



# State Rehabilitation Council Quarterly Meeting

## October 27, 2020 | Virtual WebEx Meeting

### 9:30 am- 12:30pm MST

### October 27, 2020 Meeting:

**Present [alpha order]:** Janice Carson, Randi Cole, Jane Donnellan, IDVR Administrator, Angie Eandi, Pam Harris, Mike Hauser, Mel Leviton, Darin Lindig, David “Max” Maxwell, Christine Meeuwssen, Ramona Medicine Horse, Ron Oberleitner, Danielle “DR” Reff, Paul Tierney, Sarah Tueller, David White, and Council Secretary Baxter Q. Andrews

**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, their role in the SRC and years of service in SRC.

**Approval of Minutes – July 21, 2020** Members were given time to review the minutes from the July 21, 2020 meeting; no changes / revisions were requested.

**Motion:** Mike moved to approve the July 21, 2020 Meeting Minutes with as is version; Mel seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously by a roll call vote:

DR-Aye  
Sarah-Aye  
Pam-Aye  
Darin-Aye  
Ron-Aye  
Janice-Aye

Mike-Aye  
Max-Aye  
Mel-Aye  
Ramona-Aye  
Angie-Aye

### Members Update:

#### 1. Tribal VR Update

Ramona Medicine Horse reported that most of their programs are working but the clientele has gone down. Since the new fiscal year, they had one or two new intakes, and they are doing them by the phone. She noted that it has been difficult to do intakes and provide services without the face-to-face interaction.

#### 2. Idaho Parents Unlimited Update

Sarah Tueller with the Idaho Parents Unlimited gave an update on their operations. She reported that the various committees have been busy responding to inquiries and that it is challenging to answer questions when things change every day. However, it is also comforting that the organization can show support to parents trying to manage goals and technology, and to provide technology and help.

Sarah also reported that the Work of Art program is being done virtually, with one session’s registration open now, and another one starting soon. If anyone wants or has anyone that would like

to apply, please directed them to the website. Some of the artwork that has been produced will be posted on the website and Facebook page as well.

### **3. DisAbility Rights Idaho Update**

Angie Eandi reported that, since the end of March, the offices in the Pocatello and Boise, have been closed to the public, but the organization has been operating remotely. The focus has been on addressing emergency COVID-19 issues, monitoring developments with the State Department of Education and special education. The organization has been working with the long-term care ombudsmen and addressing concerns that a lot of individuals are being evicted from residential assisted living facilities. The organization have been working with them and providing legal aid.

Unfortunately, it is currently not possible to physically go in and monitor facilities, but DRI has been monitoring remotely and keeping up with the emergency COVID-19 plans, primarily Southwest Idaho Treatment Center.

One of the priorities for the 2021 fiscal year will be outreach. DRI will develop a video about the CAP program and post it on the website with the goal of reaching out and explaining DRI services. IDVR will include a link to the video and provide brochures for the program during orientation and throughout the VR process.

Christine Meeuwsen reported that, as of October 1, DisAbility Rights Idaho have transition into a new structure. The legal and advocacy departments were split into an adult unit and a youth unit. A big project in the youth and education realm will be project related to restraint and seclusion trying to analyze how that's being used around Idaho, and then moving towards proposing legislation on those issues. In the adult unit, one of the major projects is a collaboration with the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, to set up a referral system for deaf and hard of hearing individuals who are not receiving effective communication in healthcare settings, so that they can be helped directly.

Angie Eandi announced that Amy Cunningham is the DRI's Executive Director, Courtney Courtney Holthus is the Legal Director, and Christine Meeuwsen is the lead attorney on the Adult Unit.

### **4. Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation – VR Counselor Update**

David White gave an update on IDVR operations in his region (IDVR Region 7, with a regional office in Nampa). There have been a lot of changes with physical office move as well as personnel and supervision changes within the Treasure Valley region.

VR Counselors prioritized reaching out to schools and helping juniors and seniors transition from high school. Recently, David met with special education staff at a charter school, and they were excited to have IDVR there and provided many good ideas about things VR could be doing to help their kids.

Jane Donnellan reminded council members that on June 1 there were changes in supervision and physical office moves within IDVR. Region 8 which now considered the Boise East regional office. Treasure Valley Central office will be moving mid-November or later part of November, and Treasure Valley West has also had significant remodel projects at their offices.

### **5. Community Rehabilitation Program Update**

Pam Harris gave an update on the program operations. They have been very busy. They are seeing a higher stress level with a lot of their workers because of all the changes that are happening. A lot of

times they begin serving people that have not been able to meet their VR counselor in person yet, so they are doing a lot of intakes by Zoom. They have been also meeting customers in lawns and in parks and, and inside conference rooms if social distancing is possible.

The employers and the workers schedules are changing frequently. For example, at an independent living site, they have just had their fourth COVID-19 outbreak, so they closed the dining room again. Every time that happens the workers have their schedules change because instead of serving meals in the dining room, they have to deliver all the meals to somebody's door, so their hours change, and their checklist changed. Consequently, there have been a lot of stress, but the VR counselors have been great. Several of them had been quarantined and that delays services.

It is busy and employers are hiring essential workers while trying to keep everybody safe. Pam reported that they introduced handwashing program that a lot of customers and business requested. The program provides training in hand washing techniques and how to use masks and gloves to ensure workers' safety.

## **6. Business Representative Update**

Darin Lindig informed that at HP they are still promoting and trying to improve their inclusive communication efforts. They plan on having another round of autism hiring program. Hiring will be done virtually.

## **7. Ron Oberleitner**

Ron reported that his son, Robbie, lost his job in March because the business went out of business due to COVID-19. The process with the VR counselor during the summer had not produced results so Robbie's case was closed, and he is currently unemployed. As Ron does not see any suitable VR programs for Robbie in a short term, he would like to help build something that can help people in his situation in the future. Also, they did not receive a survey for customer satisfaction so Ron will want to find out why to make sure all customers have an opportunity to provide feedback.

Ron reported that he took part in the business engagement strategic session held by IDVR and it was great. He would like to see more in business engagement and outreach from VR. Recently, his own company as well as other companies and schools adapted online tools to do conduct business and VR should be using these tools to support clients or reach out to businesses.

Ron mentioned that "60 minutes" had a piece on how high functioning people with autism are valuable candidates to hire, and some of the challenges and successes that were encountered. HP can be an example of the success.

## **8. Assistive Technology Project Update**

Janice Carson reported that Assistive Technology Project never closed for business during COVID-19. When the campuses were closed, staff worked at a distance and then they dropped or shipped any equipment that was needed or provided curbside services. Janice mentioned that her staff can come in for demos, and loans, but they are also providing curbside if someone prefers that and will also do distance demos if needed.

In addition, they are launching a communication access program for older persons. She will reach out to Ron offline to discuss a tele health component to the program.

There is a lot going on with K-12 education and supporting families on assistive technology. They reviewed every district and the charters' state plans for going online and what that online technology would look like, and later developed training to provide support.

They are also working with the Department of Agriculture on AgrAbility program and providing supports to farmers and ranchers. Janet will be looking at RFP for the AgrAbility grant and engaging higher ed faculty to write it for Idaho. She will be partnering with IDVR on that as well.

## 9. SILC Update

Mel Leviton reported that almost everybody is currently working in the office, with one person who splits office work and telecommuting. They are prepared to roll back to virtual work immediately but do not anticipate doing that at the moment. Also, beginning next week they will start locking their front door.

Mel informed that she was appointed to the vaccine advisory committee.

In addition, the Idaho Inclusive Emergency Coalition and the Mental Health Preparedness Committee put together a mental health preparedness packet to supplement the standard emergency preparedness packet that helps people record all medications and be prepared for an emergency. The mental health preparedness packet will be available in both English and Spanish. They are hoping to roll it out fully by the end of the week.

Mel reported that Jamie will be doing emergency prep workshops online and people who sign up in advance will receive a packet. It contains checklists and other tools to prepare for different types of emergency or disasters that can happen at home. There will be a separate packet for preparing for when clients must go to the hospital and are not able to go home and get what is needed for the hospital stay. The packet will help them prepare a bag so that somebody can pick it up and drop it off at the hospital for them. In addition, they will also receive the new mental health packet. Also, people who complete the workshop and survey will get an emergency go bag prepared with the Idaho Office of Emergency Management, with necessities including flashlights, water bottles, etc. The workshops are geared towards people with disabilities and will also be offered in Spanish.

Mel mentioned that while the recent "virtual world" works great for a lot of people, there is a significant part of the population that struggles with it. Telehealth, virtual check ins, computer issues may be hard and frustrating for many people, including elderly and people with disabilities. We need more opportunities to think how we can help those individuals.

Jane Donnellan mentioned that while the virtual or online tools may not work for everyone, they may also provide opportunities for people that were otherwise disregarded in the past. We need to look at the unique person and their ability to engage and whatever is the best way to engage them.

## 10. Department of Education

Rani Cole reported that she has been working on the COVID-19 resource page that is continually being updated. She is also working on gathering resources for teachers for remote learning and proving transition services. She has been collaborating with Alison Lowenthal, Transition Coordinator at IDVR and they will be hosting a webinar on transition services together in a few weeks.

Randi reported that she is also working on ideas and arrangements for the Transition Institute so it can continue this year either in person or virtually.

## Membership Discussion

Jane Donnellan welcomed Christine Meeuwesen from the DisAbility Rights Idaho and Randi Cole from the State Department of Education and thanked them for their contributions to the council. Jane informed that a representative from the Disability Rights Idaho and a representative from the state educational agency responsible for public education for students with disabilities are both required positions under the federal regulations.

Jane also recognized and thanked Angie Eandi for her work and contributions to the SRC.

Jane provided an update on the issue that was brought up in March to whether any individual who works under the State Board of Education could be a voting member of the State Rehabilitation Council. The decision that RSA rendered on September 3, 2020 was that if you are an individual who works for any entity under the State Board of Education, you could not be a voting member on the State Rehabilitation Council. Consequently, Janice and Randi cannot be a voting member on the council. Janice will continue to be a Co-Chair.

RSA consulted this decision with their legal counsel and Matt Freeman, the Executive Director of the State Board of Education, provided input as well. Jane will be happy to provide the communication from the RSA on this issue for those who are interested.

Jane also clarified that both her and David White from IDVR are both ex officio members and cannot vote on the council. As a result, there are currently 13 voting members on council as the Workforce Development Council representative position has not been filled since Dwight Johnson left last December. Jane has been in talks with the Workforce Development Council about recommendations for a new member and we may have it by the SRC meeting in January or by the spring meeting.

The question was asked whether the council has to have a quorum requirement to vote, and the answer is yes.

Jane also discussed another area of membership that requires that the majority of SRC members are made up of individuals with disabilities. Jane asked that all members send an email to her and Baxter by the end of the week confirming whether they have a disability or not.

Jane clarified that, by the ADA definition, an individual with a disability is an individual who has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activity, who has a record of such an impairment or who is regarded as having such an impairment.

## Administrator Update:

1. Jane expressed appreciation for all SRC members and their contribution to the council. She acknowledged Darin, Ron, Janice, Nathan, and DR for their involvement and contribution during the strategic business engagement meeting hosted by IDVR in July. Their input on how we can strategically move forward with business engagement is valuable and appreciated.

2. As SRC meetings are short, Nanna, Darrell, Teresa, and Kean prepared their respective area reports that were sent out to members before the meeting. No questions were noted.

3. Jane provided an update on the IDVR operations during COVID-19 and return to Stage 3. Safety protocols were reviewed, and we have plans in place. Most employees have the own individual



offices with doors, but the biggest concern are the assistants whose workspaces may be clustered together so this will need to be managed. The safety of customers and staff continue to be priority.

4. SRC Annual Report Update. It was a collaborative effort and contribution from all members. With valuable input and feedback, the document is ready to print. The deadline to send it to the Governor and the RSA is December 31, 2020. The potential idea for the next publication is to have it in a calendar format.

Janice asked about the impact of COVID-19 on numbers of individuals we serve. Teresa referenced the Program Highlight document that was sent to members that provides data for the first quarter of PY 2020. Next year's report will probably have more data on the impact of COVID-19.

5. Jane gave her annual presentation to the State Board of Education, highlighting the programs under the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. There are three programs under the division, the VR program being the largest program. The second program is the Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, which is an independent agency that only gets fiscal and administrative support from IDVR, with Steven Snow as an Executive Director. The third is Extended Employment Services Program.

During the SBOE presentation, Jane had an opportunity to show videos, one included the chalk art and explained to teachers and parents the pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities. The video is available on the IDVR website as well. She also highlighted Daniel's story which is featured in the annual report.

Jane informed that during the presentation she had a question from one of the board members and it was about who determined the level of qualifications for our counselors.

She explained that under the Code of Federal Regulations, it is the State's ability to define what we consider qualified personnel for our counseling staff in the state of Idaho. We require a master's degree in counseling or related field for our VR counselors. This level of education is required because working with individuals with disabilities takes a unique skill set. Individuals who have gone through a master's program, specifically in rehab counseling, understand the complexities of individuals with disabilities and their skills and abilities and functional limitations as it pertains to their disability. VR Counselors also must understand the world of work and how that intersects with somebody's disability and all those different nuances that they need to apply to help individuals get and be successful in employment.

6. Jane met with Dr. Linda Clark, who is a state board member. Jane meets with her monthly to discuss initiatives or any issues around programs under the Division. In September, Allison Lowenthal, IDVR Transition Coordinator joined the call to discuss students with disabilities. As Dr. Clark she was the superintendent of West Ada school district, it is been a great opportunity to discuss these initiatives and successes and highlight the VR program and what we have to offer. She can hopefully pass that message to legislators and state board members.

7. Jane continues to serve on the Workforce Development Council that includes 37 members, 17 of which are employers, and the rest are state agencies that represent varying groups of people in the workforce.

One of their initiatives is Next Stop Idaho which is a site launched in partnership with the State Department of Education and Idaho employers. It is designed to help the job seeker understand and pursue different educational and career opportunities. It fits well with IDVR's mission to help individuals with disabilities find employment while meeting the needs of the employers.

A second site launched by the Workforce Development Council is called Idaho Launch. It matches skills needed to fill Idaho's current employment needs as well as provides short-term training opportunities. Workforce Development Council was awarded \$2 million in CARES funding to assist in providing short term training for people who have been impacted by COVID-19 and others. There are eligibility requirements. An individual must be an Idaho resident and they must apply training they receive to an Idaho business. It is a short-term training in nature, and after the CARES Act money runs out the Workforce Development Council wants to continue this support by providing up to 70% of training funds for the short-term training. They have career planners, through the Department of Labor, who have been trained on doing assessment of candidates and who are trained to ask questions whether applicants are working with other programs like VR to maintain the collaboration.

The two initiatives will be shared with VR counselors so they can use them when serving clients.

8. Jane mentioned that the IDVR Annual In-Service is being held virtually on October 28 and 29. Mark Schultz, who is the Commissioner of Rehab Services Administration will be providing opening remarks. This year is also 100th anniversary of the VR program, 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of National Disability Employment month as well as the 30th anniversary of the ADA. There have been many celebrations and a trivia game that IDVR staff were able to participate in.

### **Fiscal Update:**

Kean Miller reported that in the last quarter SRC did not spend any funds. That is because the last meeting was virtual, and we did not have any travel or meeting hotel arrangements so there was no expense during the last quarter.

Kean informed that IDVR Quarterly Budget to Actual Report by Fund document shows what is being spent by fund. She noted that we have met our match on our 20 grant. That means that we have our FY 20 federal grant for the next year and it is through September 30 of next year.

For Pre-ETS, we spent 1.3 million out of 2.5 million as of the end of September. Last year we had only spent 665,000. Kean believes we will be able to meet our 2.5 million minimum obligation.

### **Planning and Evaluation Update:**

Benefits Planning service delivery has been one of the priorities in our strategic planning and state plan. We are going to launch the service through a contract award process with the Division of Purchasing. We plan on having an invitation to pre-bid meeting with interested parties before the end of the month.

Teresa will reach out to SRC members in case they know of entities or individuals who may be interested in delivering the service. IDVR will also reach out to the CRP network, independent living centers and other state agencies with information.

The goal is that they will have about a month to respond to the announcement, and that we will make awards in December. If the individuals who respond are not going to meet our qualifications, they will have to obtain the training provided by Cornell University or Virginia Commonwealth University. They will need to get the training before they can deliver the service. The service delivery may possibly start in Spring 2021.

We also need to train VR counselors on benefits planning service, and it will be another expenditure

that will help utilize the resources we have available on our grant.

### **Business Engagement – Member Input**

Nanna Hanchett presented the Business Engagement Strategic Planning Summary which includes short-term and long-term objectives for business engagement. It was prepared after the virtual business engagement session in July. Members were asked to provide feedback and comments.

Janice commented that, as Ron mentioned the experience with his son who was not able to get support from VR and obtain a job, Janice's nephew who is on the spectrum also struggled with understanding the VR process. She asked how the business engagement can address this issue. Nanna responded that business engagement's goal is to increase employer's awareness of VR. With that understanding and good rapport, VR will be able to increase our effectiveness when it comes to the individual placement.

Darin commented that focusing on employers and how VR can benefit employers is a positive and effective message in the strategic planning goals. Nanna agreed and mentioned that IDVR will be training counselors and providing them with clear expectations and goals for the business engagement to satisfy the requirements of WIOA.

### **Old Business / New Business**

- Jane discussed scheduling the SRC meetings for next year. At this point, meetings will be virtual.

Proposed dates are:

Thursday, January 14

Tuesday, April 27 or Thursday, April 29

July 20, 21 or 22<sup>nd</sup>

Tuesday, October 26

- Meetings will be for around 3 hours with a break.
- Darin proposed to have virtual break up groups to connect with people during breaks.

### **Adjourn**

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