

Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council  
Meeting Minutes  
February 8, 2018  
Madison, WI

**Present:** Rob Buettner, Nancy Molfenter, Beth Swedeen, Patrick Young, Jaclyn Borchardt, Matthew Zellmer, Cathy Steffke, Thomas Benziger, Matthew Busch, Jason Ostrowski

**Absent:** Traci Jones, Tracy Mace, Ramsey Lee, Jodi Hanna, Barb Klug, Julie Barker, Delora Newton

**Resource Staff/Invited Guests:** Sarah Lincoln, Jessica Holton, Meredith Dressel, Allison Gordon, Patty Noland, Alaina Knief, Anna Eggebrecht, David Cruz, Nick Lampone, Kathleen Enders, David Knuth, Deb Henderson-Guenther

**Public Attendees:** Sheri Wade, Beth Wroblewski, Jennifer Boyle, Becky Hebda

**Recorder:** Sarah Lincoln/Jessica Holton

**Call to Order:** Nancy Molfenter, Chair, called the meeting to order at 8:36AM.

## **Roll Call**

## **Announcements**

- No quorum for today's meeting, short by one council member.

## **Old Business**

- Nancy Molfenter and Beth Swedeen met with David Cruz and Patty Noland about the relationship between Business Service Consultants (BSCs) and DVR service providers.
- Services to Business Committee suggested a local service provider be chosen to attend each WRC meeting to share perspectives on how to communicate and coordinate with DVR staff and employers. The BSC from that WDA would also attend.

- Beth Swedeen shared that BPDD invited the Governor's Appointment Officer Daniel Sievert to their last meeting and he shared advice on how to expedite the appointment process. He mentioned that any applicant that hasn't heard back from the Governor's Office can contact him directly to check their status. The WRC should discuss council member recruitment further.

## **New Business**

- How does DVR identify a Supported Employment (SE) Consumer when the Consumer is not yet old enough to be enrolled in Long-Term Support (LTS)? Are all WDAs applying the same criteria to make those determinations?
  - Meredith Dressel indicated that the decision for SE is based on career profile outcomes and offered to have an SE presentation at the next WRC meeting to explain the DVR process and how it works on an individualized basis.
  - Meredith indicated that SE is not based on a Consumer's LTS eligibility status.
  - A survey was sent to providers to gather information on this issue and address other provider issues and concerns.

## **Public Comment**

- Becky Hebda requested that the DVR quarterly report update on total successful closures be split out by SE, CE, IPS, and regular Job Development services.
- Becky requested the percentage of cases that are handled by a DVR counselor vs. through provider referrals. She also noted that many Consumers are not LTS-eligible so the higher cost of services to those Consumers is falling on providers.
  - Discussion between DHS and DVR is ongoing on this topic.
  - Sheri Wade shared that her agency is tracking those individuals found ineligible.
  - Beth Swedeen shared that DRW is addressing appeals for those found ineligible for LTS services, and that Consumers should be referred to DRW for support to appeal their case.

- WRC has requested that an individual from DHS apply to be on the Council, so far no one has been appointed.

### **Agenda Item: BSC Provider Relationships**

Patty Noland, DVR WDA 6 Director

David Cruz, Business Service Consultant

- Patty provided an overview of WDA 6 (Northcentral Wisconsin) and shared some challenges in outreach to employers in this area.
- David shared his challenges in finding his role among providers, and best practices he developed for coordinating with providers.
- Beth Swedeen asked if WRC could recommend that all BSCs implement these best practices to maintain statewide consistency. Anna Eggebrecht indicated that leadership is reviewing the position descriptions and best practices on an ongoing basis to ensure they match DVR's desired performance outcomes. Meredith indicated that with only nine BSCs statewide, best practices will differ in each area based on availability of resources.
- Tom Benziger mentioned that the Job Center of Wisconsin (JCW) asks for a lot of information to apply, creating a barrier in seeking services. Anna shared that other workforce partners are required to collect specific information that differs from DVR's requirements.
- WRC requests continued updates from BSC activities.
- Beth suggested best practices and BSC strategies should be documented and better shared statewide.

### **Agenda Item: DVR Administrative Updates**

Meredith Dressel, DVR Deputy Administrator

- Meredith announced that Allison Gordon is DVR's new Bureau of Consumer Services Director.
- Overall DVR spending is down due to the low unemployment rate, meaning fewer people are applying for DVR services.
- DVR met the 15 percent Pre-ETS spending requirement for 2017 and is on track to meet the 2018 goal.

- Two new classifications are being introduced into the field.
  1. **Financial Specialist.** Starting at \$20/hour, this position will focus on fiscal issues.
  2. **Vocational Rehabilitation Specialist.** Starting at \$18.03/hour, this position will support VRCs and include direct contact with consumers.
- The VRC position has not changed, a Master's degree is still required. With a starting salary of \$22/hour, DVR is working to get equity raises for the VRC position. The two new positions will give VRCs the opportunity to spend more time on counseling by removing much of their administrative burden.
- Tom Benziger shared the concern that there are very few VRCs that are skilled in serving consumers who are deaf or hard of hearing. Meredith asked Tom for specific resources for recruiting VRCs with that skill set.
- Matthew Busch shared that there are other incentives to consider offering VRCs like flexible work hours or working remotely instead of offering pay increases.
- Nancy Molfenter asked if DVR financially supports staff returning to school to get their Master's degree. Meredith responded that DWD can support Master's level education on a case by case basis.
- DVR has hired 17 interns in the past year, with intern recruitment efforts increasing throughout DWD. Internships are a great recruitment tool to bring on permanent staff.
- As of October 2018, DVR will no longer have Promise staff. Promise staff will transition back to regular DVR positions.
- Administrative Law Judge training will take place in spring of 2018. The highlights of the training will be WIOA, regulations, policy, common language, and citations.
- Directors will be trained on the purpose of mediation as an alternative to an appeal.
- Existing Business Policy:

1. DVR and CAP will jointly seek guidance from RSA regarding calculations for determining feasibility of farm operations. DVR considered a recommendation to ask for five years of taxes instead of three, and a survey of Directors concluded that the three-year standard will be maintained due to the potential burden of a five-year documentation requirement.
  2. In January, DVR, DATCP, CAP, Easter Seals, AgrAbility, and Wisconsin Farm Center met to discuss outcomes of the DVR Existing Business Policy. The group will meet as needed to monitor farm cases served under the current policy.
- The WRC Annual Report was submitted to RSA on December 28, 2017, and published on the WRC website on January 2, 2018.

### **Agenda Item: Training for New VR Counselors**

Allison Gordon, Bureau of Consumer Services Director

- Training for new DVR staff is held roughly every six months, including 2.5 days the first week, a week off, then 2.5 days again.
- DVR's training officer, Angel Hodsdon, is providing Training for Trainers for Comprehensive New Staff Training (CNST) trainers.
- DVR is considering increasing the frequency of trainings offered each year. Next year we will have three sessions and will review what can be done between sessions.
- Study Hall trainings are held based on current issues or requests.
- Motivational Interviewing, Trauma-Informed Care, Ethics, and Communication Under Pressure trainings also available to staff.
- Disability-awareness training is provided through DWD.
- Anyone interested in presenting on WRC to CNST, contact Nancy Molfenter. WRC members are welcome to attend the training.

### **Working Lunch: Service Capacity Reports**

David Knuth, Contracts Specialist

- Fall 2017: Service capacity surveys were sent to providers with questions related to training needs and DVR reports. Over 200

providers completed surveys and 24 attended focus groups, then additional surveys were sent for feedback on recommendations.

- Deadline to complete the most recent survey is the third week of February. The survey included questions on retention, recruitment, and building service capacity.
- Service Provider Demand vs. Supply Maps:
  - Developed to help address waitlists in some areas, counties with no identified providers to serve consumers, and the need to shift populations served and services under WIOA.
  - In 2016, only three statewide services were included on the maps, but now all eight are listed.
  - Maps are currently available to internal staff only, but will be made available to the public and stakeholders by Fall 2018.
  - Maps are refreshed daily based on self-reported data. The maps provide projections, not exact figures. DVR asks that providers speak with their local WDA Director about services and locations and not rely solely on map content.

### **Agenda Item: SenseAbility Team**

Kathleen Enders, Program Development Section Chief

- The SenseAbility Team was developed in 2006 as a statewide team to meet the needs of consumers with sensory disabilities.
- The team meets bimonthly to develop resources and build expertise among team staff. All WDAs are represented. Member turnover/rotations are minimal, as members often have strong interest or background in working with this population.
- SenseAbility has a strategic plan that is updated each fiscal year. The 2018 plan includes identifying best practices and strategies related to 1.) hearing aids and 2.) improving employment outcomes and services to high school students with sensory disabilities.
- SenseAbility provides real-time case consultation to statewide VRCs. Inquiries can be sent to the SenseAbility team email box.
- WRC requests quarterly updates on SenseAbility team activities.

## **Agenda Item: Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment**

Sarah Lincoln, DVR Policy Analyst

- Under WIOA, all VR agencies must conduct CSNAs every three years to look at existing data and conduct interviews/focus groups with staff, partners (providers), and employers. VR agencies are also required to perform fiscal forecasting for Pre-ETS.
- WRC State Plan Committee reviewed individual surveys while the Services to Businesses Committee focused on business surveys.
- DVR researched how other states are conducting CSNAs, and SLT determined that we do not have the resources to conduct them in-house. DVR selected San Diego State University (SDSU) as the contractor to conduct the CSNA. SDSU has done CSNAs for seven other states and is very familiar with the requirements. DVR has been meeting with SDSU on a weekly basis.
- WIOA requires that WRC is involved in the CSNA. Four surveys will be sent electronically to staff, consumers, partners (providers), and employers working with DVR.
- The goal is for SDSU to send the surveys by the end of May.
- Suggestion to run the consumer survey through a reading level check. DVR is looking to move to plain language for all surveys.
- Feedback that surveys are too long. There will be opportunity for individuals to complete the surveys via telephone if needed.

## **Agenda Item: CAP Updates**

Deb Henderson-Guenther, CAP Director

- Complaint Investigator position has not yet been posted yet. CAP is exploring options to try to get the best qualified candidates in the program. PD is completed but timeline for a hire is unclear.
- CAP is required to provide information and referral services to DVR, Independent Living Center (ILC), and Native American Vocational Rehabilitation (NAVR) consumers.
- CAP wants to create an intake form to streamline services and improve data tracking to better balance resources with workload.

- Concern about making sure DVR provides people with information on CAP and ability to complain and seek out individual service.
- Given limited staff and resources, CAP hasn't been able to do outreach with different disability councils and groups.
- Suggestion for CAP to give a presentation to DVR WDAs to improve communication between DVR staff and CAP.
- Many CAP inquiries are related to delays in services following AT assessments; the issues seem regionally-based given there are few providers in certain areas to evaluate AT assessments.
  - DVR is currently looking into AT technical specifications to ensure no conflict of interest with evaluators and direct equipment purchases. Some states have occupational therapists on staff to conduct these assessments onsite.
  - Recommendation for consumers to try out tech loan closet before committing to try out AT to ensure it works for them.
- VRC response time continues to be an issue, in some areas more than others. Sometimes issues arise when staff go on leave and their work is not properly covered. VRC turnover is also a problem; some consumers have had to change VRCs multiple times.
- DVR is adding the Financial Specialist and VR Specialist positions as one step to address this issue. Also, Communication Under Pressure trainings have been promoted throughout the state to help VRCs more effectively communicate with their consumers.

## **WRC Committee Reports**

- Committee Structure Discussion: Some have noted a barrier to committee meeting attendance as committees meet the day before the WRC meeting. Two remedies were discussed:
  1. Committees meet in the AM and full council meets the rest of the day. This will require shortening the full council meetings.
  2. Committees meet virtually in-between WRC meetings. A/V technology can be challenging depending on internet speed and access to equipment. DVR offices have A/V equipment.



- The hope is that committees do work between council meetings including follow-up to help benefit the whole council, such as inviting businesses and providers.
- To discontinue any existing committees, the WRC bylaws would need to be amended. Bylaws article 4, letter L defines the standing committees, but does not mention how often they must meet or if they need to be separate.
- WRC must address the lack of committee leads. As of now, Nancy leads most committees which is not sustainable.
- Decision: Create a WIOA committee merging Pre-ETS and 511 to meet annually. Beth Swedeen offered to lead this committee.
- Decision: For the May meeting, committees will meet in the morning and the full council will meet afterward. The Executive Committee, led by Nancy Molfenter, and the Pre-ETS/511 (WIOA) Committee, led by Beth Swedeen, will meet before the next full council meeting in May.
- WRC Chair and DVR Administrator meet 2-4 weeks before each meeting to create the agenda.
- If anyone is interested in leading Services to Business Committee, contact Nancy Molfenter.

## **UPDATES**

- WRC needs to perform targeted outreach to identify potential candidates to fill vacant seats to address quorum issue.
- Council members terming out should feel empowered to continue in their roles until their seat is filled.
- Current list of vacancies should be included in minutes for members to help solicit applications.
- Suggestion: Vice-Chair should work on outreach for recruiting council appointees.
- Rob Buettner terms off July 1, 2018. Given that, next meeting WRC will have nominations and election for new Vice-Chair.