveness. We keep communication for open cases, we need to rethink how to go about the closed cases based on our resources.

DR stated she agrees with Darin but added it depends on an individual and their preference.

Teresa mentioned that, for some customers we have data in our case management system (AWARE) on what method of communication they prefer.

Max – question: does AWARE provide text capability? It can be good engagement tool. Answer: Not yet; it is more focused on reporting capabilities.

Other updates:

- Customer numbers decreased so we are looking for ways to improve and strengthen our program. We reached out to North Dakota VR that sent out a letter to former customers who needed to reenter services. IDVR will be sending similar letters, both in paper format and electronically, to reach out to former clients who may need services and support due to Covid-19. This may increase our applicant pool.
- Annual Report have been sent out. If you need additional copies, please contact Linda Jensen, Administrative Assistant at 208-334-3390.
- Legislative Session started on 1-11-2021. Jane will be presenting virtually to JFAC on VR Budget on Monday morning. You can see the live stream on Legislative Session website by clicking on the JFAC committee.
- Staff turnover in the Central Office: Baxter resigned, and we are in the process of recruiting for her replacement. We also filled our Business Liaison vacancy – MiKayla Cobler who was a VR Counselor in Region 7 was selected for this role. She has two bachelor's degrees (in General Business and in Human Resources Management), and a master's degree in VR Counseling. She starts on February 1, 2021.

- Pre-ETS update: We are moving forward with in-person and virtual activities for the summer of 2021. We are collaborating with various universities to pivot. ELT will be meeting for a Strategic Planning session and one of the topics will be how to strengthen the Pre-ETS services. Nanna will provide an update on Pre-ETS services at the SRC meeting in the future.
- Customized Employment: Pilot 2 in the works. We will have a more detailed report in the Spring. It is a very complex process and requires great collaboration. We need strong mechanisms to deliver it successfully.
- Another focus area is helping CRPs increase the quality of service that they provide to our customers - priority for the agency. We also need comprehensive training for the IDVR staff, and we are evaluating options.

Teresa:

- Status of Idaho Administrative Procedure Act (IDAPA) Rule 47.01.01 – Rules Governing the Vocational Rehabilitation Services: The State Board of Education (SBOE) approved the Division's temporary and proposed rule at the June 10, 2020 meeting. The Office of Administrative Rules published the temporary and proposed rule and the notice of public meetings in the September 2, 2020, Volume 20-9 Administrative Bulletin. The Division held public comment from August 31 – September 23rd, including two telephone public meetings held September 10th and 17th. Public comment was received; one during the public meeting and two written submissions. The Division considered and incorporated many of the recommendations. The temporary and proposed rule was published in the December Administrative Bulletin, Volume 20-12, announcing the final 21-day period of public, which ended December 23rd. The pending rule will now be reviewed by both the Senate and House of Representatives Education committees sometime during this legislative session. IDAPA Rule 47.01.01 for the Division will not be reviewed again until the 2025 legislative session (negotiated rulemaking begins in 2024), according to the Zero-Based Regulation Rule Review Schedule.
- Benefits Planning service delivery: We awarded three contracts: LINC, Achieve, LLC, and Transitions, Inc. They are in the process of becoming certified through Virginia Commonwealth University and Cornell University. The next step in the process is to develop materials and provide staff training on identifying appropriate customer referrals and the basic vendor service delivery requirements. The Division plans to reengage in the bid process later this year to expand services for the entire state. We anticipate that current vendor service delivery in the approved areas/regions of the state will begin in April of this year.

Prior to the next bid cycle, the Division hopes to engage with the vendor community to increase interest in providing this service. Specific details on Benefits Planning service are in Teresa's SRC report.

Fiscal Update:

- Kean Miller, IDVR Fiscal Manager, explained both budget and grant processes. IDVR is awarded a grant for one year. If we make match in that year, then the grant is extended for another year. We always meet match in the first year, therefore, at any given time, we always have two grants open.
- Basic 19 Grant: we met our match, so we were able to spend from September 1, 2018 to October 30, 2020. 15% of the grant award must be spend on Pre-ETS. Due to COVID-19 we only spent \$763,820. As we were not able to spend 15% on Pre-ETS, we could only spend \$5.1 million of the Basic 19 grant and relinquished about 11 million dollars of federal funding.

Questions:

Janice: Have we always met our match? Kean: Yes

Janice: What funds do we use to meet match? Kean: general fund budget and miscellaneous revenue (from cooperative agreements with other state or local entities, e.g., Juvenile Corrections, education entities). We use general fund first because it does not carry over for next fiscal year.

- 0288 Rehabilitation Revenue Fund must be used the same way as the federal money because it is considered program income. It comes from the social security reimbursements that we receive. When we help a customer, who has Social Security benefits and they can move into employment and no longer need the benefits, we can report to Social Security Administration the cost spent on that individual to obtain employment, and SSA may reimburse us for that amount.
- General fund budget for this year is 3.9 million. The match that we need for Basic 20 grant is 4.5 million. It is \$600,000 more than we actually get in our general fund budget for the year, which means that we have to use other funds in order to meet that match.

Also, federal fiscal year and state fiscal years are different. Federal fiscal year runs October 1 to September 30 while state fiscal year is from July 1 to June 30. Therefore, federal fiscal year contains two state year budgets. Between those two we are able to meet match in the first year of the federal grant. We may also use the miscellaneous fund.

- Kean also discussed diagrams illustrating VR and Pre-ETS expenditures by service category. Teresa provided additional details on service categories and

description of service in the SRC packet.

- We are ready to report Basic 19 grant. Basic 20 started October 1, 2019, and because we met match, it will go thru Sept 30, 2021. For Basic 21 grant – we are working toward match and we expect to meet it.
- SRC Budget: we spent \$250 for virtual CSAVR. The spending is lower than it is typically because we do not have in-person meetings.
- SRC Budget is our best estimate and part of VR program total budget. We keep it separate by having a separate Program Cost Account to capture SRC expenditures.
- Mel: can we use the unused SRC funds to market/PR SRC to legislators? Jane: we would need to examine this and review the federal rules around marketing. Good idea would be fact sheets that we can prepare regionally to educate about the VR program.

Election of SRC Chair:

Jane reminded everyone that by-laws define the responsibility of the Chair as follows: “May serve as Chief Executive Officer of the Council, call and preside over all Council meetings, appointment membership of all Council committees, represent the Council and all coordinating activities, give leadership in general policymaking and carry out direction of the Council”.

Call for nominations:

Ron nominated Janice Carson; Christine Meeuwsen seconded.

Motion: Jane moved to approve Janice Carson as a new SRC Chair. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote:

Pam – yes

Mike- yes

Mel -yes

Darin-yes

Christine -yes

Max -yes

Ron – yes

DR- yes

Paul – yes

Sarah- yes

Election of SRC Vice Chair:

Jane informed that, per the by-laws, “the Vice Chair shall preside in all Council meetings in the absence of the Chair and serve as the Chair of the Membership Subcommittee. The Vice Chair may also undertake any duties assigned to that office

by the Council or delegated by the Chair”.

Call for nominations: Mel Leviton nominated Darin Lindig; Ron Oberleitner seconded.

Motion: Jane moved to approve Darin Lindig as Vice Chair. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote:

Pam – yes

Mike – yes

Mel – yes

Christine – yes

Max – yes

Ron – yes

DR – yes

Paul – yes

Sarah – yes

Committee Discussion:

- New members need to pick a committee; descriptions of each committee were sent to members.
- Committees need to re-start regular meetings; perhaps we can do breakout rooms during the SRC meetings.
- Once members pick a committee, please email Janice, Jane, and Darin
- SRC discussed how we can recruit new members. We currently have all our required members, except for the Workforce Development Council. Jane and Darin will schedule a meeting to discuss total membership numbers. We have one applicant who is interested in serving on the SRC.
- More diversity in location and representation throughout Idaho would be great. Currently, most members are based in the Treasure Valley.

Members who need to pick a Committee expressed their interest as follows:

- Christine – Policy Committee
- Randi – Survey Committee or CSNA
- Paul – Program Effectiveness Committee

Members Update: Members were asked to provide an update on current projects.

1. Ron Oberleitner – Business, Labor, and Industry

- Ron mentioned that new economy and business development may present opportunities for VR customers. Opportunities for Council and VR could be in job creation and jobs in newer fields like gig economy, jobs of the future, e.g., Uber drivers or DoorDash delivery drivers.

2. Janice Carson – Disability Advocacy Group, Idaho Assistive Technology Project

- Janice informed that she has been working with faculty on the Vandal QUEST program. The program assists individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities with going to college and building skills needed for their career. Janice mentioned that they did not get a grant but continuing the program and trying to find additional funding.
- In addition, focusing on purchasing of equipment and providing assistive technology in the lending library so Idahoans can borrow and try it before they buy.

3. Randi Cole – State Department of Education

- Focusing on training and connecting directors and teachers to VR; collaborating with universities on programs for students with disabilities.
- Doing monthly webinars, trying to educate school staff.
- Working closely with Alison Lowenthal, Transition Coordinator at IDVR.
- Transition Institute will be virtual. The goal is to provide resources for local education entities.

4. Pam Harris – CRP Representative

- Reached out to peers in industry to gather feedback:
 - Most CRPs in Region 1 are back to providing services.
 - Interested in more training.
 - Challenges reported are reduced hours for current employees and staffing impacts due to COVID-19 exposure.
 - Many workers in North Idaho are rural and do not have technology, like computer, phone, and internet – hardship.
 - Pam's company tries to meet with customers in person when they can socially distance and have VR counselor on Zoom.
 - Positive comments on new Pre-ETS positions.

5. Mel Leviton – State Independent Living Council

- Provided TA for people who would like to open ABLE saving accounts. Big interest because of the stimulus payments.

- Idaho Inclusive Emergency Coalition – added mental health component for emergency preparation.
- Serving on the State of Idaho Disaster Medical Advisory Committee which developed crisis standards of care for both hospitals and nursing homes.
- Continue working on Advisory Vaccine Committee.
- Continue working with facilities and nursing homes to assist people to transition out of facilities and those who have been evicted.
- Working on solutions to address workforce shortage in direct care.
- Preparing for Legislative Session.

6. Darin Lindig – HP, Business Representative

- Conducted autism hiring program for internship positions during the summer.
- Darin presented a disability survey conducted on HP Boise site – voice of HP employees on disability:
 - Received around 100 responses.
 - Comments on fear of disclosure of disability in the workplace.

Committee discussed the issue of fear and anxiety about disability disclosure. Jane mentioned that VR Counselors may help with techniques on how to disclose disability and seek accommodation to stay successful in workplace.

7. Christine Meeuwsen – Client Assistance Program

- Office closed to public but in-takes over the phone and online.
- CAP – numbers down; being a liaison and helping facilitate communication with VR.
- Legislative Session – helping with accommodations.
- DRI signed off on the lawsuit filed against legislature on accommodations.
- On national scope: Nancy Grant, senior advocate, has been working with a team from around the country and developing policy statements summarizing some of the major issues facing Native Americans with disabilities for the Biden Harris transition team.
- Will be hiring new attorneys in the new future to increase capacity.

8. Max Maxwell – VA Vocational Rehabilitation

- 32% reduction in applications in VA VR.
- Trying to capture populations within the disability community for veterans who historically were not captured in the program, utilizing Federal Code § 3117. Some individuals who have used state vocational rehabilitation programs who were typically not eligible for the program, can now be eligible or entitled to limited employment services within VA VR.
- For individuals who have lost their jobs due to Covid-19, VA VR can fast track them and connect them with Department of Labor if their employment or positive outcome goal is the same.
- In addition, working with the local schools to reach out to individuals who might be appropriate for the program so they can be provided with information.

9. Ramona Medicine Horse - Idaho's Native American Tribe Representative

- Customer numbers decreased.
- Continue taking in-takes over the phone and online.

10. Danielle Reff - Former Applicant or Recipient Representative

- Vice Chair on Council on Developmental Disabilities.
- Plans to be connecting with legislators next week.

11. Paul Tierney – Business, Labor, and Industry

- Paul stated he agrees with Ron – new economy jobs (providing service) can be an opportunity for people with disabilities.

12. Sarah Tueller – Parents Unlimited

- Increase in calls regarding ABLE Accounts, sending them to SILC.
- Many calls from families moving from other states on programs and services in Idaho.

- Also, inquiries from families looking for out-of-home placements and information on how to implement transitions goals while at home.
- Collaborative effort with other organizations to get the information about services to families.
- Part of the school-based Medicaid Services Committee and helping inform teachers and families (especially rural schools, teachers and supports) about services that can be provided during the pandemic.
- Continue to offer trainings to professionals and parents.
- Trying to reach underserved families on how to attain healthcare.
- Training site for our region Community of Practice for telehealth. The focus is to reach underserved and vulnerable populations by providing technology and other assistance.
- Work of Art program is up and running; just opened new registration.

Old/New business

Nothing was added.

Adjourn

Motion: Mike moved to Adjourn the meeting; Paul seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a verbal vote.