

Making Careers Possible



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.

2018 SRC Annual Retreat Seyon Lodge - Groton, Vermont



Welcome to
Seyon Lodge



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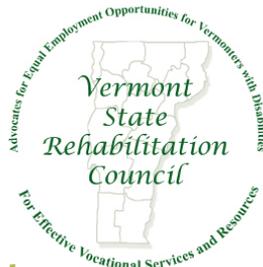
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The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council

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.



From the Chair of the Vermont State Rehabilitation Council

It has been a great honor to have been elected and to serve in the position of chair of the SRC this past year.

I'm pleased that our report begins with an important story of the history of how State Rehabilitation Councils came out of significant advocacy from leaders in the disability rights movement. The roots in which our work has taken shape are really important when looking at the system of Vocational Rehabilitation and how advocates, people with disabilities, parents, and allies work within and push for stronger supports of this system.

There is some excellent and groundbreaking work happening at VocRehab Vermont and, over the past year, the Vermont SRC has continued to work to ensure systems are held to the highest of standards. As you will see in the reports presented from our committee chairs, there is a lot happening and the committees are working on hard issues and evaluating and bringing forward positions that help create better experiences for the customers of VocRehab Vermont.

Committee members have a broad range of experiences that they bring to the table. Some have recently received services from VocRehab Vermont and they share openly about those experiences. Some are parents of individuals who have used services, some are employees of VocRehab Vermont, some work in the community in organizations who serve people with disabilities, and some work in private businesses. All are working toward the common goal of ensuring that individuals with disabilities have options and supports in employment.

This year, we continued on the path of youth transition as an important aspect of the work for a society in which individuals with disabilities are experiencing employment. But it went a step beyond with a stronger focus on careers—having a career and having support in a career rather than simply helping someone “find a job.”

I'm proud of the SRC committee members. As a person who lived on Social Security benefits and felt that my life was saved when I found a job that led to the career I have today, I appreciate and value the work they have completed and you will read about throughout this report. In the coming year our goals include continued review of policies and procedures including highlighting gender identity issues, cultural competency work as it relates to the VocRehab Vermont website and other materials, and advocacy on the state and national level as it relates to competitive employment and people with disabilities.

I look forward to continued work with partners as we strive for systems in which people with disabilities have more options and the supports they choose in employment.

*Sarah Launderville, Chair
Vermont State Rehabilitation Council*

From the Director of the Vermont Division of Vocational Rehabilitation



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 significant shift from quantitative to qualitative measures requires a major paradigm shift in our service delivery system.

VR launched a major Careers Initiative in 2017. In 2018, staff are focused on how to assist our customers to have a career. Components include a realignment of how we allocate our resources, modifications to the rehab process, increased use of vocational assessment as a career counseling tool, the creation of a new dashboard to measure leading and lagging indicators, and implementing Progressive Education. Progressive Education is a continuum of education and training experiences that overcome customers' barriers and engage them in credential attainment and skills gains.

As an organization we have been focused on our careers paradigm shift with managers, supervisors and line staff. All staff have been involved in the revision to our mission, vision and guiding principles and how to support the shift from jobs to careers. Each of our 12 district offices have chosen a project to pilot that will support the Careers Initiative. Front line staff have ownership of their projects. Staff are excited and motivated to see their project to successful completion. We expect to obtain rich and diverse information on

what works in helping people to develop their own career pathway.

The VR Implementation Team has several work groups on a variety of topics including revamping our orientation program for new referrals. All the district leadership teams have taken the White Belt Training on process improvement and an I-Team work group is leading an effort to process map all steps in the rehabilitation process to identify ways to be more efficient and effective. Another group is focused on how to support a customer to have a short-term and a long-term vocational goal—the right now job to pay the bills and a career goal over time.

As our new dashboard is created we will develop scorecards that tell the story about our new performance measures. We are very hopeful that our new approach to serving customers will yield increased job retention and higher wages because consumers are obtaining new skills, credentials and industry recognized certifications. We are convinced our new way of working will assist people to have better jobs that are better matches to their skills and values.

We continue to have a robust, productive relationship with our State Rehabilitation Council. Members have contributed much to our ongoing policy and procedure review, monitoring our performance and advising us on WIOA implementation and our Careers Initiative.

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

The Year in Review — Summary SRC Committee Reports



Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee

Sam Liss, Chair

The newly re-established and re-invigorated Advocacy, Outreach and Education (AOE) Committee has been off to a productive start, reconvening with the January 2018 meeting. At this time, the Committee has many members, all of whom are seemingly eager to learn and to actively participate as the Committee moves forward with its many and diverse initiatives. In this spirit, the idea of an updated VR orientation packet was suggested and relayed to James Smith.

Sam Liss was elected Committee Chair and Sarah Launderville and Sam presented on the background and charge/purview of the Committee and suggestions for procedures and best practices for constructive work, such as clear and realistic focus. It was explained that the SRC is a nonvoting (affiliated) member of Vermont Coalition of Disability Rights (VCDR). Marlena Hughes volunteered to be one of the two allowable SRC liaisons to VCDR. Indeed, an attempt was also made to extend the VCDR listserv to SRC/AOE Committee members.

It was clarified that the AOE Committee can work closely with Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS)—the Inter-agency partnership (Business Account Managers (BAM's) being the liaisons between consumers and employers), Chambers of Commerce, as well as sister Federal Councils such as the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), to achieve its objectives.

The annual 2018 Statehouse card room event at which the SRC exhibits, networks and educates, was discussed and planned. The March event was well-received with significant attendance by SRC members and VR staff, as well as sincerely

interested legislators. The theme was Career Pathways for People with Disabilities (PWD) with emphasis upon youth, as within the Linking Learning to Careers (LLC) grant project. It was agreed that the 2018 event was an improvement over years past, though constructive suggestions were made to improve further in future years. The date for 2019 has already been chosen.

A key initiative was collaborating with the Youth Core Transition Teams around the state, with emphasis upon the annual collaborative event in October.

A key initiative was collaborating with the Youth Core Transition Teams around the state, with emphasis upon the annual collaborative event in October. Tara Howe, Youth Transition Program Director, was invited and presented before two Committee meetings.

It was agreed that AOE Committee members would actively invite legislators to attend local core transition team meetings, as well as the annual event. In fact, a discrete table for AOE members to enhance SRC presence was highlighted. An Advisory Board workshop with

emphasis upon youth was proposed for 2018 but has been postponed for a future event.

Diane Dalmasse has kept the Committee informed of progress toward establishment of a Youth Advisory Board. At present, it is taking shape with ideas as to its charge and direction.

A key component of the AOE Committee's purview is keeping abreast of pertinent legislation, both State and Federal. In that vein, constructive ideas as to best presentation formats have been discussed and executed. It was agreed that Committee members keep well informed and, for example, be able to testify/advocate on particular topics, if necessary and appropriate. (Note: State staff cannot generally advocate before the legislature.)

Disability Awareness Day (DAD), the annual event sponsored by VCDR and Vermont Center for Independent Living (VCIL), was highlighted as a venue for such testimony. The role of the Governor's Committee on Employment for People with Disabilities (GCEPD) at the event was discussed.

State legislative issues discussed relating to employment of PWD included the restoration of funding for the general-funded Attendant Services Program (ASP) and for Developmental Disability (DD) services, as well as other budgetary topics. In addition, the inclusion of PWD as a targeted population (i.e., eligible for educational and training opportunities) within the most recent workforce development bill was also mentioned, thanks to Chairmen Bill Botzow and Ann Pugh.

Federally, the Committee was informed about such legislative initiatives as eliminating employment disincentives for PWD at/above retirement age, enhancing protections for Social Security beneficiaries with representative payees, increases in Independent Living (IL) funding, enhancements to the Federal tax credit for hiring people with disabilities and seniors, as well as promising new online tools for managing benefits vis-à-vis employment and strengthening of access to VR information for those denied disability benefits.

The AOE Committee took the lead in requesting that the SRC co-sponsor a ceremonial event in Bennington upon Chairman Botzow's retirement as well as one to announce the introduction in Congress by Congressman Welch of the retirement age work incentive initiatives.

Finally, the "Perky Planet Café," debuting in Burlington with emphasis upon hiring PWD, was discussed with all its implications. Pros and cons were considered; however, it was agreed that the discussion was simply informational at this time and more information was needed for Committee direction.

The Committee looks forward to a FFY 2019 that incorporates and builds upon strides made in FFY 2018.



Performance Review Committee

Chris Kane, Chair

The Vermont State Rehabilitation Council's 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. To that end, the PR Committee lent its efforts this year to reviewing a broad range of topics affecting DVR's effectiveness, including:

- the Consumer Satisfaction Survey,
- DVR's 2018-19 State Plan,
- systems of accessibility and translation,
- the Needs Assessment, and the
- proposed Leading Indicators.

The PR Committee also saw a transition as Adam Leonard's term as member and chair of the SRC and PR Committee drew to a close. The PR Committee elected Chris Kane as the new chair.

In December of 2017, the PR Committee reviewed the draft Needs Assessment before bringing it to the full SRC for approval.

The two largest changes over the last few years were:

1. the implementation of Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) which made significant changes to the VR program, like the requirement to spend 15% of DVR funding on students in high school, and
2. the loss of re-allotment funding, which resulted in about a 20% reduction in the VR program.

The accessibility of the DVR website and materials was a topic that crossed several meetings throughout the year. The PR Committee hoped to ensure that information that is available for the public is in an accessible format. That includes translation services

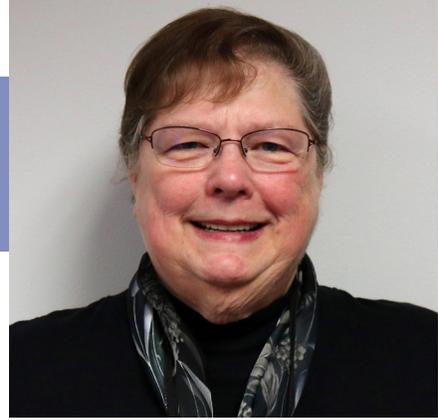
for non-native English Speakers. DVR provided documents and department responsibilities around language and translation services, but time did not permit a full accounting of accessibility features, including for customers with visual impairments.

In April 2018, the PR Committee had the opportunity to review the indicators required by the passing of WIOA and the following Leading Indicators proposed by DVR:

- Percentage of consumers in plan status who participated in at least one assessment;
- Percentage of consumers with an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) goal in a higher wage cluster as per Labor Market Information (LMI);
- Percentage of consumers in plan status who participate in a post-secondary education or training program or progressive employment that would result in either a measurable skill gain or a credential, including credentials that are not allowable by RSA but would benefit the consumer;
- Percentage of cases with more than one team member;
- Percentage of cases with evidence of regular contact with DVR or VABIR at 3 months, 6 months, and 9 months post closure.

DVR provided additional information on the assessment process and answered questions on the assessments used.

The PR Committee also reviewed and made recommendations on the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. DVR has added a Quality Assurance Manager who will be responsible for developing the new survey. The new survey continues many of the



questions that have been in place since 2003, which allows for continuity of data collection. The PR Committee also provided feedback on new questions, making recommendations as to whether they should be included, and suggesting several that addressed missing areas in the drafted survey.

The 2018 PR Committee proudly tackled a number of substantive issues over the past year that we believe are important to DVR's success. We look forward to continuing to pursue many of these important topics as well as exciting new ones in 2019.

Policy and Procedures Committee

Sherrie Brunelle, Chair

FFY 2018 began with the welcoming of several new members to the Policies and Procedures Committee. As chair of the committee, I appreciated having greater involvement in the work of the committee. Increased participation resulted in active and productive discussions on many issues. These discussions led to revisions of existing policies, creation of new policies and guidance, as well as preliminary work on other issues. I want to express my appreciation to each and every committee member and to our SRC Coordinator who helped us get our work done.

Within the context of five meetings held between November 2017 and September 2018, the committee developed and finalized after public comment a new chapter related to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for youth. Pre-ETS services are required services under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). Chapter revisions and guidance approved by the committee and pending public comment include:

- Chapter 102 related to informed consent,
- Chapter 313 related to audiology services and purchase of hearing aids, and
- Guidance for VR counselors illustrating when it is appropriate to provide a service as a post-employment service under Chapter 205 and when it is more appropriate to open a new case.

In addition, the committee created a handout detailing a consumer's rights and responsibilities under the WIOA. The handout is scheduled for review by senior VR counselors and VR's Director for further input prior to final approval. It is expected that this handout will be part of the orientation packet for new consumers and available at other points in the VR process. The content may also be incorporated into the VR Policies and Procedures Manual.

The committee worked and will continue to work on a range of other topics, including:

- Application of a financial means test to one or more VR services (research ongoing),
- Chapter 310 Supported Employment,
- Chapter 308 Transportation (establishing a workgroup),
- Chapter 308 Self-employment (establishing a workgroup), and
- Implementation of the new "career" focus of the WIOA.

Topics the committee may address in the coming year include policies related to disruptive and/or violent behavior and addressing gender identity issues. Any work this committee does on these topics will likely be tied to broader Agency of Human Services' work that is ongoing.

Vermont State Rehabilitation Council Members - 2018

Steering Committee

Sarah Launderville, *SRC Chair*

Brian Smith, *SRC Vice Chair*

Sam Liss, *Advocacy, Outreach and Education Chair*

Chris Kane, *Performance Review Committee Chair*

Sherrie Brunelle, *Policy and Procedures Committee Chair*

Diane Dalmasse, *Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Director*

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

Advocacy, Outreach & Education Committee

Sam Liss, *Chair*

Max Barrows

Jessica Brennan

Sherrie Brunelle

Diane Dalmasse

Martha Frank

Marlena Hughes

Cari Kelley

Sarah Launderville

Bill Meirs

Calla Papademas

Michelle Paya

Olivia Smith-Hammond

Policy & Procedures Committee

Sherrie Brunelle, *Chair*

Courtney Blasius

Jessica Brennan

Maria Burt

Marlena Hughes

Amanda Kohle

Sam Liss

Michelle Paya

James Smith, *SRC Liaison**

Performance Review Committee

Chris Kane, *Chair*

Max Barrows

Jessica Brennan

Sherrie Brunelle

Nick Caputo

Martha Frank

Marlena Hughes

Robin Ingenthron

Rose Lucenti

Bill Meirs

Brian Smith

Olivia Smith-Hammond

Deb Tucker Boyce

James Smith, *SRC Liaison**

2018 SRC Members in Alphabetical Order with New Appointments

Max Barrows

Courtney Blasius

Jessica Brennan

Sherrie Brunelle

Maria Burt

Nick Caputo

Diane Dalmasse

Martha Frank

Marlena Hughes

Robin Ingenthron

Christopher Kane

Amanda Kohle

Sarah Launderville

Sam Liss

Rose Lucenti

Bill Meirs

Calla Papademas

Michelle Paya

Brian Smith

Olivia Smith-Hammond

Deb Tucker Boyce

James Smith, *SRC Liaison**

*SRC Liaison with Voc Rehabilitation

VR's Contribution to Vermonters and Their Communities

Creating Opportunity, Creating Jobs

VocRehab Vermont's core mission is to realize human potential by putting meaningful work within reach of Vermonters with significant disabilities. We help VR consumers figure out what work will work for them through careful assessment, counseling and guidance from our expert staff. We capitalize on our extensive networks in the employer community to create job opportunities and make good placements that match employer needs with jobseeker skills, and help employers retain staff with disabilities. We use our financial resources within Vermont communities to support our consumers as they transition to stable employment, and our employers as they try out new workers.

Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) shift to Pre-Employment Transition Service (Pre-ETS)

The WIOA legislation mandated that VR agencies significantly shift their priorities to providing Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to high school students with disabilities, starting services as early as the freshman year. The goal of Pre-ETS is to engage students with disabilities earlier to improve their long-term employment and post-secondary educational outcomes.

WIOA also required that VR agencies reserve 15% of their federal grant awards for these Pre-ETS services. Vermont DVR has met the 15% Pre-ETS funding reserve every year since the requirement was added.

DVR has fully implemented Pre-ETS statewide to serve all of Vermont's 59 supervisory unions. In SFY 2018, DVR served 1,555 high school students statewide, approximately 20% of the eligible student population.

DVR has dramatically expanded services to youth overall, and the percentage of population served who were under age 22 at entry into VR services has grown:

- In SFY 2014 (the last pre-WIOA year) 26% of all people served by DVR were youth under age 22.
- In SFY 2018 42% of all people served by DVR were youth under age 22, a 14 percentage point increase.

Work-Based Learning Experiences for Students and Youth

Providing real work-based learning experiences in real employment settings is one of the most effective ways to prepare students and youth for long term success. Therefore, DVR has invested more resources in providing these opportunities for students and youth.

The percent of students and youth served by DVR who engaged in work-based learning experiences with real employers before age 22 has increased:

- SFY 2011-2014 (pre-WIOA) 15% of all VR youth served received a work-based learning experience.
- SFY 2015-2018 (post-WIOA) 23% of all VR youth served received a work-based learning experience.
- In SFY 2018, 857 students and youth under age 22 had work-based learning experiences as part of their VR services.

Resources for Growth, for our Future

VocRehab Vermont is funded primarily by the Rehabilitation Services Administration in the U.S. Department of Education. About 80% of our funding is federal money which goes into the local economies of Vermont towns—to local stores to purchase work tools and clothing; to health care providers and medical equipment suppliers; to community colleges and technical training programs; to transportation providers; and to Vermonters in community agencies who provide support services for workers with disabilities.

Linking Learning to Careers (LLC)

Linking Learning to Careers (LLC) is a 5-year statewide research project awarded to DVR by the U.S. Department of Education. This grant is an opportunity to improve career outcomes for Vermont students with disabilities by offering a menu of enhanced services on top of the core services already available through DVR Transition Counselors.

LLC is a timely and direct complement to recent WIOA regulatory changes with Pre-Employment Transition Services and will provide valuable, real-world-tested insight into the most effective DVR practices for working with students.

Throughout Vermont, nearly 800 students are participating in the project with coordination and support from key LLC partners, including the Community College of Vermont (CCV), Agency of Education, local schools, Mathematica Policy Research, TransCen, and others.

Jobs for Independence (JFI) becomes ICAN

DVR and its Invest EAP program have partnered for the past three years in an exciting random assignment demonstration involving beneficiaries of 3Squares, Vermont's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The SNAP project—led by the Department of Children and Families (DCF) Economic Services Division (ESD)—intentionally targeted those hardest to serve in our communities:

- Individuals with substance use disorders
- Vermonters with mental health concerns
- Homeless and housing insecure individuals
- Ex-Offenders

Over 3,000 participants enrolled in the study, and half were eligible for enhanced services. These services were provided by a team including ESD, the Department of Labor (VDOL), DVR, Invest EAP, VABIR, Community College of Vermont, and local Community Action Programs. These teams gave participants the benefit of a wide range of expertise, resources, and coordination, beginning with a clinical assessment by Invest EAP clinicians. Over 9,000 referrals to community resource organizations and employment programs were made and over 700 jobs obtained by participants. Services included:

- Education and training
- Substance abuse and mental health treatment
- Housing and transportation
- Primary care and disease management
- Work search and employment supports

The success of JFI has yielded a new core model for providing services to SNAP recipients which the US Department of Agriculture (the federal SNAP administrator) had approved for implementation in Vermont. This new model, called Individual Career Advancement Network (ICAN) is began enrolling participants in October 2018.



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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