

Minutes
WISCONSIN REHABILITATION COUNCIL
February 9, 2023
WebEx Meeting
9:00 AM – 2:30 PM

A Statement of Mission

The Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council, working on behalf of Wisconsin residents with disabilities, will review, analyze, and advise the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) regarding the performance of its responsibilities in providing quality services to persons with disabilities.

WRC Members Present: Steven Wheeler, Liz Kennedy, Deb Henderson-Guenther, Delora Newton, Dick Straub, Megan Bisonette, Jolene Wanek, Natalia Graf, Alexis Riggs, Alicia Reinhard, Joalyn Torgerson, Gadeen Taylor-Duke, Norene Lueck, Lori Karcher, Jenny Felty, Alan Kaltenberg, Ann Franz, Michael Jackson

WRC Members Absent: Kyle Kleist, Antrice Brown, Edward Kastern, Lindsey Kreitzman

DVR Staff Present: Sarah Kuehn, Meredith Dressel, Kay Schoone, Deanna Krell, Allison Gordon, Anna Eggebrecht, Patti Johnson, Patty Noland

Guests: Danita Jackson (Disability Rights WI/CAP), Franky Newcomb (Disability Rights WI/CAP), Ramsey Lee, Greg Magoon (DSAW)

Roll Call and Introductions

Announcements – WRC May 4, 2023, meeting is in person at the UW-Platteville campus in Baraboo. Kay will reach out to see who needs overnight accommodations or has dietary restrictions.

Quorum Check – Quorum met with 11 voting members (additional members joined the meeting after roll call).

Approval of November 2022 Minutes – Steven stated the need to amend the company attribution for Franky Newcomb to read, (Disability Rights WI/CAP). Liz motioned to approve, seconded by Jenny F. – Motion carried.

Committee Updates and Committee Member Approvals:

Council Engagement Committee

- Have not met since November 8th meeting.
- Call for nominations for vice chair position was sent. We will vote on that today.
- Email will be sent to those members that are up for re-appointment for second term to provide them instructions on how to do that if they are interested.
- WRC information was sent to all members to add that information to newsletter, etc.
- Working to develop WRC SharePoint site with Kay. Update on that later in the meeting.
- Acronym list was sent to all members. if updates are needed contact Deb.
- WRC member orientation session will be available in April, if interested contact Kay and Deb by March 1, 2023.

Performance Measures and Quality Assurance Committee

- Kyle is the chair and not present today. Deb provided update.
- Working on State Plan recommendations from the WRC with DVR staff. Need to ensure they are measurable and achievable goals for DVR.
- Dick thanked Deb for all her work to edit recommendations on the State Plan.
- Potentially do a survey of consumers to see what WRC should be focusing when asking Delora for an Administrative Update.
- Meet again on February 16, 2023.

Policy Review and Administration Committee

- Steven shared update as chair.
- Transportation by DVR service providers has been discussed.
- Think College program (Comprehensive Transition Programs) information was shared with the Committee.

Services to Business Committee

- Liz shared the update as there is no current chair.
- Liz motioned to appoint Jolene Wanek as a member of the Services to Business Committee, seconded by Deb. Motion carried.
- Jolene has expressed interest in becoming chair of the committee. They will vote on a chair at their next meeting.
- Becky Hebda attended the last committee meeting and provided an update as past chair. She shared the purpose of the Committee.
- Discussed the DVR BSC's and Patti Johnson's selection as the new Section Chief for Business Services for DVR.
- Windmills training for DVR staff was discussed.

- Ramsey asked if there can be a public comment period for committee meetings. Currently we do not have that option on Committee agendas. That is recommended as an Executive Committee decision so that a decision on inclusion of a public comment period will be consistent for all committees.
- Kay will send a Doodle poll to schedule the next Services to Business meeting.

Annual Report Workgroup

- Annual Report was published, and the workgroup has not met since the last WRC meeting.

Executive Committee

- Chose the agenda items for the meeting today.
- Administrative Law Judge decisions reviewed.
- Discussion on how to support WRC Committees that have been struggling with membership.
- Discussed the proposed Service Provider Transportation Survey to support the Policy Review and Administration Committee.
- Discussion on WRC SharePoint site. Details will be discussed later in the meeting.
- Service Providers are expected to report in the Service Provider Portal when they have a service waitlist and the definition of a waitlist.
- Kay shared information on how WI WRC compares to other Rehabilitation Councils. Other states do more work in committee structures and their full Council meetings are a few hours. Other states have similar committee structures and officers' structure as WRC.
- There will be openings on the Executive Committee this spring. Steven urged members to consider if they are interested.

Administrative Law Judge (ALJ) Workgroup

Steven, Deb, and Kyle are on the workgroup and have been meeting to review the regulatory requirement that WRC participate jointly with DVR to select ALJ's.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Report - Franky Newcomb, Danita Jackson

- Franky and Danita presented an overview of cases that CAP has worked on between November 1, 2022, and February 6, 2023.
- They have received a total of 37 service requests. Top three reasons are:
 - 41% have been about conflict with VR services provided
 - 22% are communication problems between the consumer and VR Counselor
 - Tied at 11% each are related to Title 1 of the ADA and issues related to independent living services (these are outside the responsibility of WRC)
- They have closed eight cases during this timeframe. In 62% of the cases, all issues were resolved in favor of the consumer. CAP determined that DVR's decision was appropriate in 12% of cases.
- Staffing update: Effective February 14, Danita will reduce her schedule to part-time for CAP. Hiring an additional staff member to serve more consumers.

- Danita highlighted a story about a consumer who was applying for DVR and concerned that the process took too long. His disability was low vision. Danita reached out to DVR and the issue around documentation for eligibility was resolved in a timely matter. The consumer was terminated from his job while asking for reasonable accommodations with the employer. CAP assisted the consumer in receiving a financial settlement from the previous employer and DVR helped the consumer find a new job. It was a great collaboration between CAP and DVR and a successful closure for DVR done in a timely way.
- Lori asked if CAP assists families and students in transition if they have an issue with school services. Danita shared that typically those cases go to the school CAP assistance program. Lori would like more information on transition cases. She also asked if there are CAP staff that are bilingual? CAP uses a service called Language Line for translation services and are developing outreach materials that will be translated to Spanish that will be CAP/DVR specific.

Vote for Interim Executive Committee Members

- Julie Burish resigned from WRC effective December 2022. Julie was the Vice Chair; an interim person needs to be appointed until the May elections.
- Steven nominated Liz Kennedy as the interim Vice Chair and shared her biography. Seconded by Deb.
 - Approved unanimously
- Since Liz was appointed as Vice Chair, the Member at Large position is open.
- Dick Straub nominated himself, seconded by Al.
 - Approved unanimously

DVR's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Plan - Deanna Krell, Director DVR Bureau of Management Services

- Deanna shared a DRAFT of the 5-Year DEI Action Plan that will be shared with the public. There is an in-depth version of the plan that includes more details that will be shared with DVR Staff.
- There are three goals in the plan – each goal has strategies and steps for each.
 - Inequities that impact our consumers
 - Building a diverse workforce.
 - Build safe place, safe reporting options within DVR.
- Strategies to achieve the goals in the Plan
 - Create a DEI Council that will oversee the implementation of the plan.
 - Create local action plans that complement the agency wide action plan.
 - Review DVR policies to determine if they impact marginalized consumers in a negative way
 - Investigate creation of a consumer advisory board to review policy.
 - Determine how DVR uses consumer data to understand their experience
 - Ensure DVR Service Providers are DEI accountable.

- Expand DEI training opportunities for DVR staff.
- Review how DVR communicates with consumers
- Hiring DVR staff who are more diverse including bilingual staff. There is currently a pay differential that can be used for staff that are bilingual, which DVR does make use of.
- Focusing on advancement opportunities for diverse/marginalized staff.
- Create safe and transparent process for reporting issues. Educate our staff on the process.
- Provide training to leadership/managers on how to handle complaints and feedback to have meaningful conversations to revolve issues.
- Employee Resource Group is already in place at DVR. This group can help review/provide feedback on DEI Plan implementation.
- Deb asked if employer education on DEI is part of the plan? Deanna shared that employers will be targeted by the actions in this plan
- Next Steps:
 - Present plan to DVR staff
 - DVR form DEI Council to implement the Action Plan
- Deb asked if DVR could do public service announcements that focus on DEI and if BSC's could offer employers an Americans with Disability Act (ADA) 101 presentation that includes DEI education?
 - Deanna shared that DVR would consider this request. Patti Johnson shared that she has recently been trained on ADA resources for employers, working on new BSC webpage with resources for employers including DEI topics.
- Steven shared that he is hearing that there are two other letters being referenced with DEI - "B" Belonging and "A" Accessibility. He feels it is helpful because it serves as reminder of the end goal of DEI efforts.
 - Deanna shared it would be helpful to include a glossary in our DEI Plan to explain the ongoing changes in language/terms that are being used around inclusion/equity efforts.

FFY 2022 DVR (Oct 2021 – Sept. 2022) 722 Report on Hearing Appeals

- Seven decisions were made by DHA ALJ's.
 - Three from the same former consumer were dismissed because they were beyond the time allowed.
 - Four others were closed at the consumer's request.
- Steven asked if DOA was assigning ALJ's randomly or intentionally assigning cases to specific ALJ's?
 - Meredith/Delora researched this question with DHA. DHA clarified that ALJ assignment changes occurred in 2021. DHA has assigned four ALJ's for general cases. Two of the four have been given primary responsibilities for DVR cases. The other two can assist if the need arises.

- DOA welcomes further training and assured that the two ALJ's assigned to DVR will attend training. The other two can also be trained if instructed by DHA management as they are backup for the DVR specific cases.

Public Comment

- Ramsey encouraged DVR to add public comment time to their committee meetings because he feels that the more public participation DVR has the better.
- Lori Karcher, WI FACETS – shared a concern that she heard VRC's are not showing up for IEP meetings at schools in the Milwaukee area. Families have expressed their frustration with this situation.

DVR Administrative Update - Delora Newton, DVR Administrator

- All materials for today are posted on the WRC website
<https://dwd.wisconsin.gov/dvr/partners/wrc/public-meetings.htm#>
- Delora reviewed the Administrative Update PowerPoint.
- Deb asked if DVR has done an analysis of the number of students in each WDA that are DVR consumers? Kyle was interested to know if DVR is reaching the students that are eligible for DVR services.
 - Delora shared that there are some schools that invite DVR in and make the best use of DVR services and other school districts that do not. We continue to do outreach for student referrals.
- Deb asked if DVR has any hiring goals for diverse populations in the DEI plan?
 - Currently we do not have a hiring goal in the plan.
 - Delora shared that we have seen an increase in male VRC's being hired recently.
 - There are not a lot of diverse individuals and males going into the vocational guidance counselor career.
 - Dick asked if DVR has flexibility to offer more money to recruit diverse staff?
 - Delora shared DVR can offer a pay range for VRC's. There is a starting base and then we can add on for specific experience/bilingual. It is not much, maybe \$.50 to \$1.00 per hour. Once the individual is hired, DVR is very limited as to when we can offer raises.
 - Steven shared that it would be helpful if DVR could offer some pay increase for VRC's who keep up to date with training and CRC's.
 - Dick asked if DVR pays for CEU/CRC's?
 - DVR offers in-house training for staff to get CEU/CRC's and there are local training budgets that staff can access to get CEU/CRS's.
 - DVR does stay connected to post-secondary programs in WI that offer VRC degrees so we can recruit directly from that pool. DVR does offer paid internships to recruit those students as well.

- Natalia asked what percentage of all DVR cases are farm related? Delora responded less than 2%.
 - Natalia wondered why WRC was focused on farm cases.
 - Delora shared that we have received questions/concerns from the public and WRC on farm specific cases, that is why we share this specific information in the Administrative Update.
 - Dick shared that the emphasis on agriculture for WRC was because we saw a decline in the number of farmers being served. Dick feels that if there are other groups that are being underserved, WRC needs to address that.
 - Jenny Felty feels that we need to focus on other populations that DVR serves as well.
 - Deb shared that due to a change in the Existing Business Policy in 2016, the number of farmers DVR had been serving was reduced. Agriculture advocacy organizations reached out to DVR to ask many questions.

WRC SharePoint Site Discussion - Kay Schoone, DVR Executive Staff Assistant
(WRC/DVR Liaison)

- SharePoint is an online portal for storing documents for WRC members.
- Each WRC member must create a SharePoint account to access the site. Kay will be sending an email with instructions on how to create your account. She will also send an email with specific instructions on how to access the documents in the site.
- Members will have "read only" permission for the documents stored.
- Separate folders can be created for each Committee. WRC can make organizational decisions as they use the SharePoint site. Kay will take any feedback members have on the SharePoint site.
- Add this topic to a future WRC agenda so members can share their experience in using the site and offer modification recommendations.

Service Provider Transportation Survey Results - Deanna Krell, Director DVR
Bureau of Management Services

- 148 responses received from 200 providers.
- 28% are interested in using privately owned vehicles to provide transportation as outlined in the survey question.
- 72% are not interested in providing this type of transportation.
- Comment themes included: lack of payment, liability, consumers could use other options since provider is short term service, issues with relationships between consumer and provider, consumer independence could be jeopardized, increase in insurance rates, providers don't have the time, helps consumer in job development, needed in rural areas.
- Next Steps:
 - DVR leadership have not discussed the results of the survey to develop next steps, looking for WRC input.

- Jenny F. felt that DVR could make it an option for those Providers interested in providing the service.
- Many WRC members feel that DVR needs to proceed with this option for Providers that are interested.
- There were some Provider concerns around service capacity if they are using their staff for transportation, they may not have staff to provide other services they are being paid for.
- DVR will report their decision regarding implementation to WRC at the May meeting.

Review of Open Items and Suggested Discussion Topics for Future Meetings

Adjourn

Liz motioned to adjourn, seconded by Deb. Motion carried.

*Public comment is limited to the time listed on the agenda. Comments can be sent at any time to: DVRWIRehabCouncil@dwd.wisconsin.gov.

Comments sent to that e-mail box will be read to the full council at the next meeting.