

Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council

Meeting Minutes

May 14, 2020 – Remote via WebEx

Members Present: Julie Burish, Barb Klug, Ramsey Lee, Liz Kennedy, Mary Kessens, Matt Busch, Megan Bisonette, Patrick Young, Tom Benziger, Alicia Reinhard, Becky Hebda, Jaclyn Borchardt, Beth Swedeen, Ann Wales, Deb Henderson-Guenther, Joalyn Torgerson, Debra Notstad, Julie Barker (non-voting), Darla Burton (non-voting), Delora Newton (non-voting)

Members Absent: Lori Karcher, Ann Zenk, Jodi Hanna, Anntrice Brown

Resource Staff/Guests: Allison Gordon, Sarah Lincoln, Jessica Holton, Diana Kiesling, Patricia Sugden, Anna Eggebrecht, Meredith Dressel, Kathleen Enders, Steven Corfman (DRW), Sarah Lyngdal (ERI)

Roll Call & Announcements

- Matt welcomed everyone and reviewed the process for participation in the WebEx format of the meeting. Matt thanked everyone for their participation and wished everyone well.
- Matt conducted roll call using the member roster. Quorum was met with 16 out of 19 voting members in attendance.
- Matt asked that if an attendee would like to ask a question that they type it into the chat, and noted that questions would be addressed at the end of each presentation.

Public Comment

- No public comments received.

Agenda Item: COVID-19 Updates and Impacts of Provider Base

Delora Newton, DVR Administrator

- Overview provided of how DVR addressed staff working from home, closing local offices, notifying consumers and service providers of remote services, and FAQ webpage for Service Providers.

- Offices closed to the public as of March 18, 2020 but will continue to provide remote services. This information was posted at local offices and sent in a press release. The press release also included an FAQ on how to communicate with DVR staff during this time.
- Skype, Webinar, and BlueJeans are the approved technologies for DVR staff to communicate remotely.
- DVR has promoted the use of wellness resources for all staff with the added stress that has resulted from COVID-19.
- Many consumers are working, and some have lost positions. Some are putting their DVR services on hold for now for various reasons.
- DVR is encouraging consumers to focus on activities related to work search including resume development, online trainings, job searches, etc.
- New applications in March 2019 = 1,243. In March 2020 = 737. Data shows some are choosing not to pursue work at this time.
- Weekly trends chart (starting 03/23/2020) was shared with data on referrals, applicants, eligibilities, new IPEs, Status 26 closures, total cases, and cases with IPE.
- Service provider temporary fee increases for COVID-19 service costs effective March 30 – May 31, 2020. Services with COVID-19 fees include Work Incentive Benefits Counseling, Job Retention, Transition to Long-Term Care for Supported Employment (SE), Customized Employment (CE), or Individual Placement and Support (IPS), Job Hire incremental payment for Job Preparation and Development, SE, CE, IPS and Student Work-Based Learning, and Internship/Temporary Work.
- DVR is reviewing budget to see if the increased fees will be extended through June. No decision has been made.
- As of July 1, 2020, DVR implementing new Tech Specs, so COVID-19 fee increases will not be extended past June.

- Service providers have been provided temporary service flexibilities. Adjustments have been made related to required timelines and consumer status. Service provider COVID-19 FAQs are frequently updated on our webpage. Resources include information for online training for service provider staff.
- 14C employee interviews are being done remotely when possible.
- Two new services have been developed: 1) Explore Work (Pre-ETS or for adults) – 31 providers are currently authorized, and 2) Partners with Business service.
- DVR is making plans for staff reintegration into offices. DVR has not received more information about the potential impact of the Supreme Court ruling on that plan, but Delora feels it will likely not impact our plans. DVR's priority is the health and safety of DVR staff and consumers. DVR will ensure we have all necessary supplies to keep staff and consumers safe (hand sanitizer, disinfectant wipes, plexiglass screens, etc.) before returning.
- Becky asked if DVR has considered paying for PPE for consumers or vendors if it is required as part of their work. Anna noted that if a consumer needs PPE not funded by their employer we would consider the cost on a case-by-case basis, but unsure about paying for PPE for job coaches.
- Lynn asked how to get connected to Partners with Business? Anna indicated that Shannon Munn is coordinating those services for DVR and providing training.
- Beth asked how DVR is addressing individuals who submit a referral but then say they are not interested at this time because of COVID-19, with concern that consumers with IDD may be confused. Anna addressed this, noting resources like tele counseling are available to address individual concerns that consumers with IDD may have during this time.
- Matt asked if DVR has addressed DVR consumer unemployment given the current unemployment rate. Does DVR have a plan in

place for an increase in DVR referrals? Delora indicated that DVR is looking at the possibility of OOS category closure to address the staff shortage we are experiencing due to the DWD requirement that some DVR staff are reassigned to UI. DVR is watching trends and making plans to address it. Meredith shared that she was working for DVR back in 2008 during the recession and it was different because job losses were gradual. This is different because job losses were very sudden but there are lessons learned from the recession that DVR is using.

- Patrick asked if consumers who work for small businesses are eligible for Partners with Business. Anna indicated that yes, small businesses are eligible.
- Steven Corfman shared some information regarding Pandemic federal funds for SSI/SSDI recipients related to unemployment. <https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/uiben/pua/>.

Agenda Item: DVR Administrator Updates

Delora Newton, DVR Administrator

- Follow-up from February WRC meeting:
 - List of Service Provider Capacity Workgroup members is now posted on the DVR webpage.
 - WRC members received a copy of the Tech Spec revisions that will be implemented on July 1, 2020.
 - Section 511 Power point from Jessica Smith at UW Whitewater was shared with WRC members.
- Welcome new WRC members: **Megan Bisonette**, Native American Rehab Program; **Lori Karcher**, Parent Training Info Center Rep.; **Elizabeth Kennedy**, Advocacy Rep.; **Ann Zenk**, CWI Rep.; **Tom Benziger**, State ILCW Rep.
- Program Year 2020 (July 1, 2019 – April 25, 2020) outcomes were shared via the presentation, including PY 2019 Measurable Skills

Gain (MSG) Attainment and Credential Attainment Rate to date. These rates should increase as schools end their year.

- DVR has negotiated the MSG Rate for next year with RSA. Details included in the presentation.
- Between July 1, 2019, and April 28, 2020, DVR had 47 referrals indicated as coming from a 14c employer at the time of application.
- Between Oct 1, 2019 and April 28, 2020, DVR had 1,024 referrals indicated as coming from an LTC provider at the time of application.
- FFY Budget information for DVR was shared. Not likely that we will receive re-allotment funds this year from RSA. Federal funding can fluctuate but State GPR remains the same.
- DVR's Pre-ETS spending requirement for FFY 2020 is \$9.7 million. Through April 28, 2020, DVR has spent \$4,935,947. DVR may see lower Pre-ETS expenditures for this year due to lower participation in summer Pre-ETS programs. RSA has expanded service flexibility that count as Pre-ETS, so that should help meet the requirement.
- Most DVR staff vacancies are currently in the recruitment process. Wisconsin has a temporary hiring freeze, so DVR needs special permission from DWD's Secretary's Office to hire. Fortunately, DVR has been given permission to hire for vacancies so far. DVR recently hired a new WDA 10 Director, Jennifer Klein, who was a VRC in WDA 1, and prior to that worked in VR in Arizona before coming to Wisconsin.
- DVR caseloads are slightly higher since February. DVR is keeping an eye on these numbers and the possibility of going on a waitlist.
- Project SEARCH: COVID-19 has impacted these programs globally. DVR is developing creative solutions to continue to work with PS youth, encouraging virtual training and flexible start dates for the Fall. Five PS sites have chosen to close due to COVID-19, so we have not been able to provide services. These sites are all supported by EasterSeals. DVR continues to discuss solutions with EasterSeals to keep their interns engaged.

- Delora shared some of the virtual service options available to PS participants to keep the interns engaged. Sites are restructuring graduation ceremonies. Some are using virtual ceremonies through technology like Zoom and WebEx. Some are doing private drive-thru services for graduation while others are delaying until August or September. DVR is working with the DWD Secretary's Office to see if DWD Secretary Frostman can share a video message for all graduates.
- Wisconsin Project SEARCH has three new sites planned to launch this fall: Superior, Kimberly, and Green Bay (adult only). The business partners are not 100% confirmed at this point but plans are moving ahead. All three new programs have been licensed and are receiving virtual technical assistance. Teams are also providing mental health supports to participants and their families during this time. DVR will issue an RFA for additional sites for 2021-22.
- Combined State Plan 2020-2023: Every four years DVR submits a combined State Plan with all WIOA partners in Wisconsin. The plan is being reviewed by RSA after responding to some technical questions. DVR is waiting for RSA approval of these corrections.
- UW-Whitewater has conducted 3,366 of the Section 511 interviews required for PY 2020. There are 1,500 interviews that still need to be conducted before June 30, 2020. Due to COVID-19, 18 14c sites have closed. Of those that remain open, many have restricted outside visits. This may cause issues with UW-W completing all the interviews within the time required. DVR has reached out to RSA to ask questions about the issue of employee access to complete the interviews. DVR hopes waivers will be issued during this time. DVR, the Disability Service Provider Network (DSPN), and UW-Whitewater will meet to create a plan to conduct interviews remotely where possible.
- Service Provider Portal Update: Service providers can now attach reports directly to case files, eliminating the need for DVR staff to manually attach reports to case files. All POs issued to a provider

are available electronically via the portal. SVRI can also share documents through the portal.

- Tech Spec changes are effective July 1, 2020. These changes are in response to the SP survey, DVR staff, and other stakeholders. DVR staff will be trained on these changes in May, and Service Providers will be provided training in June.
- RSA has created a webpage for 100 Years of Vocational Rehabilitation – Google RSA VR 100. DVR will be promoting this milestone via social media (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn). Plans for a large celebration have been canceled due to COVID-19.
- RSA Monitoring Workgroup: DVR was monitored last summer and received the final report with no findings. RSA is currently reviewing their monitoring efforts and Delora has been selected as one of six VR Administrators from across the country to participate, with the goal of improving the process overall. Delora detailed the workgroup's goals, with the hope that the work will be completed by the end of September 2020 so RSA can use the recommendations for their next monitoring cycle.
- DWD has a new Deputy Secretary: Robert Cherry Jr.
- Unemployment Insurance (UI) has experienced a huge increase in UI claims due to COVID-19. UI pulled staff from other State agencies to assist where possible. DVR was directed to reassign a portion of DVR staff to UI. Under RSA rules, DVR may only have 10% of VR staff conducting non-consumer services, so DVR reassigned 34 VR staff to work for UI. Those staff are being paid with UI dollars for the duration of the temporary assignment. The assignment is full time for at least three months and could last for up to six months. DVR had to look at which staff would have the least impact on services to DVR consumers, so many DVR Business Services Consultants and admin staff were assigned.
- **Q:** What happened to the Walmart Distribution Center PS site? **A:** Walmart has decided to no longer participate in PS, but the site will continue at a different area business. DVR is currently seeking a

new permanent business in the area. DVR may have a temporary business for a year before securing a permanent business.

- **Q:** Can the UW-Whitewater interviews be conducted in the individuals' homes? **A:** That is being considered as an option.
- **Q:** Are Supported Employment (SE) rates being increased in the new Tech Specs?
 - Monthly Job Coaching increased from \$800 to \$1,000.
 - Transition to LTS adjusted payment when a consumer doesn't transition within 6 months was added.
 - New service in SE for Job Development Plan \$250.
 - Hire rates are increasing for individuals making more than \$9 per hour.
 - Systematic Instructions for students for hard or soft skills now count as Pre-ETS at \$45 per hour. The costs have been shifted into different funding codes, not cut.
 - The number of reports were reduced to save service provider staff time.
 - New increases will cost DVR approximately \$3 million per year in service budget. DVR needed to try to balance increase in fees with overall budget needs to avoid or delay a waitlist. A waitlist implementation could impact service providers if DVR doesn't have consumers needing their services.
 - Matt has concerns with ensuring the service providers can pay their staff a competitive wage, maintain good quality staff, and provide quality services. It is a balance to keep everyone satisfied with the rates and existing DVR budget.
 - Kathleen addressed the process DVR used to change the Tech Specs, indicating that most providers shared they are satisfied with the increases/changes in reporting requirements.
- **Q:** Ramsey asked if UI has considered hiring DVR consumers.
A: Delora shared that the UI positions were publicly posted and

shared with DVR consumers, and that DVR encouraged consumers to apply if it was a good job fit.

- **Q:** Ramsey asked if UW-W Interviews can be done via phone?

A: That is an option being explored.

Agenda Item: IPS Model Overview and Possible Impact on OOS

Kathleen Enders, DVR Program Development Section Chief

- DVR reviewed this topic with WRC earlier this year.
- RSA has clarified that Supported Employment (SE) services can be provided only to those with the most significant disabilities (who are placed in Order of Selection (OOS) Category 1).
- DVR has three SE services: Customized Employment, Individual Placement and Support (IPS), and typical Supported Employment.
- DVR pulled cases to conduct a review on how these changes would impact current practices:
 - Some cases were presumptively eligible, but not reviewed again to be moved to OOS Category 1, while others should have been in OOS Category 1 instead of OOS Category 2. Others were IPS cases.
 - About 42% of cases were in OOS Category 2. About 32% were in OOS Category 2 with no Long-Term Care.
 - Of Customized Employment cases, 15% in OOS Category 2.
 - For IPS cases, 54% were in OOS Category 2. There are two levels of service under IPS: Higher level of service for those with the most significant disabilities – majority of these cases are in OOS Category 1 – and for those with fewer functional limitations, Comprehensive Community Services are delivered at the county level.

- DVR staff should go back and update OOS decisions for those determined presumptively eligible or if new considerations appear throughout the duration of a case.
- DVR provided updated SE guidance and training for staff statewide last fall; updates were also shared with stakeholders.
- Updated edits in DVR's case management system went into effect April 1st, but those already receiving SE services before that date were grandfathered in to continue receiving those services.
- Deb clarified that an SE approach can still be provided to consumers, but there wouldn't be a transition to long-term support.
- Becky noted the \$750 difference between job development and supported employment is a concern. Kathleen clarified that DVR can always re-evaluate an OOS category when appropriate and took note of Becky's concerns that contradictory information on this is topic has been shared in the field.

Agenda Item: Client Assistance Program (CAP) Quarterly Report Deb Henderson-Guenther, CAP Director

- CAP was able to seamlessly move to working remotely and has been successfully using various platforms for meetings, but has been impacted by phone calls for assistance with Unemployment Insurance claims.
- Deb shared information about a free webinar on June 2 from 2:30-3:30pm at [NCRTM.ed.gov](https://ncrtm.ed.gov) celebrating the 100th anniversary of VR.
- Consumers who were relying on comparable benefits at libraries, Job Centers, etc. have been impacted by COVID-19. CAP is working with them to reach out to professors for deadline extensions and troubleshooting.
- Hiring process was halted because interviews were to be held the week Deb was directed to work remotely.
- 227 Annual Report:

- Deb was informed last year that she cannot post the report on the website until RSA has published it. Deb asked RSA about it, but they haven't responded.
- Deb sent a blank copy of the report to the council for review and shared a high-level overview.
- **REQUEST** – Put 227 CAP Report on August WRC agenda.
- **REQUEST** – Share a copy of the report in advance of the meeting for review and questions.
- CAP received 429 information and referral calls and conducted three training sessions this past year, including DVR's Comprehensive New Staff Training.
- CAP participated in an outreach event at Juneteenth Day in Milwaukee and had one scheduled with Native American VR, but it was canceled.
- CAP had 78 cases in 2019, including 42 males and 36 females ages 41-64. Top two categories of disability were Mental Illness and Orthopedic Issues.
- Deb asked WRC members to encourage families with youth to contact CAP with issues or concerns.
- Patrick suggested Deb consider reaching out to YIPPEE for outreach. Liz Kennedy stated one of their Project SEARCH instructors is a YIPPEE facilitator and Sherry Gundlach would be another good contact person. Alicia Reinhard also shared that Martha DeYoung is a good contact person.

Agenda Item: WRC Committee Reports

- Executive Committee (Matt Busch)
 - The committee discussed COVID-19 and parameters for the full council meeting, including technology and logistics.
 - The committee discussed a request for more details on the roll-out of policy, guidance, and laws for DVR and when they get shared with WRC for review.

- The committee discussed officer positions for chair, vice-chair, and member-at-large positions for the Executive Committee.
- At-Large member position election will be moved to August. If interested in that position, let Matt know. WRC will need to follow Roberts Rules of Order for this position.
- The committee discussed a nominating committee and what it could entail for candidates for chair and vice-chair as opposed to following current process of Roberts Rules of Order.
- WIOA Committee (Beth Swedeen)
 - The committee checked in with DVR staff about suggestions provided to UW-Whitewater on resources shared with participants in 511 interviews. Edits would be considered for the next round that starts in Fall 2020, including resources.
 - The committee discussed school/DVR coordination during COVID-19 related to Pre-ETS, including technological issues such as Zoom meetings.
 - DPI has a resource page on their website, and DVR can provide technology support on a case-by-case basis.
 - Any provider in any region can offer Explore Works support.
 - The committee also discussed CCOTS and their work, and Becky asked about responsibility for purchasing PPE.
- Services to Business Committee (Becky Hebda, ADD-ON)
 - Becky explained that due to COVID-19, that nature of this committee has changed, especially since many BSCs and similar positions are assisting with UI.
 - Becky feels this committee is paused at this time due to COVID-19 changes.
 - Anna Eggebrecht will serve as a point-of-contact in Patti Johnson's absence and is working on a list of back-ups for each WDA.

- Becky shared the committee's goal to improve outreach to employers and discussions they had about ways to achieve that goal, including working with DVR's Policy Initiatives Advisor and engaging business partners to speak with other businesses about their successes and best practices in employing people with disabilities.

Action Items

- **REQUEST** – Place 227 CAP Report on the August WRC agenda.
- **REQUEST** – Share a copy of the report in advance of the meeting for review and questions.
- Executive committee discussed a request for more details on the roll-out of policy, guidance, and laws for DVR and when they get shared with WRC for review.
- At-Large member position election will be moved to August. If interested in that position, let Matt know. WRC will need to follow Roberts Rules of Order for this position.
- Becky asked about school vs. DVR responsibility for purchasing Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- COVID-19 updates and how WRC can support DVR, consumers, provider base, businesses, and other stakeholders.
- Deb would like a conversation about trying to recruit a high school transition student to be a WRC member to gain their insight, and Ann Wales suggested having a person representing unions serve on WRC. Delora clarified that DVR has no influence on the make-up of dedicated positions on WRC but can encourage transition students and/or union representatives to fill vacant spots.
- Deb asked about bylaws and attendance language, including contact to members who may have not attended. The primary goal is to reach quorum, but DVR will reach out again to members who haven't been engaged.

Adjourn