



## **WSRC QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES**

*Thursday, May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2023*

*9:02am to 3:35pm*

**Members Present:** Erica Wollen, Workforce Training Representative, Olympia  
Laurae MacClain, Tribal VR Representative, Nespelem  
Peggy Frisk, Vice Chair, Community Rehabilitation Provider, Lake Stevens  
Terry Redmon, DVR Director, Ex-Officio, Lacey  
Edward Nicholson, Business Representative, Vancouver  
Jen Chong-Jewell, Parent Advocate, Everett  
Jennifer Bean, Client Assistance Program, Bellingham  
Matt Newton, Business Representative, Tacoma  
Lesa Dunphy, DVR Counselor Representative, Ex-Officio, Colville  
Alexandra Toney, OSPI Representative, Olympia  
Aimee Elber, Disability Advocacy Representative, Spokane

**Members Absent:** Dion Graham, State Independent Living Council Representative, Union  
Michele Stelovich, Council Chair, Labor Representative, Everett

**Council Staff:** Shelby Satko, WSRC Executive Director, Lacey  
Jolie Ramsey, WSRC Executive Assistant, Lacey

**Visitors:** Albert Almanza, Regional Manager, Entrust Community Services  
Allesandria Goard, DVR Chief of Field Services  
Ann Martin, DVR Region 2 Administrator  
Bek Moras, Executive Director, WA State Independent Living Council  
Cameron Walsworth, DVR VRC, Pullman  
Cassi Villegas, DVR Deputy Director  
Catherine Herring, DVR Supervisor, Bellingham  
Brandy, CRP, Compass of Spokane  
Erin Ormsby, Arc of Spokane  
Jeanese Hime, DVR Program Coordinator  
James O'Brien, DVR Supervisor, Lynnwood  
Jamie Grund, DVR Finance and Budget Manager  
Jamie Rasmussen, DVR Planning and Evaluation Manager  
Jeanette Ogg, DVR Chief of Operations  
Jo'el Roth, DVR Assistive Technology Assessment Practitioner (ATAP)  
Judith Campbell, DDA Case Resource Manager  
Jeannine Chandler, DVR Business Relations Manager  
Justin Rinta, DVR Supervisor, Kelso

Kaire Downin, Executive Director, Oregon WSRC  
Kathy Powers, Orion  
Lan Totten, Cascade Connections  
Maria  
C. Burkhart  
Mary Halterman, DVR Program Specialist, Bremerton  
Melinda Bocci, DVR Transition Manager  
Mercedes Bekke, DVR Management Analyst, Spokane  
Michelle Spier, MRJN Associates  
Rebecca Jansson, Director, Mainstay/SAILS  
Rena Van Meter  
Shawn Walsworth, DVR Region 3 Administrator  
Tricia Wiltse, DVR Supervisor, Tumwater  
Christina Frye, Trillium  
Deona Koberstein, DVR Regional Training Specialist, Everett  
Matthew Powles, ENSO  
Wanda T.  
Shon Fowler  
Jessica Armstrong, DVR Contractor

**Call to Order—** Meeting called to order at 9:02am by Peggy Frisk, Vice-Chair

**Motion:** Approval of February 2023 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

**First:** Erica Wollen

**Second:** Jen Bean

No edits, no abstentions.

**APPROVED**

Honored Erica Wollen, Workforce Board representative since 2016. Presented her with a Certificate of Appreciation.

**DVR Updates:** Terry Redmon

- Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Conference Highlights
  - Terry met with nationwide VR Directors
  - Heavy Fiscal Focus
    - Shared mutual concerns about federal monies for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) being unspent and sent back. Other states have sent money back to feds as well.
    - Learned how to be more efficient, shared ideas.
    - Looking at the business world for ideas to more efficiently use funds to serve customers.
    - Firmer penalties coming for being out of compliance regarding the Pre-ETS 15% set-aside expenditures.
    - Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) representatives attended the conference. Announced that they will start 107 reviews in 2024 to review:
      - State Plan
      - Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE's)
      - Eligibility determination
      - Pre-ETS

- Vocational Rehabilitation staffing shortage is a nationwide issue.
- Rapid Engagement
  - Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) executive leadership is on board and looking at ways to implement.
  - Looking at what to call the program.
  - Discussed importance of meeting customer where they are and not overly requesting medical information.
- DVR Executive Leadership Team Priorities
  - Staffing
    - DVR will make sure staff will be trained to stay in funding compliance.
    - There are not enough people interested in getting master's degrees in VRC.
    - Need to be more individualized, getting our customers to be more economically viable, reduce recidivism.
    - Considering ways to modernize customer service and discussed a multi-disciplinary team approach to caseload management.
  - Focus on customers' mental health needs.
- DVR In-Service
  - Date: October 24-25, 2023, at Hotel Murano, Tacoma
  - Conference theme: What's Your Why?
  - WSRC, Dept. of Services for the Blind (DSB), Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation to attend together.
  - Focus on inclusivity and inviting outside partners and community.
  - Create DVR ambassadors, increase marketing and visibility.
  - Opportunity to network, get together, celebrate team-member accomplishments, and discuss how to improve staff training.
  - Registration will come soon.
- Workforce Partnerships
  - Reviewing co-location options (one-stops/WorkSource Centers)
- Workforce Board—looking at ways to have inroads with the board.
  - DVR Director acts as proxy for Secretary Meneses
  - Terry advocated for DVR to being at the table going forward with Career Connect
- Continuing to reconnect with the Centers for Independent Living.

## Q&A

**Q:** When we consider common threads of workforce shortages, including teacher shortages, especially around Special Education, I wonder if there is a focus on the Rehabilitation Services Administration's (RSA) side in terms of attracting people to the profession?

**A:** Terry answered, no. RSA does not appear to be a targeted plan to address the Special Education teacher shortage. No help coming from the feds. The onus is on us to figure it out, to engage in a way to add people to the Special Education field in our state. Mentoring young adults and students about the VR career field path. And the workforce has changed. People no longer want to work for the same agency for 30 years necessarily. How do we create a career ladder in VR to improve retention? We must incentivize differently. We must meet customers and staff where they are differently.

**Q:** What are the RSA penalties?

**A:** The 15% of our budget that is dedicated to Pre-ETS. We receive a grant. Like with any grant, you must meet its requirements. We have never met the 15%. We cannot use the funds for other programs.

\$6 million returned to feds.

**DVR Budget:** Jamie Grund, Jeanette Ogg

- DVR Budget Process
- State Fiscal Year (SFY24) is July 1, 2023-June 30, 2024.
- Official Budget
  - Decision packages submitted for next biennium.
  - Biennial budget passed.
  - DVR receives General Fund State (GFS) dollars, GFS appropriation/authority to spend GFS, and federal appropriation/authority (no dollars) to spend federal dollars.
  - DVR cannot exceed the official budget authority of \$80 million for SFY23.
    - DVR Fiscal works with the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to stay within guidelines.
  - DVR did not submit any decision packages this state fiscal year.
  - Governor should sign our budget soon.
- Sources of Revenue
  - Basic support grant
    - Awards arrive throughout the federal year.
    - State match requirement is 21.3%.
    - Maintenance of effort requirement—two years prior
    - It is a one-year grant until we meet state match. Based on population and per capita income. Can change year to year based on state population.
  - Supported employment grant
    - Awards arrive throughout the federal year. Match requirement is 10%
  - Independent Living grant
    - Awards arrive throughout the federal year. Match requirement is 10%
  - Program Income (Social Security reimbursements)
    - Ticket Tracker
    - Funds can arrive daily. No set time for reimbursements.
    - Funds must be spent prior to drawing down Basic Support funds.
    - No state match requirement.
    - Program income received for FFY22= \$7,353,623
    - Program income received for FFY23= \$6,186,270 (as of 4/24/2023)
- Reallotment— Form 692
  - Relinquish-done in year one.
  - Reallotment
  - Must be filed by mid-August.
- Request additional funds
  - DVR can request additional federal grant funds if we can match prior to 9/30.
  - Very short window to match funding.
  - Must stay within our federal appropriation.
- Relinquish funds
  - Before end of year one.
  - Funding goes back to RSA to redistribute to vocational rehabilitation programs.
- DVR Anticipated Funding/Revenue (Estimates)
- General Fund State—SFY24: \$26.6 million
- Federal -Basic Support Grant—SFY24: \$56 million

- Federal Supported Employment Grant: \$385,000
- Federal-Independent Living Grant: \$425,000
- Social Security Reimbursements: \$7,500,000
- DVR Pre-ETS Expenditures
  - Current spending
    - Spent \$2,533,935 since 10/01/2022.
    - Unspent funds: \$3,484,375
    - DVR tends to spend more for Pre-ETS in June, July, and August, on summer programs.
    - Terry explained that DVR has carryover funds, so any potential impacts from the federal debt ceiling could be used to cover that. We did not meet our maintenance of effort last year, and the feds said that's not a bad thing. It was strategic to make sure our state match was better aligned. We always meet our state match. If we didn't meet our maintenance of effort by \$500,000, then our funds would be reduced. One penalty is closing the grant "non-compliant" if there are unspent Pre-ETS funds.

**Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation and Policy & Planning Subcommittees: Jen Bean, Lesa Dunphy**

- Customer Satisfaction Survey: FFY22 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter Highlights
  - Customers surveyed: 481
  - Comments received: 264
  - Response rate: 44%
  - Overall satisfaction was 69% statewide, margin of error is 4%
- Rapid Engagement Listening Sessions Summary
  - Addressed the lowest customer satisfaction survey question, "DVR moves quickly enough for me."
  - Listening sessions attended by DVR leadership, Supervisors, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRC), Rehab Technicians (RT), and Assistive Technology Assessment Practitioners (ATAP), and Regional Transition Consultants (RTC).
  - CAP hears that customers want their services to have value and not feel like a number.
  - Maximize employment outcomes, streamline processes, work smarter, tailor services to each customer.
  - Council recommendations based on listening sessions feedback:
    - Technology
      - Modern technology such as lack of ability to digitally sign documents and ability to text customers. Not being able to do so is a barrier to communication.
      - Barcode/Client registry-using records that already exist.
      - Have a customer portal.
      - Adobe Pro for all staff
      - Hand scanner for RTs
      - Customer technology training
      - Texting ability on phones. Ability to text customers with quick questions to check in and follow up. To do the quick "one off questions". Appointment reminders or ask if the customer called their doctor.
      - Online customer application
    - DVR Leadership response:
      - Terry said he is challenging DSHS IT to get DocuSign capability to DVR quickly.
      - Texting ability has been a big more challenging due to retention policies.

- There needs to be someone monitoring the inbox of online submitted applications. Staff would be needed to be administrators of online applications.
- Terry has talked to IT about getting Adobe Pro for all staff.
- IL centers can be used to customers to learn the basic technology skills, such as how to attend a zoom meeting, how to set up voicemail, email, etc.
- Partnerships—utilize them from intake all the way to case closure.
  - Community Rehabilitation Programs
  - Developmental Disabilities Administration
  - Dept. of Behavioral Health and Recovery
  - Workforce System
  - Tribal VR Programs
  - Public School systems
- Staff turnover has increased the need for staff training how to partner with other agencies and how to understand Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs).
- DVR could build professional development time into their workday/week. “Team Huddles.” They build it into their day, so everyone gets the same information at the same time. Updates, trainings on certain subject matters, partnerships, etc.
- Service Delivery
  - Intake and Application
    - Include RTs. They can help with paperwork, obtaining correct contact info, etc.
    - Information and Referral handouts
  - Invite support people. Family, caregiver, Developmental Disabilities Administration (DDA) coordinator, etc.
  - Give new customer an assignment from the outset.
- Eligibility-Presume eligibility should be emphasized. It’s been around for a while. Let’s simplify things and get customers into services asap.
- Case Progress
  - Next Meeting is scheduled.
  - Customer has homework.
  - Next steps are documented.
  - Utilize internal VR staff; Business specialists, RTs, ATAPs
- Starter Plans
  - After vocational assessment
  - Begin providing vocational services.
  - Amend and edit IPE as needed.
- Staffing issues
  - Customer engagement and case progress vs process.
  - Specialized caseloads to improve relationships and streamline referrals.
  - Policies that support counselor decision making
- Member Analysis
  - Short Term
    - Case progress highlights
    - Starter individualized plans for employment
    - Digital signatures
    - VRC & RT attend intake meeting.
    - CRPs-conduct rate study

- Long Term
  - Staffing-retention specialized caseloads
  - Waves customer portal

## **Region 1 Leadership Updates: Pablo Villarreal**

- Staffing updates
  - Since Sept. 2021, Region 1 leadership has hired 28 new staff, which means that 40% of regional staff are new in the past two years.
  - Added two VRC-4 positions that had been vacant. These are very experienced VRCs able to connect with schools and engage customers.
  - Three remaining positions remain in recruitment: One in Spokane and two in Kennewick.
  - Helping to hire new, additional Business Specialists
- Averaging 120 days to IPE, eligibility, which is down from 152 days in the 2021-22 program year.
- Customer eligibility determinations completed average is 43 days, which is down slightly from 44 days in 2021-2022 year.
- 862 intakes in previous fiscal year. Region 1 will complete over 1,000 this year.
- As we come out of order of selection, we can support staff to outreach at schools.
- Conducting individual unit meetings, office tours, to talk about outreach to schools and rapid engagement.
- Pre-ETS services to individual students on caseloads.
- Small increase in Pre-ETS informational interview service. If trend is the same as last year, we should see an increase in AFPs issued. Expected to exceed this year.
- Yakama Nation Honor our Presence American Indians with Disabilities Conference is July 11-12 in Toppenish. Region 1 leadership and DSB will be there.
- SB 5790/School to Work & Transition Services Update
  - Senate Bill 5790—Supporting Building school to work across the state.
  - Working to stand up programs in all counties. Currently, eight counties have school to work programs.
    - Suggestion: Survey the eight counties to find out what's working/what's not so that Transition team can make improvements to the School to Work program.
      - How do we get innovative for someone to go into a rural area, still run a business, but also reach people who live rurally, in areas where there aren't enough customers to have a caseload.
  - OSPI and the data share agreement.
  - Creating a Statewide Transition Council
  - Working on hiring three Regional Transition Program Specialists.
- Current School to Work contract is in the renewal process.
- Continued collaboration with community partners.
- Working on transition presentation and materials to share statewide.
  - Adding consent form to IEP process, which would allow their names to be shared with DDA, DVR, etc. to streamline services.
  - Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is working on putting the process in place and making a stand-alone form.
    - April 2023 Program Improvement Updates ([www.k12.wa.us](http://www.k12.wa.us))
- Monitoring Plans

- A means for DDA and DVR eligible customers to receive more employment supports while benefiting from services from both agencies. Mary Crago working with both agencies to ensure consistent messaging.
- Pablo and Mercedes are visiting region offices to share ideas and share presentations on VR topics.

**Spokane Units Updates:** Carla Caballero-Jackson, Jere Jaline

- Region 1 staff moving customers into plan at a faster rate.
- Rapid Engagement in process
- Increase in intakes.
- They are not out of order of selection, and they are not operating on a waiting list. DVR to be out of order of selection in June 2023.
- Colfax office has needed a VRC for a long time. When they recruited last time, they included Pullman, and they found a master's level person who said he'll do it if he can work out of the Pullman office. He serves Colfax and Pullman. Excited to see that office grow.
- Hired a new Business Specialist in Spokane office.
- Teaming up VRCs to get out to schools to serve students, meeting with parents and teachers.
- Spokane has two Deaf/Hard of Hearing Counselors.
- Spokane shares their ASL speaking staff with the region as needed.
- Good communication with different agencies, meeting with Eastern State Hospital, what can DVR do to support people as they transition out of the hospital. Aging & Long-Term Support Administration (ALISA) also a part of this effort.
- DCYF foster program has reached out to Spokane, how they can help with transition.
- Amazon met with them and wants to provide opportunities to DVR customers.
- Two Tribal relations liaisons on staff as well. Connections to Spokane Tribe and Colville Tribe have been invaluable. Liaison for the American Indian project in Idaho.
- Finding vendors for customers is tough. Many did not renew their contracts with the state. Working to find those vendors. Some places are not accepting their AFPs. Working to restore relationships with previous vendors. Vendors for satellite offices is a struggle.
- Department of Children, Youth, & Families (DCYF): There were monies dedicated to serving youth transitioning out of foster care.
- Bethany Johnson, VRC, shared:
  - Their team mostly all started with DVR during the pandemic.
  - Supervisors have an open-door policy and have created a supportive work environment.
- Eliza Lester, VRC, shared:
  - Focusing on staying connected with vendors, staff.
  - At least 1/3 of caseload is housing insecure.
  - Office culture is very positive. Lots of mentoring, staffing cases together, a Teams chat for all VRCs to provide answers to questions and support.
  - Office staff holds quarterly "lunch and learns" to share updates and ideas, get feedback.
  - They meet once per month as a VRC team to share referral ideas and best practices and camaraderie.
  - Deaf/HOH Counselors are going above and beyond.

**Public Comment:**

- Rose from MRJN: "As a new CRP providing the group Pre-ETS contract services we have struggled with DVR and schools understanding that CRPs are assigned to a specific school. However, as not all students are being served by the one CRP serving Pre-ETS at one school site other students (their parents) that are eligible for Pre-ETS are not aware of the program. Many schools we have done



outreach to about the program being available to all students with an IEP or 504 plan or student with a disability tell us they already work with a CRP that comes to one classroom for Pre-ETS as this is what's been interpreted to them as how Pre-ETS works. Additionally, with the idea that CRPs are assigned to a specific site that does not leave much room for client choice. A suggestion could be that DVR send out information prior to the school year to the effect that breaks down the way Pre-ETS works, the fact that students/parents can choose how to participate and a CRP of their choice regardless of what CRP is already providing the service at that school site and encourage the idea that students could also participate with Pre-ETS before and or after school, online and summertime as well. "Most of Pre-ETS providers are not CRPs. There is a requirement that that provider works with an RTC. They should be coordinating with DVR.

- Brandy from Compass, CRP from Yakima: Sometimes CRPs must advocate for themselves. There is an education piece. A lot of times it's relationship building with teachers, and this is a service we can provide to support you.

### **Council Wrap Up**

- Community Rehabilitation Programs have a very important role.
- Engaging with Tribal VR to better coordinate and support our co-enrolled customers.
- Giving our staff the support to take care of themselves. Providing physical and mental space when needed.
- Bring back work strides independent strengths.
- The rigidity with certain contracts needs to be reevaluated, specifically with Independent Living (IL) services.
- Realistic guidelines for mentoring and greater flexibility in DVR requirements.
- Overarching systemic issues with DVR. We should have specialty in transition. Provide incentives for using them. Not being afraid of startup IEP and go back to it when needed.
- Rapid engagement ideas. Clear communication with group contractors.

**Meeting adjourned at 3:35pm**