

Making Careers Possible



Vermont State Rehabilitation Council
Annual Report 2017

State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs)

Joelle Brouner, Executive Director of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council; used by permission.

State Rehabilitation Councils were born out of the tradition of effective advocacy by people with disabilities committed to the success of the publicly-funded Vocational Rehabilitation program. Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 was the first disability civil rights law to be enacted in the United States. The victory was marred when the Department of Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) delayed endorsement of the regulations needed to implement the law.

By April of 1977, frustration mounted and disability-rights advocates took direct action by leading sit-ins in Washington, D.C., New York, and San Francisco to pressure HEW to issue the regulations. While the protests in Washington and New York were short-lived, advocates in San Francisco persisted. They occupied the offices of HEW for four weeks. As a consequence, Joseph Califano, the secretary of HEW, endorsed the regulations. The Rehabilitation Act is the federal law that establishes the publicly-funded Vocational Rehabilitation Program as we know it today.

The advocacy did not end in 1977. Since that time disability-rights advocates have continued work in service of a system that affords opportunities for customers of the Vocational Rehabilitation program to have more choices on their journeys toward employment. During the reauthorization process of the Rehabilitation Act in 1993, advocates built on their tradition of effectiveness by persuading Congress to create State Rehabilitation Councils (under Title I, section 105) as a mechanism to support people with disabilities receiving vocational rehabilitation services to take an active role in shaping the services they receive.

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The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council

Vermont's State Rehabilitation Council advocates for consumer-directed and effective vocational services and for the creation of resources and services that will result in equal opportunities for Vermonters with disabilities.

Under its mandate in the Rehabilitation Act, it “shall review, analyze and advise the designated state unit regarding the performance of the responsibilities of the unit...particularly responsibilities relating to...eligibility (including order of selection); extent, scope and effectiveness of services provided; and functions performed by state agencies that affect or that potentially affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving rehabilitation goals...”

To meet its mission, the Council meets on a bimonthly basis five times a year. (There are no meetings in July or August.) SRC committees meet between full Council meetings to help conduct Council business.

Letters



From the Chair of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council

The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Steering Committee is charged with the task of considering and deciding upon necessary SRC business between meetings of the full Council. 2017 brought a number of unique and significant changes to the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR). The Steering Committee worked to ensure that those changes were communicated to the full membership and that the SRC was closely engaged on these issues.

The largest issue that affected DVR was the significant reduction in re-allotment funding DVR received. DVR's re-allotment funding was reduced 76% year over year leading to a multi-million-dollar budget shortfall in the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The steering committee was intimately involved in advocacy work around this issue, working with Vermont state legislators to propose long-term financial solutions, as well as working closely with DVR to understand the impact on the operation of DVR as a result of this unexpected funding loss.

Another major focus area for the SRC this year was to better understand the services DVR was providing to youth. This interest was sparked by the strong emphasis on youth services in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). To that end, the Steering Committee scheduled a youth themed SRC meeting in June with a panel of youth who had previously or were currently receiving services from DVR as well as a panel of staff members from DVR, the Vermont Association of Business Industry and Rehabilitation, and the schools who all work with youth. The panels were very successful and well received by the SRC.

Additionally, a number of changes were made this year that were organizationally impactful to the SRC. First, a decision was made to dissolve the Advocacy

Outreach and Education (AOE) committee. The steering committee felt the work of the AOE committee could be done on an as needed basis by specially selected SRC members as part of a subcommittee. Although this change was implemented, there continues to be discussion by the SRC on whether or not the AOE committee should be reinstated. Secondly, the decision was made to combine the October SRC meeting and the SRC Annual Retreat into one single event. The committee felt asking SRC members to commit to two meetings in one month was potentially burdensome. The committee planned this year's retreat to also include agenda items that would typically be covered in the full SRC meeting in order to combine the two events. Lastly, it was proposed that in order to expand the size of the Steering Committee, Sam Liss and Adam Leonard should step down from their roles as chairs of the Policy and Procedures and Performance Review Committees respectively. As Chair and Vice Chair of the SRC as well as committee chairs they were filling multiple seats on the Steering Committee, thereby reducing the total number of members on the Steering Committee. These transitions occurred starting in June and Julia Burakian and Sherrie Brunelle stepped into the roles of Performance Review Chair and Policy and Procedures Chair respectively.

Finally, I would like to say that I'm so grateful for the opportunity I've had to work with such amazing people this past year and the previous 5 years as well. As my term on the SRC ends this year I would like to thank everyone who shared their knowledge, time and expertise with me these past five years. I will forever appreciate the things I've learned, the perspective I've gained and the relationships I've built.

*Adam Leonard, Chair
Vermont State Rehabilitation Council*

From the Director of the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



Our major focus in 2017 was to get to Go Live with our case management system. In February of 2016, VocRehab entered into a contract to purchase the Aware Case Management System from Alliance Enterprises. Aware is an IT solution used by over 30 VR agencies across the country.

VR staff have been working 24/7 for the last 17 months to prepare to Go-Live with the system. Major pieces of the work include data migration, adaptation, limited customization, business process redesign, interfaces with the VISION system and Salesforce. Orienting and training staff has also been a major effort. On September 11th, we began a two-week transition to Aware. The first week staff were trained and the second week they began using the system.

Aware will enable us to serve customers more effectively, meet our federal reporting requirements, avoid audit findings and provide us access to a wealth of data with which to make sound decisions and continuously improve our services and outcomes. Everyone is excited to begin a new era in case management. Most importantly, for a major IT project: we were on time and under budget.

Congress passed the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) in 2014 and introduced new Common Performance Measures (CPM) that core partners including VR will be measured on. The measures are focused on job retention, median earnings, credential attainment, measurable skills gains, and employer satisfaction. Prior to WIOA, VR had been primarily measured on how many people the program assisted to get a job. This major shift from quantitative to qualitative measures requires a major paradigm shift in practice.

VR will launch a major Careers Initiative in 2018.

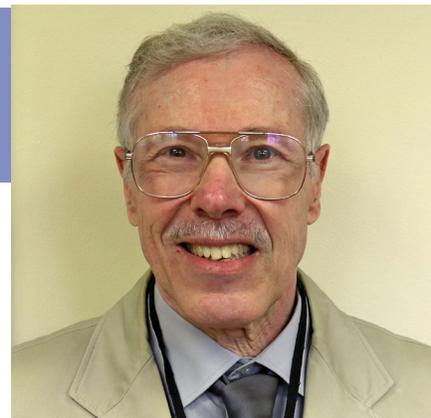
Components include a realignment of how we allocate resources, modifications to the rehab process, increased use of vocational assessment as a career counseling tool, and creation of a new dashboard. We have been talking about a jobs to careers paradigm shift to staff and most are very excited about moving to qualitative performance measures.

We rolled out Linking Learning to Careers (LLC) over the course of this past year. LLC provides an exciting opportunity for Vermont high school students with disabilities to effectively prepare for life after high school related to employment, careers and post-secondary education. For participating students, it provides additional college and career exploration opportunities, work-based learning experiences, and assistive technology supports to the high-quality transition assistance they might already receive through VocRehab's Pre-Employment Transition Services. LLC not only provides these enhancements to students, but seeks to measure the impact that these have on post-high school outcomes through a 5-year research study. The project is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and Vermont is one of only 5 states selected for Disability Innovation Fund support.

VocRehab Vermont maintains a positive, productive relationship with our State Rehabilitation Council. They have been working with us and advising us on the Aware implementation, our Careers Initiative and rolling out the Linking Learning to Careers project. We are fortunate to have such committed and hard-working members.

*Diane P. Dalmasse, Director
Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation*

The Year in Review — Summary SRC Committee Reports



Policy and Procedures Committee

Sam Liss, Outgoing Chair

Sherrie Brunelle, Incoming Chair

FFY 2017 was another productive year for the SRC Policy and Procedures Committee. Four meetings were held between October and September 2017. One meeting was canceled.

The main focus of the committee's work this year was reviewing, revising, and approving changes in the manual chapters needed to comply with the Federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations that guide the work of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (DVR). The Committee also reviewed and revised other chapters upon recommendation of the SRC Client Assistance Program (CAP) representative and other P&P Committee members.

In total, the Committee reviewed, revised and approved six (6) chapters for public comment. These chapters became final on July 1, 2017. Key changes included:

- Emphasizing “competitive, integrated employment” for all consumers;
- Including “advancement in employment” as an appropriate employment outcome;
- Clarifying the requirement to develop and complete an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) for an eligible consumer within 90 days; and
- Defining clear procedures and timelines in the appeals process.

The Committee began work on additional chapters. The first is a new chapter that will provide guidance to VR staff on the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for youth, a new requirement under WIOA. It is expected that this new chapter will be finalized by the end of 2017.

The second is the revision of the chapter providing guidance on VR funding of hearing aids. Work on this chapter will continue into FFY 2018.

The Committee agreed to review Chapter 310 related to supported employment to clarify the substance of the Chapter. The Committee also agreed to develop two (2) new chapters on Cost-Sharing and Denial of Benefits. The Committee decided not to develop a “Progressive Employment” chapter.

In addition to work on the Policy and Procedures Manual, the Committee discussed two possible changes to the SRC bylaws. One is related to the advocacy function of the SRC. It was deferred for further discussion and consideration. The other, proposed adding “a parent or another immediate family member of a person with a disability” to the requisite criterion for the position of Chair or Vice-Chair of the SRC. This proposed change conforms to parallel provisions in bylaws of similar Councils/Committees. This proposed change was approved by the Committee. It will be voted on at the October full SRC meeting.

Performance Review Committee

Adam Leonard, Outgoing Chair

Julia Burakian, Incoming Chair

The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) Performance Review (PR) Committee is responsible for reviewing, analyzing and advising the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) on its performance in fulfilling its mission and responsibilities. This year the PR Committee focused much of its efforts on understanding VR's performance in relation to the new standards set forth in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) including examining the technical guidance received this year from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and its implications for DVR.

In February 2017 the PR committee heard from Alice Porter regarding the RSA Technical Assistance Circular (TAC) which provided clarification on how RSA would be calculating the Common Performance Measures. The committee learned that DVR submitted written comments to RSA and many of their suggestions and concerns were addressed in the TAC. DVR was asked about goals for 2016-2017 now that guidance on measuring the indicators was in place. The committee learned that because this is a new way for DVR to measure outcomes that 2016-2017 will be a baseline year, and goals will be set for future years based on this year's results.

Additionally, the committee examined the RSA guidance around what expenses can be considered Pre-Employment Transitions Services (Pre-ETS) expenses. We learned that the tracking required by RSA will be more cumbersome than hoped and requires counselors to delineate many of their duties between Pre-ETS and non-Pre-ETS work. However, we were glad to hear from RSA and shared with



DVR that the way in which they were tracking expenses was being done correctly.

In alignment with our focus on WIOA and Pre-ETS impact, the PR Committee asked for an overview of the youth survey and listening sessions conducted by the Vermont Family Network (VFN) for DVR. Martha Frank from VFN shared these results with us. One of the major takeaways from this valuable gathering of information was that DVR still has a large opportunity to increase awareness about DVR and the services DVR offers among youth with disabilities and their families.

The PR Committee also had the opportunity to see the results of one of its initiatives from last year, the Consumer Orientation. Samantha Brennan presented the new Consumer Orientation. The new program was designed in part as a result of the PR Committee's examination of the previous program from last year. The committee was excited to hear about the coming changes to the program.

Finally, in June of 2017 the PR Committee got a new Chair, Julia Burakian. The PR Committee is thrilled to have Julia in that role and is certain she is going to do an amazing job.

The 2017 PR Committee worked hard to understand the impact on DVR of much of the new guidance from RSA. We look forward to continuing to support VR in achieving these goals.

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council Members - 2017

Steering Committee

Adam Leonard, SRC Chair and Performance Review Committee Chair

Sam Liss, SRC Vice Chair and Outgoing Policy and Procedures Committee Chair

Sherrie Brunelle, Incoming Policy and Procedures Committee Chair

Diane Dalmasse, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Director

James Smith, SRC Liaison, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Budget and Policy Manager*

Policy & Procedures Committee

Sam Liss, Outgoing Chair

Sherrie Brunelle, Incoming Chair

Leslie Walker Mitchell

Michelle Paya

James Smith, SRC Liaison*

Performance Review Committee

Adam Leonard, Chair

Max Barrows

Samantha Brennan

Sherrie Brunelle

Julia Burakian

Nick Caputo

Martha Frank

Jessalyn Gustin

Marlena Hughes

Robin Ingenthron

Christopher Kane

Rose Lucenti

Ashley Pulaski

Brian Smith

Olivia Smith-Hammond

Leslie Walker Mitchell

James Smith, SRC Liaison*

2017 SRC Members in Alphabetical Order with New Appointments

Max Barrows

Courtney Blasius (Appointed 2017)

Jessica Brennan (Appointed 2017)

Samantha Brennan

Sherrie Brunelle

Julia Burakian

Nick Caputo (Appointed 2017)

Diane Dalmasse

Martha Frank

Jessalyn Gustin

Marlena Hughes (Appointed 2017)

Robin Ingenthron (Appointed 2017)

Christopher Kane

Amanda Kohle (Appointed 2017)

Sarah Launderville (Appointed 2017)

Adam Leonard

Sam Liss

Rose Lucenti

Calla Papademas (Appointed 2017)

Michelle Paya

Ashley Pulaski

Brian Smith

James Smith, SRC Liaison*

Olivia Smith-Hammond

Deb Tucker Boyce (Appointed 2017)

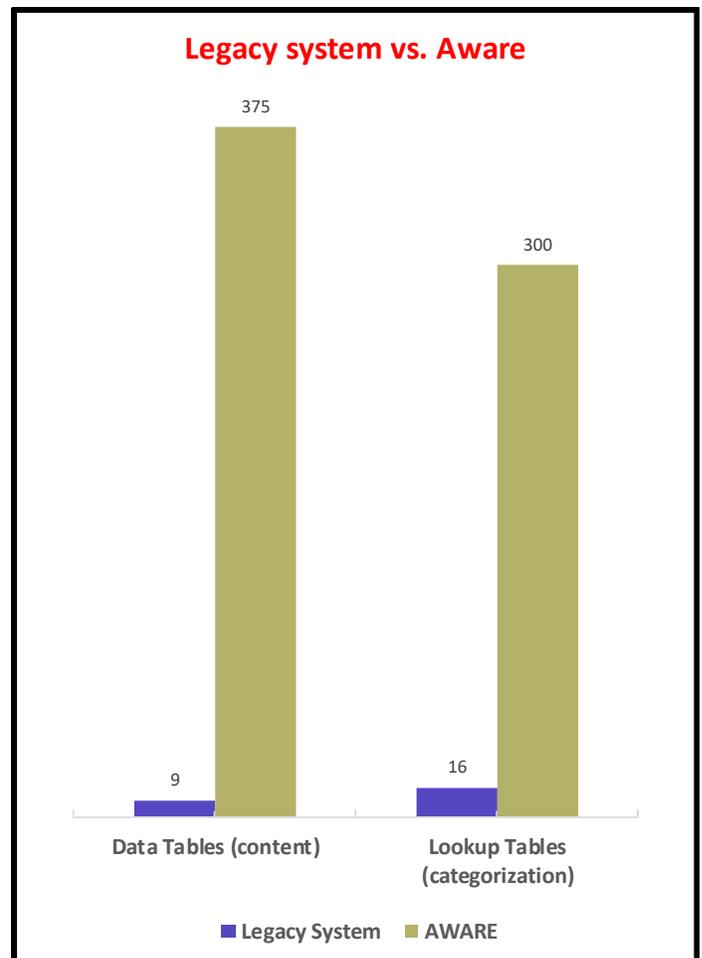
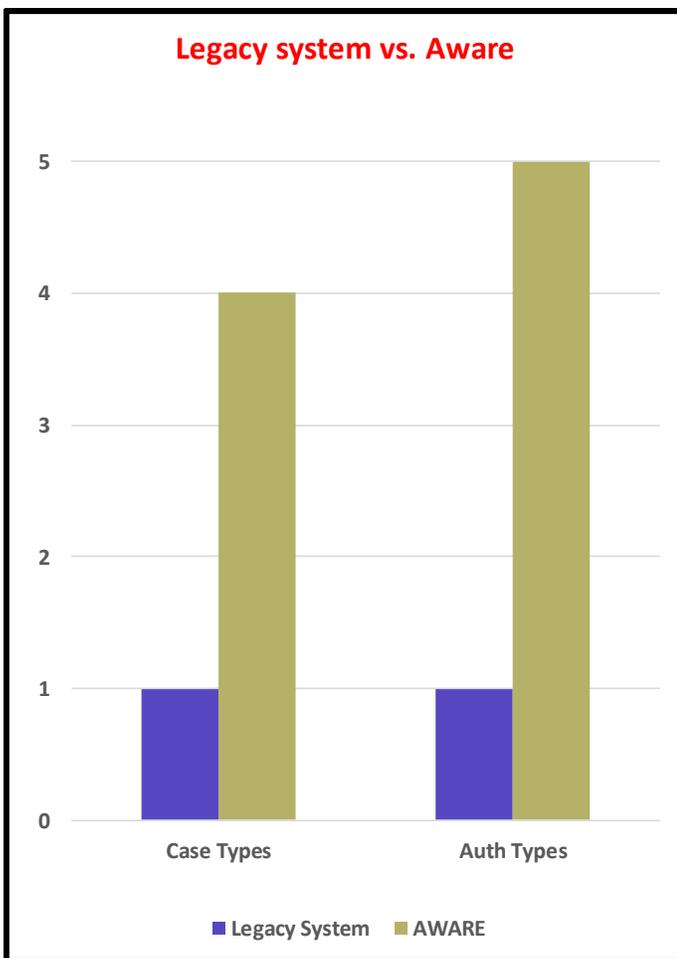
Leslie Walker Mitchell

*SRC Liaison with VocRehab – not SRC Appointment

Aware Case Management System

In September 2017, VocRehab went live with its new VT-Aware electronic case management system. This was the culmination of an 18-month implementation project that followed a two-year contracting process. The on-time, under-budget roll-out of this new system was a signal success for VocRehab's staff and partners and creates a strong foundation for serving our customers. VT-Aware's sophisticated, integrated, and modern web-based features are a considerable leap forward from VR's previous patchwork of simple data systems.

Purchased from industry-leading Alliance Enterprises, Aware is specifically designed for rehabilitation staff. Case documentation and narratives are now in one place, where all members of the team – VR counselors, employment staff, benefits counselors, supervisors, and more – can share their conversations and activities in a secure and organized way. This integration of work has resulted in our ability to use data more effectively to ensure quality of services.



Aware CMS (cont.)

The new system is highly configurable, meets high accessibility standards, and, most importantly, makes it possible to align our work and our data collection with WIOA’s paradigmatic shift towards focusing on careers and RSA’s emphasis on Pre-Employment Transition Services for youth in school. In addition, system administrators and case managers can exercise refined control over who can see cases, access information, or perform actions in a case through sophisticated security parameters and business logic that reduces audit risk by greatly improving data quality and timeliness.

Automated interfaces with the state’s finance system and the CWS Salesforce Employer Outreach database have eliminated duplicative data entry and promise even more power to integrate data. The wealth of new data elements has provided a mountain of information for data analysts and managers to mine for nuggets of insight into our customers, our services to them, our impact on their outcomes, and our practices as teams striving to support our customers’ career goals. Text.

	LEGACY	AWARE
Data Tables (content)	9	375
Lookup Tables (categorization)	16	300
Audit Logging Tables	0	13
System Configuration Tables	0	40
Views and Functions	0	200
System Parameters	0	700
Case Types	1	4
Case Type Parameters	0	165
Auth Types	1	5
Auth Type Parameters	0	99
Security Templates	0	20
Security Parameters	0	467
Security Decisions Made	0	14800

Linking Learning to Careers (LLC)

This exciting new research project, funded by a 5-year federal grant from the U.S. Department of Education, will build on DVR’s effective Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to engage students in additional, enhanced services that will help them transition from high school into adulthood.

Those students that elect to participate (and are selected through a randomized selection process) will be supported by an enhanced VR team – a new career consultant working in collaboration with the local transition counselor and youth employment specialist. The enhanced services students receive include career planning assistance, work-based learning experiences (such as job shadows, internships and paid employment), college exploration and access to dual enrollment classes, assistive technology support, and funds for transportation for work-based learning opportunities.

DVR is joined by the Vermont Agency of Education, Community College of Vermont, VABIR and others in this partnership effort, with a rigorous evaluation study supported by Mathematica Policy Research. The results of the evaluation will provide qualitative and quantitative evidence of the impacts of LLC services on students’ early career outcomes including paid competitive employment, postsecondary school enrollment, and improved confidence to achieve career goals.



The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is appointed by the Governor. We seek new members who have a wide range of interests and talents to help improve the services offered by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation to the citizens of Vermont with disabilities. If you are interested in applying to become a member of the SRC, please contact Debra L. Kobus, Coordinator.

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