



State Rehabilitation Council Quarterly Meeting October 26, 2021 | Hybrid Zoom Meeting

Present

Council Chair Janice Carson, Council Vice Chair Darin Lindig, Tim Blonsky, Emily Carlisle, Randi Cole, Jami Davis, Jane Donnellan, Pam Harris, Dave “Max” Maxwell, Christine Meeuwsen, Ron Oberleitner, Nathan Ogden, James Pegram, DR “DR” Reff, and Stephanie Taylor-Silva.

Guests

Nanna Hanchett, Doug Miley, Teresa Pitt, and Darrell Quist.

Absent

Ramona Medicine Horse, Sarah Tueller, and David White.

Welcome & Introductions

Council Chair Carson opened the meeting by greeting Council Members and thanking them for their participation in the Council. **Council Secretary Emily Carlisle** completed roll call, then Council Chair Carson completed a review of the meeting’s agenda with all members. She invited new members to introduce themselves, they received a warm welcome from the Council.

Approval of Minutes – July 20, 2021

Members were given time to review the Minutes of Tuesday, July 20, 2021. They stated there were no corrections necessary.

Motion:

Nathan Ogden moved to approve the Minutes of Tuesday, July 20, 2021, as amended. **DR “DR” Reff** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

Agency Update

RSA Monitoring

Jane Donnellan, Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (IDVR) Administrator, welcomed the Council and introduced Agency guests Darrell Quist, Field Services Chief; Teresa Pitt, Planning and Evaluation Manager; and Emily Carlisle, Administrative Assistant and SRC Council Secretary. She also welcomed new SRC Members. **Jane Donnellan** began the Agency Update by briefing members on the Rehab Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring; to include the background of the monitoring initiative and its history with IDVR, the work IDVR staff did to prepare for the monitoring, how the process has progressed, and the status of RSA's response report. She outlined what IDVR staff learned throughout the process and how the department has grown since the monitoring ended. Jane Donnellan expressed that it has been a very positive process and noted she is optimistic about the response report. **Teresa Pitt** agreed with Jane Donnellan's words and reiterated the positive remarks from RSA. She acknowledged the process has involved quite a bit of work, but has been a very validating process.

Council Chair Carson inquired if the Idaho Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired (ICBVI) was included in the monitoring. **Ms. Donnellan** explained that since IDVR and ICBVI are separate entities, they were not monitored together. She predicted that ICBVI will undergo monitoring in the upcoming years since they hadn't been selected yet. Council Chair Carson then asked how many states operate with separate entities, to which **Ms. Donnellan** clarified roughly half the states have opted for this approach and noted there were about 78 entities nationwide.

Business Engagement & Apprenticeship Coordinator

Nanna Hanchett, Deputy Administrator at IDVR, introduced herself and briefed the members about her work with the agency. She reminded everyone that October was National Employment Awareness Month. Mrs. Hanchett shared that Boise Chamber of Commerce had shared an interview on social media which discussed individuals with disabilities as well as vocational rehabilitation. She thanked MiKayla Cobler, Business Engagement Coordinator, for making the interview possible.

Mrs. Hanchett continued to briefly describe a new position with the agency. The Apprenticeship Coordinator is a four-year position funded by a grant through the Department of Labor and is intended to expand opportunities for individuals using VR services. **Tim Blonksy** commented that IDVR, Apprenticeship Idaho and Business Engagement will need to coordinate their communications to ensure they are not duplicating services unnecessarily. **Mrs. Hanchett** specified that transformation at the state level would be necessary, she described the evolution of IDVR services as they move towards a “two customer approach” between the customer and businesses engaged with IDVR. She did acknowledge the apprenticeship effort would require planning and forward thinking to be successful. **Council Chair Carson** acknowledged the importance of interagency work in the service of customers, to which **Mrs. Hanchett** agreed. She also noted agencies on the state level are working to coordinate and transform together in an effort to better serve customers.

State Board of Education Presentation

Ms. Donnellan gave a brief recap of her presentation to the State Board of Education. She highlighted challenges the agency has encountered, to include retaining qualified staff, attracting new staff, and compensating staff equitably. She also took a moment to describe underfill positions the agency has been dependent on. Vocational Rehabilitation Specialists can work with the agency as a counselor, provided they pursue and attain the necessary education to be a qualified counselor within five years of their hire date. The program has been a success in allowing more customers to be served but has proven to be taxing on the agency and its management staff.

Mrs. Hanchett briefly reviewed vacant positions within the agency and described the difficulty field staff and Human Resources (HR) have had in filling them. **Ms. Donnellan** emphasized efficient HR dynamics, creativity in compensation and flexibility in agency funds as ways of attracting and retaining to fill the identified vacancies in addition to keeping existing agency staff. She identified salary savings as a way of providing recruitment bonuses for credentialed staff and suggested legislative engagement may be a way to influence a change in employee compensation during the next legislative session. The council held roundtable discussion on the innovation and strategies that could be adopted from private sector employment.

State Plan

Mrs. Pitt discussed the planning and work that has gone into developing the state plan. Once it has been completed it will be made available for public comment and reviewed for any additional changes.

She noted the schedule will need to be aggressive to accomplish all the tasks necessary but hopes conversation with stakeholders can speed up the progress and process. She reminded members of the requirement for SRC to review the VR portion of the state plan. **Council Chair Carson** affirmed they would be able to help and gave a brief overview of the process for new members. **Mrs. Pitt** thanked the council for the pledge to help and said she may need additional support in other areas and will contact them if so.

Fiscal Update

Doug Miley, Financial Specialist Senior at IDVR, gave an overview of the financial report. The Fiscal Year 2021 Budget is the same as the Fiscal Year 2020 Budget, with about 8% spent so far. He noted there were no expenditures from the SRC budget from the previous quarter.

Agency Update (Continued)

Darrell Quist, Field Services Chief at IDVR, gave a brief update of how field offices have been coping with COVID-19 policies. He also described how staff turnover has impacted the offices and answered questions on how staff have been coping with the added stress and workloads. Lastly, he informed members that counselor expectations are being developed.

Nanna Hanchett updated the members on program development within the Pre-ETS and Business Engagement (BE) realm. She noted that even though there has been great progress made in the summer work and work-based learning programs, she continues to set goals with her staff for the upcoming year. To conclude, Mrs. Hanchett reminded the council that Mikayla Cobler, Business Engagement Coordinator, has been developing a plan to further integrate VR into the state workforce and continues to develop a strategic plan for BE.

Member Updates & Working Lunch

The council broke for lunch at 12:45 p.m. and members shared updates of their personal progress and work in the community.

Annual Report Review

Members previewed a draft of the Combined 2021 Annual Report. **Mrs. Pitt** spoke briefly on the collaborative effort amongst agency staff to assemble the report. She said the most exciting aspect was the decision to have the report professionally assembled through a contract, which had been a suggestion of the SRC at the onset of planning. A challenge in development was to ensure all content was accessible; the font sizes and colors, labels, spacing and color themes were all designed to be visually accessible to users and assistive technology. There was a consensus that the report was well done, and some feedback was provided for consideration. **Emily Carlisle**, SRC Secretary, let members know they would receive a hard copy in the mail after prints were delivered. To compliment the Success Stories highlighted in the report, members previewed an additional success story developed by Business Engagement.

A Day in the Life of VR

Ms. Donnellan opened the presentation by thanking Stephanie Taylor Silva, Former VR Services recipient, and Council Member, for volunteering to share her experience with the council. As a previous VR services recipient, Stephanie was naturally an excellent individual to share how the VR process works for member familiarization. Mrs. Pitt then asked John Orose, Regional Manager at IDVR, to share the process and flow of how a traditional VR case is handled. **Mr. Orose** opened by sharing with the council that Stephanie had been one of his cases, she had done a great job and he was happy to continue working with her professionally. He discussed the flow of how a potentially eligible individual is found eligible, along with the expected timeline of the process. He covered what is expected of both the counselor and individual applying for services, as well as the different possibilities if someone is considered a successful case or unsuccessful case. To provide a visual aid of the process, he shared a flowchart with the members.

Ms. Taylor Silva then described the positive impact VR had on her life and walked the members through the process of applying, being found eligible, receiving services, and becoming a successful closure. She described her experience with the agency from a customer's perspective and outlined how the services she received changed the course of her life. Becoming involved with VR and working with Mr. Orose allowed her to overcome her disability and succeed in not only post graduate education, but in the state workforce as well. Overall, she felt immense gratitude for the chance to participate and was happy with her newfound marketability.

The council thanked Ms. Taylor Silva for sharing her experience and again welcomed her as a new member. **Council Chair Carson** remarked how important different steps of the program are and acknowledged the presentation was very informative.

Old Business/New Business

Ms. Donnellan briefly spoke to introduce a new position with the agency, a CRP Manager. She informed members Ryan Waddell, who is currently the Extended Employment Services Manager, would be filling the position. **Council Chair Carson** identified topics members had shown an interest in for the next meeting, to include another success story, a Community Action Partnership presentation and legislative engagement training. With no further business on the agenda, she thanked members for their time and adjourned the meeting.

Adjourned

Prepared by Council Secretary, Emily Carlisle