

Week of February 7, 2022

## **NATIONAL, HILL AND DC NEWS:**

On February 8<sup>th</sup>, the United States Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee hosted a two-hour long hearing specifically about the impact of COVID-19 on employment opportunities for workers with disabilities. It was a very thorough discussion and covered key topics around technological access, overcoming stigma, and solving labor force shortages. For those who are interested, the fully captioned and ASL interpreted video of the full hearing is available [online](#).

Also, below is the link to the testimony of a NET Business Partner, Jenny Lay-Flurrie, specifically addressing accessibility. Kathy shared this link with me and her team. If folks don't have the time to view the full hearing, we recommend that they watch Jenny's testimony.

**Health, Education and Labor (HELP) Committee Testimony - JENNY LAY-FLURRIE, MICROSOFT'S CHIEF ACCESSIBILITY OFFICER AT Microsoft**

<https://blogs.microsoft.com/on-the-issues/2022/02/08/accessibility-us-senate-committee-health-hearing/>

The House passed a stopgap appropriations bill Tuesday evening to extend current federal agency funding rates through March 11 as Democrats and Republicans continue to trade offers on topline spending levels for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1. The previous CR is set to expire Feb. 18.

The House vote was 272-162, indicating likely bipartisan support in the Senate as well. Most of the House opposition came from Republicans, with New Jersey Rep. [Josh Gottheimer](#) the only Democrat who voted "no." Senate Majority Leader Schumer said Wednesday his chamber will take up the stopgap measure "next week."

Also on Wednesday, House and Senate Appropriations Committee leaders said they have a deal on a "framework" that will allow them to start writing compromise spending bills for the fiscal year that began Oct. 1. Senate Appropriations Chairman [Patrick J. Leahy](#), D-Vt., and House Appropriations Chair [Rosa DeLauro](#), D-Conn., put out statements Wednesday afternoon announcing the pact. A spokeswoman for Senate Appropriations ranking member [Richard C. Shelby](#) confirmed Republicans also view what the Alabama senator described earlier in the day as "an understanding" as an official agreement.

Neither side revealed any details of what the framework entails. While the Democrats did not mention specific funding levels, Leahy said the deal will “provide increases for health care, education, our national security, and invest in the middle class, among other priorities.”

The WOTC coalition as has CSAVR and others been following the talks closely. Their goals are:

- Ameliorate impact of the Omicron variant by getting the Congress to immediately appropriate funds to cover direct cash financial needs of restaurants, retailers, and other small businesses, to stave off large numbers of bankruptcies and closures;
- Reauthorize tax policies vital for continuing workforce recovery, especially the Employee Retention Credit; Enhanced Work Opportunity Tax Credit; and new WOTC target groups for disabled persons receiving SSDI; spouses of military service men and women; disadvantaged and foster youth (Senator Durbin’s bill); ending the age 40 cap on WOTC workers receiving SNAP benefits; and
- Bring private non-profit employers into WOTC, thereby opening millions of new jobs in health and education for WOTC workers; and
- Strengthen WOTC by allowing employers with excess credits to claim them against payroll tax.

They are hoping that an Omnibus Reconciliation bill will address the above items.

Also, there was a public meeting Thursday during which the new strategic plan for AbilityOne was discussed. A link to the slides for the meeting is below. Rita registered for the meeting and submitted comments for CSAVR. It was disturbing that there were allegations that in over 20 states VR will not refer anyone to AbilityOne.

[https://www.abilityone.gov/commission/documents/Commission%20Public%20Meeting%20Advance%20Slides%20for%20Feb%2010%202022\\_post.pdf](https://www.abilityone.gov/commission/documents/Commission%20Public%20Meeting%20Advance%20Slides%20for%20Feb%2010%202022_post.pdf)

On Thursday there was a livestreamed discussion on the importance of mental health and wellness in the Black community hosted by **Domestic Policy Council Senior Advisor Susan Rice** and **SAMHSA Administrator Doctor Miriam Delphin-Rittmon**.

Participants included actress **Taraji P. Henson**, professional tennis champion **Sloane Stephens**, and WNBA star **Nneka Ogwumie** who shared their personal stories around mental health and wellness and discuss policy solutions put forth by the Biden-Harris Administration.

Employers spent 4% more on wages and benefits last year, the biggest raise workers have gotten in two decades. However, labor costs may be easing with the Ibor Department reporting a seasonally adjusted 1% increase in compensation for the fourth quarter.

About 4.3 million Americans quit their jobs in December, making it the sixth straight month of turnover of about 4 million. The figures released recently by the Bureau of Labor Statistics were down slightly in November, when the quit rate hit the highest level recorded since 2000. Most workers quit for new jobs. Employers were left with 10.9 million open jobs at the end of the year, meaning that there were nearly two jobs openings per unemployed worker in December.

### **TIP OF THE WEEK:**

There is a strong likelihood that RSA is going to be releasing another round of DIF grants. In order to be prepared you may want to start thinking now if your agency wishes to consider applying. Consider how a grant might align with your agency priorities/goals. Keep in mind it takes time to research the data for justification for the application and to compile MOU, LOS, obtain vitas, job descriptions, etc. Think about identifying agency staff who would be responsible for preparing and implementing the grant. If you do not have such staff are their entities you can turn to such as ICI, Mathematica, and AIR or a professional grant writer who can assist you.

### **CSAVR AND NCSAB CONFERENCES:**

Hope you are getting excited about the upcoming CSAVR conference virtually the week of April 12th with the Leadership Forum and Directors forum the week before. Information is available on our website.

The following month the NCSAB Virtual Spring 2022 Conference will be held on May 9 -13 from 1pm EST to 4:30pm EST each day. The theme, agenda and registration are forthcoming.

Hope you have all of the above marked on your calendars. See you there!

### **CSAVR NEWS:**

You should have received a reminder this past week to complete the survey link below in order to aid in the development of a repository of educational requirements of vocational rehabilitation counselors across the nation. Dr. Allison Levine from the University of Iowa is working on this project with CSAVR and our Operations and Personnel Committee.

This repository will be a tool that can help SVR administrators, prospective counselors looking for jobs, prospective students looking for opportunities, and educators in preparing their students. Dr. Levine, who again is working closely with CSAVR on this

project and who obtained input on a draft of the survey from the CSAVR Operations and Personnel Committee, will be establishing a site where all of this information will be accessible 24/7, for free.

Please complete the survey at this link, or paste the following into your browser: [https://uiowa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV\\_8wTPaOtib5ZBGnk](https://uiowa.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_8wTPaOtib5ZBGnk) . If you have any questions about the project, please contact Dr. Levine at [allison-levine@uiowa.edu](mailto:allison-levine@uiowa.edu). Results will be shared as soon as they are available; we anticipate this to occur in early summer 2022. Thank you in advance for your help.

Also, this past week CSAVR sent two letters of support for research grants.

The first was to Southern University in Baton Rouge (SUBR), a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and their partner the University of Memphis Institute on Disability. They are seeking a NIDILRR Field Initiated Projects Program: Minority Serving Institution (MSI) – Development, HHS-2021-ACL-NIDILRR-IFST-0023 grant for the development of TAYLOR: Transitional Transfer (T) Application (A) for Young adults (Y) with Learning difficulties (L): An Occupational (O) Resource (R). TAYLOR is designed to facilitate the successful transition of students with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (IDD) into the workforce.

The other was to the University of Maryland Eastern Shore, a historically black land grant college in Princess Anne, MD, in support of their submission of a proposal to carry out a Field Initiated Project (FIP: Research – CFDA #93.433, major domain-employment). The goal of the proposed FIP will be to generate new knowledge about transition barriers negatively impacting employment outcomes among African American transition-aged youth with Specific Learning Disabilities (SLD) that will be used to inform the development of a culturally appropriate toolkit.

### **NET UPDATE:**

**CONGRATULATIONS INGER!** She's a new grandmother 😊 Isaiah James Hardman is the cutest little man. He's already participated in one CSAVR staff call - and I'm pretty sure he was the most attentive of all! Inger, we are thrilled Isaiah is now an official member of the team!

**NET Regional Rep Meeting** - This week Kathy and Inger joined Jane Elizabeth (AL) and Michael (WA-B) to host the monthly NET Regional Rep meeting. The team was joined by Mary Matusiak, the new Region VII Rep. Mary is the Program Director for Business Services with Nebraska VR. Thanks for your support Lindy and Mary!

Each Regional Rep shared updates from their area regarding their progress on working with their regional, state and local business partners as well as the NET connections. The team shares strategies, outcomes and barriers with each other in order to develop and maintain a consistent approach to a company as well as learn from each other. In

several situations, such as Pitney Bowes, the NET is working on accessibility at the national level and is being supported by AT specialists, OTs and other VR staff across the country. The strategy is to work with the business to address the potential barriers upfront and work through solutions vs. trying to retrofit systems, particularly IT, across the footprint of the company.

One consistent topic that we heard across regions was the disconnect between VRCs and Business relations staff at the agency level. This was also a topic in the Executive Committee meeting. The team is continuing to develop strategies and training that addresses this need for current staff as well as those coming onboard. Additional details will be shared through the NET as well as the Careers and Business Relations Committee. If you have thoughts or input, please reach out to Kathy or Inger.

**TAC – QE Recording** - This week Harley, Kathy and Inger recorded a training introducing the NET and TAP. Thank you to our partners at the TAC-QE for their support. This session will be posted on their site and we will send out a notification when it is available.

**Windmills** - The CSAVR-NET partnered with Milt Wright and Associates to host another virtual Windmills Train the Trainer session. Close to 70 people participated from VR agencies and partners across the country. The second half of the training will take place next week followed by the opportunity for those certified trainers to participate in a monthly community of practice.

**TAP Training Report for February 10, 2022** - TAP reports on candidates are applying thru the system as of February 10, 2022, we have 51 applications the majority are from VA VR&E (29) TTW EN (9) and Illinois and WRP (3).

Top states that added new candidates this month are VA VR&E 84, Michigan (G) 17 & TTW EN 10.

### **February Stats as of the 10th**

320,517 Jobs Posted

11,798 Jobs Viewed

51 Job Applications

Washington State (G) Business Team was February 1<sup>st</sup> and they have added their first candidate.

Training for Massachusetts tentative for February 23, 2022

## New Candidates for the Month of February - As of February 10, 2022

State	New Candidates	Applications
California	6	0
District of Columbia	0	2
Florida (B)	9	0
Illinois	2	3
Iowa (G)	2	0
Michigan (G)	17	2
Missouri (G)	2	0
New Jersey (B)	2	1
New Mexico (G)	1	2
North Carolina (G)	1	0
Oklahoma	2	1
Oregon	1	0
South Carolina	3	0
Texas (G)	4	0
TTW EN	10	9
VA VR&E	84	29
Virginia	1	1
Washington (G)	1	0

### **WIOA UNIFIED AND COMBINED STATE PLAN RESOURCES:**

The U.S. Departments of Education and Labor compiled technical assistance for the PY 2022 WIOA State Plan Modification process. VR agencies may find these resources useful when developing and finalizing the WIOA State Plan modification for Program Years 2022-2023. See the information below or contact your RSA State liaison for additional information.

Requirements and Considerations for WIOA Unified and Combined State Plans: Modifications and Beyond for 2020-2023 (video on WorkforceGPS). States and territories are required to submit their two-year modifications to their WIOA Unified and Combined State Plans on March 15, 2022. This webcast training series provides an overview of the specific content and submission requirements for this modification for Program Years 2022-2023.

Compiled Technical Assistance for PY 2022 WIOA State Plan Modifications. The purpose of this resource is to provide States suggestions to consider while preparing and finalizing the WIOA State Plan modification for Program Years 2022-2023 plan period. The document includes the following:

Summary of Areas for Improvement: Identification of topics from the Program Year (PY) 2020 State Plans that a number of States could improve upon in their modification;

Considerations to help assess State Plan completeness and cohesiveness;

Tips on how to input a plan in the portal so the published version available to the public is reader-friendly; and

Links to resources and training.

WIOA State Plan Portal. The WIOA State Plan Portal is the approved method by which States submit and modify Unified and Combined State Plans.

### **CREDENTIAL ATTAINMENT RATE TA:**

RSA and Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM) are pleased to share new technical assistance on Credential Attainment Rate. The training:

- Provides an overview of the performance indicator;
- Outlines the Case Service Report (RSA-911) data elements used in reporting the indicator;
- Highlights performance results from Program Years 2019 and 2020;
- Specifies how the indicator is calculated;
- Details how to report some of the Credential Attainment Scenarios;
- Answers questions posed to RSA and VRTAC-QM related to the indicator; and
- Links to policy guidance and other technical assistance resources.

To complete the training, you will need to log-into your VRTAC-QM account. Please contact your RSA State Liaison or VRTAC-QM contact with questions.

We hope you find this resource useful as the VR program reports these important data for the third program year and supports individuals with disabilities in earning recognized credentials as they pursue competitive integrated employment.

## **COUNSELOR RECRUITMENT RESOURCE:**

Below please find a link to the U of MD Eastern Shore, a historically black land grant college in Princess Anne, MD. The University has a Bachelors and Masters program in Rehabilitation. The staff are CRC certified, and they also have a sign language interpreter on staff for the program. This program provides a great opportunity to establish a career track while supporting our commitment to DEI&A. A special thanks to Kathy West-Evans for sharing this information.

<https://g.co/kgs/buJ6qM>

Staff: <https://wwwcp.umes.edu/rehab/faculty-and-staff/>

## **NIDILRR NEWS:**

We understand that NIDILRR is expecting to fund three Equity Centers to support research, training, and technical assistance to study, pilot, or test programs and policies to reduce disparities among people with disabilities by race, ethnicity, LGBTQ status, or poverty status, in:

- community living and participation
- employment outcomes
- health and functioning

Each five-year center will be funded at \$933,000 per year. We expect the RFPs to be released within the next few weeks.

## **LISTENING SESSION:**

On behalf of the Office of Disability and Employment Policy (ODEP) of the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL), Mathematica is hosting a listening session on strategies to facilitate successful employment outcomes for young adults on the autism spectrum. The meeting will be Tuesday, February 22 from 1:00-2:30PM Eastern.

This listening session supports ODEP's *Research Support Services for Employment of Young Adults on the Autism Spectrum (REYAAS)* project (contract No. 1605DC-18-A-0020/1605C5-21-F-00034, period of performance: 2021-2024). As part of this project, we are conducting literature reviews, holding listening sessions, conducting analyses of extant administrative and survey data, and developing options and recommendations for designs of evaluations and new evidence-building activities.



They would like to better understand your perspective on some of the following topics:

- Whether and how programs and services are tailored to young adults on the autism spectrum, young adults with any disability, and the like
- Distinguishing features of each program and commonalities across programs
- The role of evidence in designing programs or evidence generated by evaluating programs
- Perceived barriers that young adults on the autism spectrum face in finding and retaining employment
- Perceived necessity or effectiveness of certain services for young adults on the autism spectrum
- Differences in experience working with employers based on firm size, industry, or other characteristics
- Challenges hiring, training, and retaining direct service professionals who work in employment services

Your input will help DOL develop its knowledge about these topics and inform their project's next steps. In the meeting, they will solicit both oral and written participation.

### **RESEARCH NEWS, REPORTS, WEBINARS, CONFERENCES, ETC.:**

The Great Lakes Regional ADA Center (90DPAD0012) will host a webinar, The Intersection of Race and Disability, February 15th, 2-3:30 pm ET. Presenters will discuss how the lived experience of people with disabilities is varied, even within racial and ethnic groups. Presenters will discuss the experiences of people of color with disabilities. Participants may submit questions in advance. Registration is free and required. Continuing education credits are available upon request.

*Episode 10: VRTAC-QM Manager Minute: Get in and Get er' Done! How California Makes VR Work for Customers!:*

Joining Carol Pankow in the VRTAC-QM Studio is Mark Erlichman, Deputy Director, Vocational Rehabilitation Employment Division, California Department of Rehabilitation. In this episode of Manager Minute, Mark discusses California's use of rapid engagement to get customers in and move them as quickly as possible through the VR process to maximize their opportunity for success. The California DOR Team has a variety of initiatives that they are working on. Mark and Carol will chat about a handful of those projects.

Learn about California's expedited enrollment process, resource navigators, and sector-based service teams. [Listen Here](#)

You can find out more about VRTAC-QM on the web at:

<https://www.vrtac-qm.org/>

Stay up to date by following [VRTAC-QM on Facebook](#) and follow us on Twitter [@VRTAC\\_QM](#)

The [Rehabilitation Research and Training Center \(RRTC\) on Employment of Transition-Age Youth with Disabilities \(90RTEM0002\)](#) and the [RRTC on Employment of People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(90RTEM0003\)](#) will host a webinar, [Employment AHEAD: Giving Youth Space to Lead](#), February 24th, 2-2:45 pm ET. Presenters will discuss planning secondary vocational programming, development of supported leadership and goal-setting opportunities, and the elevation of employment expectations for young people with disabilities. Presenters will also discuss the implementation of work-based learning experiences and the incorporation of employment into the transition process. Registration is free and required.

Join the next Employment First COP webinar entitled ***Secondary Benefits of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE)*** on February 23<sup>rd</sup> from 3 to 4 pm ET to hear researchers Drs. Paul Wehman and Katherine Inge discuss "The impact of competitive integrated employment on economic, psychological, and physical health outcomes for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities." This research covers the additional benefits and impacts to both participants and the communities that engage in CIE. Don't miss out on your chance to be a part of this event. Facilitated by Dr. David Mank.

#### *Creating Regional Sector Partnerships – Illinois WIOA Summit 2021:*

Recording of the Illinois WIOA 2021 Summit session Creating Regional Sector Partnerships. Key topics covered in this session included: How do sector partnerships add value to a community, businesses, and workforce? Defining true sector partnerships. How to format and sustain sector partnerships. The role of the workforce & education systems in a sector partnership; and How are other states using sector partnerships?

#### *Reimagining Employer Engagement: A Toolkit for Providers:*

The Aspen Institute released *Reimagining Employer Engagement: A Toolkit for Providers*, which provides workforce professionals with information and tools to expand their work and demonstrate the value their services bring to employers.

#### *Supporting Development of Industry/Sector Partnerships to Create Regional Jobs and Career Pathways:*

Resources identified with the Access and Opportunities theme address the workforce challenges with changes in policy, procedures, and processes.

### The Strategic Industry Partnership Toolkit:

Designed to encourage dialogue about the role assessment, capacity building, planning, implementation, and evaluation should play within creating Industry Partnerships to improve the way they work and lead to more effective, sustainable programs.

*Highlighting gaps in spinal cord injury research in activity-based interventions for the upper extremity: A scoping review. Neurorehabilitation, Volume 49(1), Pgs. 23-38. NARIC Accession Number: J87820.*

New to the NARIC collection, this NIDILRR-funded scoping review examined the high-intensity, activity-based interventions used in neurological conditions for their current and potential application to subacute and chronic spinal cord injury (SCI). Among 172 studies identified, there were 7 studies with SCI, all in adults. Activity-based interventions in SCI included task-specific training and gaming, with and without electrical stimulation, and a robotic exoskeleton while 34 different interventions were reported in stroke, cerebral palsy, and multiple sclerosis. These included high-intensity interventions using virtual reality, brain stimulation, rehabilitation devices, and applications to the home and telerehab settings, none of which were available for the SCI population. The results highlight critical gaps within upper extremity high-intensity activity-based research in SCI. [Access the full abstract and ordering information in REHABDATA.](#)

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Community Living and Participation (90RTCP0003) released Impact: Feature Issue on Retirement and Aging for People with Intellectual, Developmental, and Other Disabilities. This issue of Impact explores aging and retirement and urges policymakers, researchers, and others to create healthy, integrated retirement opportunities for this population. Individual articles discuss advocacy and equality during and after retirement, critical needs and unanswered questions during retirement, a conversation on aging and disability, and more.

The Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Home and Community-Based Services Outcome Measures (RTC OM) (90RT5039) seeks guardians of people with disabilities and other adults who know an adult with a disability to test measures to improve home- and community-based services (HCBS) outcomes for people with disabilities. Participants must be at least 18 years old and know well someone who has a disability and receives services or supports for their disability. Participants will take part in a 60- to 90-minute interview over video and will receive a \$20 gift card for their time. For more information or to participate in the study, contact Matt Roberts at [robe0290@umn.edu](mailto:robe0290@umn.edu) or 612/624-1489

The Illinois Center for Transition and Work (ICTW) Symposium is being held on April 25-26 at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The ICTW Symposium is specifically focused on career development and transition from school to work for individuals with

significant disabilities. **We invite you, your colleagues, and your students to submit a proposal to present at the conference (due 3/1/22).**

The Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) is a national membership organization focused exclusively on Employment First to facilitate the full inclusion of people with disabilities in the workplace and community. The Mid Atlantic Regional APSE Event will be Monday, March 7<sup>th</sup> 2022 from 9 am ET to noon ET. Mid Atlantic Region includes Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Maryland state chapters.

SVRI is offering the following February webinars:

### **I Don't Hear and See Very Well. Can you Help Me?**

This webinar will provide helpful tips on planning and implementing VR services for those with a combined hearing/vision loss. Understanding the differences between those with Usher Syndrome and other etiologies of deaf-blindness.

Date: February 24, 2022 at 11:30 AM CT

Cost: \$25.00

Credit: Worth 1 CRC

### **Career Pathways - STEM - Vocational Counseling & Guidance Strategies for STEM Careers**

This session will explore why STEM is a concentration in WIOA, define the range of careers that are considered STEM, explore the labor market needs for STEM careers, explore and give examples of STEM career pathways and training options and explore Vocational Counseling and Guidance strategies to help people with disabilities to explore, enter, engage, and advance in STEM Career Pathways.

Date: Becomes available February 28, 2022

Cost: \$25.00

Credit: Worth 1 CRC

### **Career Pathways - Using Career Pathway Approaches for Career Entry, Development, & Advancement**

This session will provide an overview of Career Pathways as well as forms and resource links (e.g. Labor Market Information, The Career Plus website, regional Career Pathways industries and training locations) which DVR counselors can use immediately to counsel and guide their clients towards life-changing careers rather than dead-end jobs.

Date: Becomes available February 28, 2022

Cost: \$25.00

Credit: Worth 1 CRC

On Wednesday, March 02, 2022 from 2:00 PM-3:30 PM ET join the *Digital Inclusion: Targeted Strategies for Reaching Underserved Populations* webinar.

Access to computers and broadband is not a given for many of those in underserved communities; nor is the technical knowhow to use applications that are often foundational to entry into today's job market. Oregon's Trade staff has recently begun a pilot for Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) participants, who are also part of underserved communities, to provide computer hardware, internet access, and training to help ensure successful and sustainable reemployment.

Come to this webinar and hear about their ongoing challenges, lessons learned, and successes! **Register Now**

[www.csavr.org](http://www.csavr.org)

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