

Agenda

VERMONT STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (VTSRC)

Wednesday, February 19, 2020

12:30 PM – 3:30 PM

(Lunch will be served from 12:00 PM until 12:30 PM)

Waterbury Vocational Rehabilitation, Elm

280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671

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|---------------------|--|
| 12:30 pm – 12:46 pm | Introductions (Sarah Launderville, Chair) |
| 12:46 pm – 12:47 pm | Approval of Agenda (Sarah Launderville) |
| 12:47 pm – 12:50 pm | Open for Public Comment |
| 12:50 pm – 12:52 pm | Approval of Minutes (Sarah Launderville)
Minutes from December 5, 2019 |
| 12:52 pm – 1:37 pm | Presentation: SILC (Tom Hamilton) |
| 1:37 pm – 1:40 pm | Vote: Chair (Sarah Launderville) |
| 1:40 pm – 1:43 pm | Vote: Vice Chair (Sarah Launderville) |
| 1:43 pm – 1:48 pm | Stretch Break |
| 1:48 pm – 1:50 pm | Consent Agenda (Sarah Launderville)
Committee Minutes are available for review online as indicated below. <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Advocacy, Outreach, and Education Committee January 9, 2020• Performance Review Committee December 5, 2019• Steering Committee January 9, 2020• Coordinator's February 6, 2020 Report |
| 1:50 pm – 2:05 pm | Committee Chair Updates (Chair)
No written reports. Please refer to minutes above if needed <ul style="list-style-type: none">• AOE Committee• P&P Committee• PR Committee• Steering Committee |
| 2:05 pm – 2:10 pm | Director's Report (Diane Dalmasse) |
| 2:10 pm – 2:25 pm | VR Regional Manager Updates (Nancy Dwyer and Hib Doe) |
| 2:25 pm – 2:35 pm | Vote: State Plan Presentation (Diane Dalmasse) |

2:35 pm – 3:20 pm

**Presentation: VR Program Services and Outcomes
Trend Data 2017 to 2019 (James Smith)**

- Demographic data on populations served
- Service data
- Expenditure data
- Outcome data at program exit
- WIOA Common Performance Outcome data

3:20 pm – 3:25 pm

Other Business (Chair)

3:25 pm- 3:30 pm

Round Table (Chair)

3:30 pm

Adjournment (Chair)

New Member Biographies
Vermont State Rehabilitation Council
February 6, 2020

Ana Kolbach

Ana Kolbach comes with a background in teaching Elementary, Literacy and English Language Learners in the inclusive classroom. Ana recently worked as a Youth Employment Specialist with VABIR supporting students attain competitive integrated employment and gain vocational skills. Ana is the Inclusion and Accessibility Coordinator for the Agency of Education.

Danielle Dubois

Danielle assisted in the launch of ReSOURCE's State AmeriCorps Training Program, Every Body Works, as program Director in August of 2017. She implemented this new grant program to support economic opportunities for Vermonters with disabilities or barriers to successfully enter the workforce. Danielle has a demonstrated history of working with individuals with barriers. Danielle serves our community by cultivating growth in transferable and soft skills. By using a strength based approach, Every Body Works programming encourages leadership development and inclusive job skills training; the first of its kind in AmeriCorps programming. Danielle has also been responsible for managing the Essential Goods Program since 2016; this includes monitoring voucher distribution and budgeting for partner agencies, assisting individuals by matching them with our partner agencies to apply for vouchers, and reporting quarterly on grants for the program. Danielle actively pursues new partnerships and avenues for the Essential Goods Program to reach new agencies and serve more Vermonters. Danielle graduated from Champlain College in Vermont with a Bachelor's of Science in Paralegal Studies.

Gina D'Ambrosio

Gina began her work in 1996 in the Chittenden County J.O.B.S Program through Spectrum Youth and Family Services, transitioning as the Program Coordinator as a Howard Center employee in 2005. The program serves 16-21 year olds with mental health challenges in retaining employment and building independent living skills. She oversees a staff of 7 and also supervises UVM MSW interns in their field placement with the J.O.B.S. Program. Prior to her work at Howard Center, Gina worked in the Los Angeles area with at-risk youth as well as being employed as a third grade teacher. Gina holds a Bachelor's degree in Psychology, and has been trained in various trauma-informed care frameworks, co-occurring disorders, and adolescent brain development. Over the past 25 years, Gina has served on the Board of Directors for a School-to-Work non-profit organization, facilitates a monthly case consultation team for transition age youth, and is part of a first-episode psychosis consultation team.

Helena Kehne

Helena is a recent graduate of Lyndon State College, with a Bachelors of Science in Psychology and Human Services. She is currently serving her second year as an AmeriCorps volunteer at ReSOURCE, working to help individuals with disabilities and other barriers to employment develop job skills and achieve their personal and professional goals. In addition to workforce

development, Helena is interested in health and wellness work, and is passionate about disability rights.

Kristen Carpentier

Kristen has worked in the world of nonprofit organizations for over 25 years in both leadership and direct service roles. Though her roots began in the Boston area of Massachusetts, she and her family are truly home in Vermont. Working as a Vermont state Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, she has enjoyed a deeper understanding of her community, and the powerful effects of having work that aligns with one's values and needs.

Patricia Wehman

I am currently the Division Manager of Housing & Code Enforcement in Burlington where I have been for the past 5+ years. I worked for two local non-profits in advocacy and management and previous to direct service work I was employed in the food service industry at all levels including as a small business owner. In an effort to change my career trajectory, I earned a MPA and while working on the post-graduate degree, made the move to municipal government. While I have never regretted the career change, for the past 4 years, I have kept my feet in direct service work by subbing at the warming shelter. People experiencing homelessness, mental health challenges and poverty remain near and dear to my heart and I remain passionate about supporting missions that serve the under-heard. I sit on the Board of Directors & volunteer for a small non-profit serving people of all ages and abilities. I enjoy spending my free time with my horse, my dogs, my family and traveling. Occasionally, I sleep.

Full State Rehabilitation Council Meeting

Thursday, December 5, 2019 from 12:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

Waterbury State Office Complex

ASH Conference Room

HC 2 South, 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671

Meeting called by:

Sarah Launderville, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:38 p.m.

Members Present:

- 1) Courtney Blasius (via Skype)
- 2) Sherrie Brunelle
- 3) Nick Caputo
- 4) Diane Dalmasse (VR) , ex-officio, non-voting
- 5) Martha Frank
- 6) Marlena Hughes
- 7) Cari Kelley
- 8) Sarah Launderville
- 9) Sam Liss
- 10) Rose Lucenti
- 11) Bill Meirs
- 12) Calla Papademas (via Skype)
- 13) Olivia Smith-Hammond (via Skype)
- 14) Deb Tucker Boyce (via Skype)

Members Absent:

- 1) Robin Ingenthron
- 2) Brian Smith

SRC Liaison:

James Smith

SRC Coordinator:

Debra Kobus (outgoing)

Kate Larose (incoming)

Interpreters:

None.

Speakers or Presenters:

None.

Guests:

- 1) Kristen Carpentier.
- 2) Bill Sugarman.

1) Introductions (Sarah Lauderville)

Discussion:

Those in attendance went around the table and introduced themselves.

Conclusions:

Thanks to everyone!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

2) Approval of Agenda (Sarah Lauderville)

Discussion:

Sarah asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. Sarah would like to add time for her to speak under Committee Chair Updates. Nick moved to accept the agenda as amended and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 13-0-0.

Conclusions:

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

3) Open for Public Comment (Sarah Lauderville)

Discussion:

There was no public comment.

Conclusions:

None.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

4) Approval of Minutes for June 6, 2019 (Sarah Lauderville)

Discussion:

Sarah asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the June 6, 2019 Full SRC Minutes. There were none. Sherrie

moved to approve the minutes and it was seconded. No discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 13-0-0.

Conclusions:

June 6, 2019 Full SRC Minutes were approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Upload approved minutes to SRC website. Debra Kobus, December 10, 2019.

5) Consent Agenda (Sarah Launderville)

Discussion:

Sarah asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the following consent agenda items:

- Annual Retreat October 3, 2019.
- AOE Committee May 2, 2019 and September 5, 2019.
- PR Committee June 6, 2019 and October 17, 2019.
- P & P Committee May 2, 2019 Minutes.
- Steering Committee May 2, 2019 and September 5, 2019.
- Coordinator's December 5, 2019 Report.

There were none. Sherrie moved to approve, and it was seconded. No further discussion. Vote unanimous 13-0-0.

Conclusions:

Consent agenda items approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Upload Approved Minutes to SRC website, Debra Kobus, December 10, 2019.

6) Committee Chair Updates

Discussion:

Advocacy, Outreach and Education Committee:

Sam Liss provided the update for the AOE Committee meeting.

We had a productive discussion about Federal and State Legislation. Highlights include:

Federal Related:

- **The Able Age Adjustment Act (S651)** was introduced with strong bipartisan support. This bill increases from 26 to 46 the age threshold for tax-favored ABLE (Achieving a Better

Life Experience) accounts. It requires large offsets so as not to increase taxes.

Able Age Adjustment Act has had some movement. The entire program may not be sustainable if the age is not raised and these new enrollees pay the fees. Senator Casey held a reception at the Capitol and there was also a national call in date. There are identical bills in the House and the Senate.

- **Stop the Wait Act (S2496 HR4386)**
(<https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/116/hr4386>)
The Stop the Wait Act will eliminate the two-year waiting period for Medicare after SSDI eligibility and also the five-month waiting period for cash payments after eligibility. There are some exceptions but in general there is a two-year waiting period.
- Two work incentive proposals presented by Representative Welch last congress are expected to be appended to the next Continuing Resolution which should begin December 21. There is a good chance that a longer-term bill will be appended in the future.

State Related:

- A strategy of including both the Raise the Wage in conjunction with the Family Leave Bill in a broader package is being pursued.
- Dual Enrollment (**Diane reported that there has been discussion about inviting someone from Agency of Education to speak about this-add to Steering Committee Agenda for next meeting.**)
- Governor's Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities (formerly the Disability Transportation Summit) took place on December 2 at the Double Tree in South Burlington and went very well.
- VFN Annual Conference – April 2, 2020 – Martha Frank said that we are hosting three conferences in three locations in the state with one presenter. This information is available on our website <https://www.vermontfamilynetwork.org/events-news/annual-conference/>. Sara Forward is performing the presentation. “Opening Doors in a Small Town” is the name of her presentation.

Dates / Locations:

1. Saturday, March 28, 2020 from 10 am – 2 pm at a location to be determined in Springfield, VT
 2. Tuesday, March 31, 2020 from 4 pm – 8 pm at the Eastside Restaurant in Newport, VT
 3. Thursday, April 2, 2020 from 8:30 am – 1 pm at the Delta Hotel (formerly Trader Duke's) in South Burlington, VT
- Card Room Event – April 2, 2020 in lieu of SRC meetings which have been changed to the following Thursday.
 - SILC Olmstead Summit tentatively scheduled for May 2020.

Policy and Procedures Committee:

Sherrie Brunelle provided the update for the P & P Committee.

The key items are:

We revised **Chapter 204 on Case Closure** that provides specific and detailed guidance on how cases can be closed. Statewide site training has been performed.

We reviewed the first draft of the **Self-Employment Chapter** at the last meeting.

We will be establishing a workgroup on **Post-Secondary Education and Training**.

We are also scheduled to review the **Transportation Chapter**.

The Governor's Summit on Monday was very informative. One outcome was that we were going to continuing meeting on an ongoing basis.

Sherrie encouraged members to review the P & P Manual <https://vocrehab.vermont.gov/about-us/policy-and-procedure-manual> so you have an understanding on how VR handles things. If you have any concerns or questions, please let her know.

Performance Review Committee:

Marlena Hughes provided the update for the Performance Review Committee.

SRC Leadership discussed how we can increase participation of members at meetings.

Review of the State Plan occurred at today's meeting.

At the next meeting we will be looking at the Needs Assessment.

If you love data, Performance Review is the Committee to join!

Steering Committee:

Sarah Launderville welcomed Kate Larose as the new coordinator. Kate is really excited to be on board and feels like the SRC will be a very nice place of residence.

Sarah said that the Steering Committee has had discussion about the lack of participation on committees and how to make these meetings more accessible.

James also reminded members that if you are not participating in a paid role, connect with Kate to get the paperwork needed to request a stipend and mileage reimbursement. This information is also available on the SRC website <https://src.vermont.gov/who-we-are/member-reimbursement>

Cari suggested that members get a listing of people with contact information so individuals can reach out to others in the area to coordinate transportation.

Conclusions:

Thanks everyone.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Add a discussion item about inviting someone from the Agency of Education to speak about Dual Enrollment to Steering Committee's next meeting, SRC Coordinator, January 15, 2020.

7) Director's Report (Diane Dalmasse)

Discussion:

Diane reported the following:

Governor's Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities: A Success! The Summit occurred on Monday, December 2nd at the Doubletree in South Burlington. A decision was made to go forward even though the snowstorm in southern Vermont meant we lost the four southern teams. Notwithstanding, we had 100 or so people for the event in the morning. VTrans staff Tim Bradshaw and Ross MacDonald and VTrans consultant Steve Falbel did an outstanding job of presenting the state of public transit and the innovations and pilot projects that are being created. Following the presentations, the teams broke out for discussion and the identification of local priorities and a recommendation for the Governor. Governor Scott arrived in time to hear the reports from the teams. Everyone moved to the Emerald ballroom for lunch. Governor Scott introduced Travis Roy and he spoke to the group. Travis was incredibly inspirational in telling his story and motivating the attendees to look at their own challenges. Governor Scott was clearly moved by Travis' remarks as he thanked Travis and closed the event. We will be following up on the local initiatives and statewide recommendations. I want to give a big shout out to CO staff and regional managers for all the planning that goes into these events and their hard work the day of the event.

Sam praised Tim Bradshaw as he has never seen a state employee so passionate to help individuals.

Budget: We continue to look very good from a fiscal point of view. We received an unanticipated bonus from the Social Security Administration, \$187,000 that they had recouped in ticket payments and then changed their mind and gave back to us. We are holding our breath waiting for a decision on the Kessler Foundation Grant. Should know any day now if we were awarded \$500,000 over two years. We are focused on our list of one-time expenditures given our increased reallocation funds. Currently working on purchasing 12 iPads for assessment and remote interpreting. We are adding a

temporary VR counselor in Newport given the very high volume of applicants in that office.

Single State Audit and Case Review Process: It has been over a year since we implemented our case review process statewide. Supervisors are reviewing 5 cases per quarter for each VR counselor. CO staff are reviewing an additional sample including a fiscal review. The tool measures compliance and quality. It is right now being reviewed and improved. We had a Single State Audit in the last several months. A private auditing firm pulls a sample of expenditures and ensures we have followed our policies and procedures and make allowable expenditures. We had no findings!!! We attribute that largely to AWARE and our case review process. This means no audit next year!

AWARE: We were selected by Alliance Enterprises as one of five states for focus groups. Alliance ran four focus groups of different staff types to determine whether the end users' needs were being met and what improvements were necessary. CO staff organized and attended the groups which went extremely well. Staff felt they had been heard and that their needs would be considered as Alliance works to improve the system. Alice Porter and the AWARE team deserve much credit for Vermont being selected and the success of the groups.

Bill Sugarman said that Aware Feedback Sessions have been helpful. It makes for a lot more time on the computer, but it makes case management a lot easier and we would never be able to do the WIOA reporting without it

Youth in Transition: The Youth Advocacy Council began its second year with a meeting in November. Several new members and returning members met to determine their priority areas for the year: Housing, Special Education, Employment/Careers and Transportation. Tara Howe is very excited about the energy and commitment of the group for the

upcoming year. We are planning to host the second Youth Summit on May 21st at VTC and have been awarded a small grant to support the effort.

We are working with Market Decisions to create a youth survey. As a first step, Market Decisions staff will run four focus groups in January to determine how to construct the survey, what questions to ask and how to get the best response rate. We will then survey a representative sample of youth, families and school personnel. We think this is ground-breaking and perhaps we will seek to be published with the results. Most importantly, it will direct how we deliver services to youth and their families.

Sherrie said that very rarely do you see youth involved in the development of their IEP.

Martha said that when youth become adults and are required to take over their own IEP, they have had no training.

Diane said that she, John Spinney and Tara Howe met with Representative Alice Emmons who represents the Springfield area. Representative Emmons attended the Core Team Event and wants to be a champion on the creation of a universal release form so a freer discussion can occur around needs.

Sam said that having legislators attend these events is important and it is great to see what appears to be an influx of legislators doing just that!

Careers Initiative – Dashboard and Progressive Education:

Diane distributed a Statewide look at the Dashboard which is available online for those who were not in the meeting:

https://src.vermont.gov/sites/src/files/doc_library/Director%27s-Report-2019-12-2019_0.pdf.

Teaming: We're pretty much on target, and we've improved at least 5 percentage points in the mid-term (most recent three months) measure since April.

Career Focused Training: We're below target but making progress since April (improved 3 percentage points in the mid-term measure since then).

Higher-Wage Plan Goal: Not much movement here. The rate in April was 28% and it's still 28%. Plan goals shift more slowly, so this isn't surprising. But we did get up to 30% in late summer and then it drifted back down.

Assessment and Follow-up: These haven't yet been incorporated (that's my December goal).

We intend to have a strong focus in the next year on **Progressive Education** which is parallel to our Progressive Employment model and designed to overcome consumer's fears about education and training and meet them where they are in terms of auditing a class, meeting with an academic advisor, or enrolling in our College Steps lite at the state colleges. We intend to showcase successes at our VR VABIR All Staff Meeting in March.

New Staff Development and Training Coordinator: We have hired Heather Batalion into this staff development position. Heather comes to us from DVHA and we are excited to have her training and QA experience. I would have invited Heather to come and introduce herself, but she is on the road today – another time. One of her priorities is to create and implement an internship program so we can attract interns who are enrolled in a master's degree program in rehabilitation counseling.

Goals and Priorities: James has reviewed in detail the data on our Goals and Priorities. I simply want to underscore that the data is promising and very affirming of the Careers Initiative efforts

Cell Phone Pilot: We are planning to pilot the use of cell phones in our Barre Office. We would be giving up all our land lines except for the main line. We have decided that the ability to text is a critical form of communication with our customers. We are ordering the phones literally this morning. I will keep SRC members in the loop at we roll this out.

Diane added that DVR and Department of Labor met recently, and it was wonderfully productive.

Conclusions:

Thank you, Diane, for the update!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

8) VR Regional Manager Update (Bill Sugarman).

Discussion:

Bill Sugarman, Regional Manager - Barre and Morrisville, provided the following update:

Bill said to be brief Diane's report on Careers is exactly what his region is focusing on. We are seeing plenty of folks on a path with a loftier goal. Our focus on Careers has been on vocation, counseling and guidance and doing business outreach.

Progressive education is where the growth is. Bill believes they are clearly headed in the right direction. We do spend a lot more time in Aware. Fortunately, a lot of people email but its still a struggle as we are really busy.

9) Presentation of the State Plan and its Goals and Priorities (James Smith):

Discussion:

James proposes the following plan. Voc Rehab is required to submit a State Plan every two years and the core of the State Plan is our Goals and Priorities (G & P). It is one of the things that we are required to work on in collaboration with the SRC to develop. It is always been a difficult process because of all the data. What I will do is spend about 20 minutes going over our Goals and Priorities and then we will split up into smaller groups to review how VR has done in achieving these Goals

and Priorities. The group should also identify G & P that we may need to continue or bring forward and modify. One or more members of the small group should keep notes and email these Goals and Priorities to James. James will condense findings down to 10 Goals and Priorities. These will then be brought back to the full group in February.

Goal & Priority #1 (Detailed information about the Goals and Priorities are available on the SRC website

https://src.vermont.gov/sites/src/files/doc_library/Section-P-Progress-in-Achieving-State-Plan-Goals-and-Priorities-Update-2019-12-03.pdf)

We realized that WIOA Performance Measures were too lagging to direct counselor's work. Leading indicators were then developed. We do have some outcome data for Program Year 2018:

- We know the employment rate in the second quarter post closure was 49% (this uses State unemployment rates which leaves some data out). The 49% is an underestimate. We will be keeping a close eye on this.
- Median earnings in the second quarter post closure was \$3,516. Until we get some comparative data it is hard to determine if this is good or bad.
- Measurable skill gains rate was 54.9% compared to 37.8% in PY 2017. We believe the increase is a result of better reporting in Aware.

Goal & Priority #2

Program Year 2018 Update:

For cases closed successfully in Program Year 2018, 58% had wage rates at or above 110% of the minimum wage and 23% were earning 150% of the minimum wage (above \$16 per hour) or more.

As noted, DVR has established a performance dashboard to track leading and lagging indicators. The dashboard is visible to all staff and provides them with real time data. We determined it was important to track wages at closure within the dashboard. However, rather than having two measures, earnings at 110% and 150% of minimum wage, we determined it would be clearer to have a single measure earnings at 125% of minimum wage. Using this measure the data shows the following:

- Program Year 2017: 901 individuals were closed employed. The percentage earning 125% of minimum wage at closure was 33%.
- Program Year 2018: 877 individuals were closed employed. The percentage earning 125% of minimum wage at closure was 38%.

Goal and Priority #3

Program Year 2018 Update:

During Program Year 2018, 361 participants enrolled in some kind of training or post-secondary education beyond the high school level, ranging from basic skills preparation to graduate programs. Of the 244 enrolled in programs potentially leading to a credential, 48 participants completed a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized credential in PY 2018.

Goal & Priority #4

Program Year 2018 Update: During this period CWS had relationships with 2,418 discrete employers. The CWS Business Account Managers had 5,672 recording activities with those employers (introductory meetings, informational interviews and business tours). These activities generated 4,175 opportunities for DVR consumer. An opportunity might include:

- A job shadow or informational interview
- A training placement
- An OJT placement
- A competitive job opportunity

We believe the above data indicates that CWS continues to produce robust engagement with Vermont employers resulting in increased opportunities for DVR consumers.

Goal & Priority #5

Program Year 2018 Update: The DVR Consumer Experience Survey is conducted every three years to determine consumers' overall satisfaction with the program. The survey is conducted by a third-party research firm, Market Decisions Research (MDR), who have an extensive background in working with other VR agencies nationwide. Seven hundred consumers were contacted to provide information for our 2019 survey.

The results from our 2019 survey were outstanding. Market Decisions Research found that of the consumers surveyed:

- 81% reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with DVR.
- 96% said that they would recommend that their friends or family members seek help from DVR.
- 92% of consumers reporting that they are satisfied with their experience working with DVR staff and DVR Counselors; this statistic has risen two percent from our previous survey in 2016.

Goal & Priority #6

DVR implemented a comprehensive case review process starting on October 1, 2018. The review process is built into the AWARE case management system which tracks completion. The case review system tracks both compliance and quality issues. DVR required that supervisors review 5 cases per quarter for full time counselors.

For Program Year 2018, DVR completed 100% of the required case reviews. DVR staff and managers find the system easy to use and very helpful in supporting good case work. This also resolved a prior year audit finding.

Goal & Priority #7

Program Year 2018 Update: The out posting of 14 DVR transition counselors to work exclusively with high schools has proven very effective in securing access for students.

- In Program Year 2018 all 54 Vermont Supervisory Unions have referred students to DVR for services.
- In Program Year 2018, DVR served 2,280 high school students statewide, approximately 42% of the eligible student population.

DVR has clearly done an effective job ensuring access to Pre-ETS services for all potentially eligible high school students.

Goal & Priority #8

Program Year 2018 Update:

- The Division of Developmental Services (DDS) has stepped in to provide additional funding for supported employment to back fill the loss of DVR resources. The new funding has sustained

capacity for job placement and job development that would have otherwise been lost.

- DVR generated \$1,720,534 in Ticket to Work during Program Year 2018. The lower than expected revenue was primarily the function of the Social Security Administration suspending payments for two quarters for administrative reasons. Since then, Ticket to Work revenue is on track to meet the 2019 program year goal.

- DVR has formed a Development Team to meet regularly to explore funding opportunities. DVR applied for two grant applications during Program Year 2018.

- DVR applied to SAMSHA for a supported employment program designed to serve adults with psychiatric disabilities in the outpatient program. Unfortunately, DVR's application was not selected for funding

- DVR applied to the Kessler Foundation to support a pilot called Better Option than Social Security (BOSS). BOSS will provide innovative strategies to assist SSI/SSDI beneficiaries work at substantial levels. DVR is currently one of six finalists for this funding.

Goal & Priority #9

Program Year 2018 Update: Of the 5496 participants with Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) receiving services in Program Year 2018, 58% were under the age of 35 when they began IPE services; 1506 (27%) were between the ages of 35 and 55 and 807 (15%) were 55 and older.

The wage rate and hours worked per week at closure were greater for older participants. Median number of hours worked per week were 32, compared to 25 for those under age 35. Median hourly wage at rehabilitation was \$15 for those over age 55 and \$12.50 for those age 35 to 55, compared to a median of \$11.50 for the younger population.

A higher proportion also exited successfully: 48% and 42% respectively, compared to 32% for those under age 35. However, it is more difficult to maintain contact with younger participants after job placement through the 90 days of stable employment required to claim a successful outcome. Evidence from PY 2017 exits shows a similar rate of successful VR case closure for these age groups (51% for age 55 and up, 40% for

those aged 35 to 55, and 31% for under age 35). However, the employment rate in the second quarter post-exit for these groups was 46% for both of the older age groups, compared to 52% for those under age 35. In other words, the higher employment rate for older adults compared to youth may have more to do with stability and maturity than with employment outcomes.

Goal & Priority #10

DVR has had little success to date in expanding supported employment for these populations. The primary issue is that there is no infrastructure necessary for the ongoing support services required for populations that do not meet eligibility for mental health and developmental services.

The SAMSHA grant application referenced under Goal and Priority #8 was intended specifically to provide supported employment for individuals with psychiatric disabilities who did not meet Department of Mental Health eligibility for supported employment. Unfortunately, that application was not selected for funding.

DVR is exploring using unobligated Title VI-B funds to expand supported employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities who do not meeting the developmental services system eligibility criteria or system or care priorities. We are looking at three communities in the State where the need is most pressing.

Goal & Priority #11

Program Year 2018 Update: DVR is waiting on latest data from the Program Evaluation Unit.

To align the JOBS Programs to the wider DVR Careers Initiative, we have spent the last year working with the agencies to establish new performance measures. We felt it was very important that JOBS youth should be included in the Careers Initiative and that our contracted performance measures should reflect that intent. The JOBS program staff and managers were closely involved in the development of the new measures. There is strong buy in and support. The new measures are laid out below:

- Total Number of Youth Served with DVR IPE

- Total Number of Youth Who received at least One Career Assessment During the Fiscal Year (50% of Total Served)
- Total Number of Youth Enrolled in Career Focused Training or Supported Education During the Fiscal Year (30% of Total Served)
- Total Number of Youth Placed in Competitive Employment for Ten Working Days (70% of Total Served)
- Total Number of Youth with a Higher-Wage IPE Goal during the Federal Fiscal Year (30% of Total Served)
- Total Number of Consumers employed at or above 125% of Vermont minimum wage at any time during the Federal Fiscal Year (30% of Total Served)

Conclusions:

None.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

10) Breakout into Small Groups to discuss the State Plan's Goals and Priorities.

Discussion:

Attendees broke out into small groups.

Conclusions:

None.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

11) Small Groups Report Back and Vote on State Plan.

Discussion:

Comments from all groups will be sent to James via email.

Conclusions:

James will condense Goals and Priorities down to the top 10 and report back to the Full SRC on February 6, 2019.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Group notetakers email James with their group Goals and Priorities, Committee Members, ASAP
- Compile findings down to 10; James Smith, February 6, 2019

12) Other Business (Sarah Launderville)

Discussion:

Sarah provided a lovely gift to Debra thanking her on behalf of the SRC for the work she has performed. Debra stated that working with the SRC has been truly enjoyable and an extremely rewarding experience and hopes our paths will cross again in the future!

Sam reminded everyone that the State independent Living Council (SILC) is a sister organization of the SRC and that **SILC will be holding a networking meeting on February 4th 7:30-9:30 am. For more information call 802-233-4908.**

Conclusions:

None.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

13) Round Table (Sarah Launderville)**Discussion:**

Good meeting; great group it is great having a manager or two in these meetings; great meeting; better understanding of the State Plan; looking forward to working on VDOL's plan; learn so much at every meeting; great to hear different perspectives; wonderful to collaborate; a lot of acronyms to work through; get more involved in the subcommittees; kudos to CWS – a hire was made through BGS!; it was a good meeting; every meeting I get a better understanding about the SRC; feel badly the process was truncated but really do need the support of the SRC on the State Plan; always a great meeting; enjoy coming; enjoy the work that I do as a CAP rep; appreciate the different perspectives that are shared; the good humor; enjoy this group; starting to feel a good grasp of the big picture of where we have been and where we are going; if I ever looked for another job, this is the first place I would go; it's heartwarming and impressive to see the knowledge in the room; this is my first meeting; really enjoyed the time and hope to be helpful to the process; impressed and thankful for the outside perspective and the appreciation of what we do in VR is very helpful and useful; certainly going to miss Debra; welcome to Kate;

impressed with the perspectives Kate brings to the position; I'm so glad that I live in Vermont and that State staff use resources to help me; have been around State government a lot, the openness and commitment to quality and improving lives is super exciting; the chairperson moves things along with warmth and humor; apologize the meeting went long; it feeds my soul!

Conclusions:

None.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

14) Adjournment (Sarah Launderville)

Discussion:

Sarah asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Sherrie moved to adjourn, and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 13-0-0.

Conclusions:

Motion to adjourn approved at 3:36 p.m.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, Debra Kobus, 12/10/19.
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, Debra Kobus, 12/10/19.
- Minutes approved, Committee, 2/6/2020.
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, SRC Coordinator, 2/11/2020.

Draft Minutes

ADVOCACY, OUTREACH, AND EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Thursday, January 9, 2020, 12:15 PM – 1:45 PM

Waterbury Vocational Rehabilitation, Room Cherry A

HC 2 South 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671

Meeting called by:

Sam Liss, Chair, called the meeting to order at 12:22 p.m.

Members Present:

- Calla Papademas
- Marlena Hughes
- Sarah Launderville
- Sam Liss
- Brian Smith
- Bill Meirs (via Skype)
- Martha Frank (via Skype)

Members Absent:

- Sherrie Brunelle
- Olivia Smith-Hammond
- Diane Dalmasse (ex-officio, non-voting)
- Cari Kelley

SRC Liaison:

- James Smith

SRC Coordinator:

- Kate Larose

Interpreters:

None

Speakers or Presenters:

None

Guests:

None

1) Introductions (Sam Liss)

Discussion:

Those in attendance went around the table and introduced themselves. Sam shared appreciation for Tim Bradshaw with the SILC transportation committee as he was able to help members arrange transportation for today's meeting.

Conclusions:

Thanks to everyone!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

2) Approval of Agenda (Sam Liss)

Discussion:

Sam asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. There were none. Brian moved to accept the agenda and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 6-0-0

Conclusions:

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

3) Open for Public Comment (Sam Liss)

Discussion:

No one from the public was present.

Conclusions:

n/a

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

4) Approval of Minutes for November 7, 2019 (Sam Liss)

Discussion:

Sam asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the November 7, 2019 minutes. There were none. Brian moved to accept the minutes and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 6-0-0

Conclusions:

November 7, 2019 minutes were approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Upload approved minutes to the SRC website. **Kate Larose**, 1/14/2020.

5) Vote: Chair (Sarah Lauderville)

Discussion:

Sam asked Sarah to assume this agenda item. Sarah asked for nominations or

self-nominations from the floor. Sam Liss was nominated by Calla. Brian seconded. Sarah twice more requested nominations. Hearing none, and an Australian ballot not being necessary, voting was made by a voice vote. Sarah asked all those in favor of electing Sam Liss as Chair of the AOE Committee to say Aye. All those not in favor to say No. Hearing none, Sam Liss was elected as Chair. Vote unanimous 6-0-0

Conclusions:

Sam Liss was elected chair

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

6) Legislative Updates (Group)

Discussion:

Sam provided an update on the following:

Federal Legislation

A. MFP Reauthorization/Extension Act (HR 3253)

Money Follows the Person Bill (Medicaid)

May 2, 2019 Update: More good news! Short-Term Money Follows the Person Extension signed into law through the end of this year! Now we need to wait (and advocate for) a long-term extension.

September 5, 2019 Update: There are several bills before congress that would allow for long term extensions of the MFP Medicaid Demonstration Act which provides federal money for people transitioning out of nursing homes and provides for spousal asset protection. Instead, Congress has passed short term extensions.

November 7, 2019 Update: No movement.

January 9, 2020 Update: In the 2020 budget MFP was reauthorized through May 22, 2020 and it has been paired with the home and community based spousal impoverishment protections. Additional language may be added to include Centers for Independent Living in this bill. Sarah added that in Vermont we are mandated to provide care to people transitioning out of nursing homes. Appreciation was shared for Patrick Flood, Dave Yacovone and others who helped to change the focus in Vermont.

B. National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) Proposals (S. 3010; HR 5429)

- 1.) **Eliminate work disincentives for Childhood Disability Beneficiaries** (CDBs), and
- 2.) **Eliminating the termination age of 65 for Medicaid Buy Ins** (MBIs) as authorized in the Ticket to Work Program of 1999. Senator's

Portman and Casey may sponsor the bill appending it to an appropriations bill or the Empower Care Act. It is moving slowly.

November 7, 2019 Update: There is bipartisan support of these two policy proposals, and it is hoped that these get appended to the next continuing resolution. Republican Mary Cantwell of the State of Washington would most likely support this bill but does not want to be a co-sponsor. Republican Representative Don Young from Alaska may be interested in being a co-sponsor. Both policy proposals would slightly change the Social Security Act. There has been requests to reopen the regulations and NCIL has written opposing reopening them.

January 9, 2020 Update: Sam shared that it is a moot point in Vermont but there is incongruity in other states. The CBD portion of the bill was dropped and NCIL is unclear as to why. Congressman Welch has an intent to introduce both bills and is still waiting for a co-sponsor. Social Security's Chief Actuary Steven Goss conducted a cost analysis and the Congressional Budget Office recently came back with a figure of a cost of \$25 million per year. The field feels that this amount is misleading as it does not acknowledge that many will age into Medicare, which will have a cost associated with it. Field staff are putting in employment information for consumers who are over the age of 65 and this is not taken into account in the analysis. Sen. Portman has found the paid-fors and is thinking of inserting into a health care bill in May. Sens. Portman and Casey indicated that they would tack it into budget and drug pricing bills, but neither were able to happen.

C. [The ABLE Age Adjustment Act](#) (S.651; HR 1814)

Was introduced with strong bipartisan support. This bill increases from 26 to 46 the age threshold for tax-favored ABLE (Achieving a Better Life Experience) accounts. It requires large offsets so as not to increase taxes.

May 2, 2019 Update: The positive movement is the National Down Syndrome Society now supports it. The National Association of State Treasurers supports it as it is the right thing to do.

September 5, 2019 Update: It is gaining momentum in Congress on a bipartisan basis. Anyone who is eligible and takes out an Able Account is not subject to SSI limitation up until \$100,000 and can maintain their Medicaid no matter what they have in their account. An ABLE account is a tax-advantaged savings account available to individuals diagnosed with significant disabilities before age 26. Previously, only those who incurred disability prior to the age of 26 were eligible. This act raises eligibility up to age 46. Beth Pierce, Vermont State Treasurer and a member of the National Association of State Treasurers, is in support of this change. It would benefit our veterans. It is still in committee.

November 7, 2019 Update: Five years ago, President Obama signed into the law the original Able Act. It allowed for tax free Able Accounts to be set up

for people with disabilities, but their disabilities had to set in before the age of 26, which is the key. Currently it is gaining momentum. One is the State Treasurers (including Beth Pierce of Vermont) are finding that it was greatly overestimated the number of people that would sign up. Eight million people were originally estimated as being eligible. Only 50,000 have taken advantage of it. Because of this shortage, people are not paying the fees into the program and without this the entire program may not be sustainable. The \$2 billion scored for the program will not come close to that with the 26-year eligibility cap. If the age was raised to 46, it is estimated that 6 million for a total of 14 million would be eligible. It is hoped that in the next continuing resolution that expires November 30, 2019 that this bill would be inserted into it. November 14th is the next call in day! Get the word out to have as many people as you know call their Congressional representative to support this bill. Senator Casey is hosting a reception to gain publicity in order to pass this bill on November 19th at the Capitol Building in Washington, DC in the Russell Building in Room 385.

January 9, 2020 Update: Sen. Casey's office is attempting to tack this on to the healthcare vehicle in May and he has pay-fors established. The feeling in NCIL is that it is stalled in the House. There are 18 co-sponsors in the Senate and only 2 of them are Republican. Advocates are currently attempting to garner support from constituents in Iowa, requesting that they call in to Grassley's about this and previous bills. The World Institute on Disability has a new executive director named Marcie Roth. Under her leadership they are looking to network with other organizations like NCIL particularly on this act, including writing a letter of support.

D. Other

- **Social Security Administration Rulemaking**

Sam shared information about the technical rule being proposed by SSA which will result in more frequent Continuing Disability Reviews (CDR). It has yet to be clearly defined, but the current thinking is that the Trump administration believes it will save money with more CDRs given the increases in better medical and assistance technology in recent years available to support people in rehabilitative employment and recovery. In plain language, this means that they anticipate a lot of people will be kicked off benefits, and it is anticipated that 4.4 million people will be affected. In theory or in rule Congress can ask for disability reviews more often, but SSA has never had the staff capacity. However, 11,000 new people were just hired which implies that there will be an eventual cost savings through reduction in benefits. A fourth CDR category of "likely to recover" is being proposed for people with severe neurological disabilities who might be able to return to work with new assistive technology, but the delineation of how this will differ from the already established categories of "not expected to recover", "expected to recover", and "possible to recover" is unclear. The fear in the field is that people who respond to the CDR as not working will trigger SSA to ask why not and then kick them off. Or if they say that they are working and still needing support SSA will deny benefits moving forward. Brian asked if other

departments should come up with a response in preparation for requests from the field. It was shared that NCIL and the Consortium of Citizens with Disabilities (CCD) will be suggesting best practices in responding to the new rule.

Sam shared that there is some good news to report: SSA field offices will once again be open all day on Wednesdays, and they recently made the formal determination to not use applicants' social media content in disability determination.

- **Federal Budget:** Centers for Independent Living were level-funded which isn't great but is better than the administration's proposed cuts. There is also an increase under Title I for Vocational Rehabilitation, which is believed to be reflective of the cost of living increase that was written into statute.
- **Other Federal Legislation:** No movement was reported on the other bills listed at the bottom of the minutes.

State Legislation

A. \$15 Per Hour Minimum Wage/Family Leave Bills

May 2, 2019 Update: The House General, Housing and Military Affairs Committee approved legislation Friday to increase Vermont's minimum wage to \$15 by 2024. The bill has already passed the Senate. The House committee didn't make many changes to the bill, but this week's deliberations were occasionally tense as lawmakers argued for protections to prevent the bill from hurting the business community. The bill, S.23, would raise the minimum wage to \$11.50 in 2020, \$12.25 in 2021, \$13.10 in 2022 and \$14.05 in 2023. The measure seemed to hit a speed bump Tuesday after an analysis found a bill amendment would have forced the state to increase Medicaid spending by as much as \$27.9 million over the next five years.

November 7, 2019 Update: Democrats are really trying to push this bill but there is concern that it will cut programs in other places and hurt those individuals with disabilities.

January 9, 2020 Update: There is currently agreement from the House Speaker and Senate President Pro Tempore that they will take up and vote on these bills this session, with a desire to move them through early in the session. The specifics are unclear at the moment and may include raising the wage to a dollar figure less than \$15 an hour or increasing the time frame for getting to \$15 an hour (i.e., \$12 an hour in three years and then reevaluate). Sarah shared that VCIL and Vermont Coalition for Disability Rights are both Raise the Wage members. Comments were submitted to the Raise the Wage Coalition and, as a result, the Coalition included language around not harming services, as well as benefits cliffs information. The Coalition has guiding principles that specifically named women and labor rights but not

disability rights. As a result of the submitted comments, they have now included disability rights in the guiding principles and there is language that people with disabilities won't be harmed. However, this cannot be mandated without additional funding being allocated to services. It is unclear if the Governor will compromise and sign bills if passed, or veto.

B. Attendant Services Program (ASP)

Advocates are working through appropriations to unfreeze the Attendant Services Program (ASP). The Attendant Services Program has been frozen for more than four years. Advocates successfully advocated to have it return but with a smaller budget. The budget surplus was the rationale for the legislative push. Currently, and unique to Vermont, there is no resource/income limit for program; but there may be need to compromise to pass the bill. The program allows more people with disabilities (PWD) to gain and maintain employment. This program is for middle class individuals who would have to impoverish themselves in order to get services. Commissioner Monica Hutt agrees with the inequity but is concerned that when the legislature hears that people have funds in the bank, we may need to compromise on the resource/income limit. Bill Botzow suggested that the advocates work on the financial threshold not with the legislators in the best interest of individuals with disabilities. This will be VCIL's main legislative platform.

May 5 Update: At the last meeting, Sam reported that we were hoping to unfreeze the program to new applicants. Unfortunately, there is currently a gap in the State's budget. The bill is in Senate Appropriations and it is not considered a priority. Many individuals testified. It doesn't look good for the program to be unfrozen this session. Currently, no one can even apply so there is no wait list. The main advantage of the program is that those that are not eligible for Medicaid can receive their personal attendant care services but can also direct their care without impoverishing themselves.

September 5 Update: Unfreezing the ASP Program (General Funded PDAP) didn't get anywhere last legislative session. It has been suggested that we should at least implement a waiting list as this wouldn't cost anything. In addition, you can gauge the interest in the program. If we can't get it passed any other way, perhaps having a high-income limitation.

November 7, 2019 Update: No movement.

January 9, 2020 Update: Sarah reported that VCIL has been working on the VCDR platform which will soon be available on their website. Legislators have requested a disability package that prioritizes a handful of items that advocates will push for, but it was decided to not do it this session and instead focus on planning for the next biennium. For example, this might include platform items such as increased funding for the Vermont Association for the Blind and Visually Impaired and the Attendant Services Program. The need for ASP exists. With more funding comes more outreach and more applications which result in a waiting list. The waiting list demonstrates need

to the legislature, but Sarah noted that she is skeptical that the full need is being shown as people are being put in Medicaid ASP instead and continuing conversations are being held about that. Sarah also shared that VCIL and VCDR are not in favor of moving towards an asset limit, as the goal is for people to have the opportunity to build more assets. Brian asked how return on investment can be demonstrated and Sarah shared that— because many people in the program have already aged out of working age and because the program was frozen a few years ago— the numbers in the program remain small, making return on investment harder to calculate.

C. Other:

- **An act relating to health insurance coverage for hearing aids** (H. 348, S. 137)

There is momentum in these bills on both the house and senate sides given that the states of Maine and New Hampshire recently passed similar laws. Group members acknowledge that they would like to see similar legislation in the future for dentures, especially given that lack of dentures present barriers to people seeking employment.

- **Brattleboro Retreat**

The group discussed the recent situation with the Brattleboro Retreat and their need for additional funding to avoid potential closure. They made a \$2 million request which was recently denied by AHS Secretary Smith. It was acknowledged that being a for-profit facility complicates requests for state funding, and that they likely have too many beds to be able to be run by the state given the stipulations around institutions.

Conclusions:

There is much legislation moving forward and it is important for members of this committee to continue to stay informed. Please see above

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

See above

7) Recent Event Report Out (Group)

Discussion:

A. December 2, 2019 Governor's Summit on the Employment of People with Disabilities (aka Disabilities Transportation Summit)

May 2, 2019 Update: It will be held at the DoubleTree Inn (formerly the Sheraton in So. Burlington). The Governor has approved the summit. The morning will be on transportation barriers as related to employment. Providers will be there. The State Independent Living Council (SILC) wants to make sure that not only providers are there but people with disabilities that are experiencing transportation barriers can attend too. SILC wants to make sure that transportation is provided if needed and will provide some funding. The Vermont Department of Transportation will contribute what they can. There will be a luncheon open to the public. The keynote speaker will be in the afternoon. We are hoping to get former State Senator Ted

Kennedy Jr. to be the speaker. We are looking for business sponsors to offset some of the costs.

September 5 Update: State Senator Ted Kennedy Jr. declined to be the keynote. Martha will forward the name of several people to Sam that she thinks might be good.

November 7, 2019 Update: The Governor has committed to attending so we are finalizing the agenda. Travis Roy is the Keynote Speaker. Martha asked Diane if there has been consideration about reaching out to the Youth Advocacy Council and include them? Diane said that may be a great time to include them is during the facilitated conversation part of the agenda. SILC is contributing \$5,000 towards the conference.

January 9, 2020 Update: There were some good reports from regions and districts shared at the event. VTrans is about to release their five-year plan and several transportation improvements are anticipated as a result of the input received at the summit. There is still a long way to go on improving transportation options and resources continue to be limited, but progress is being made including micro transit pilot programming. The summit for the southern part of Vermont has yet to take place.

B. December 20, 2019 Vermont Coalition of Disability Rights (VCDR) Board of Governor's Meeting

This event was held and Sarah reported that upcoming regular VCDR meetings are scheduled throughout the year and people are always welcome to attend. These meetings typically start with planning for upcoming events and then transition into policy planning discussion. There are also occasionally guest presentations. For example, the Executive Director of the Human Rights Commission will be presenting at a meeting later this month about workplace sexual harassment.

Conclusions:

See above.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- **Sarah Launderville** will email Calla Papademas with information about upcoming meetings she might be interested in attending
- Sarah Launderville shared that VCDR is currently recruiting for Steering Committee members and a secretary. **Interested parties** should contact her for more information about getting involved

8) Calendar of Upcoming Events (Group)

Discussion:

Upcoming Events

- A. [VFN's 2020 Annual Conference](#) (March and April dates)

VFN is hosting four conferences in four locations in the state with one presenter. Sara Forward is performing the presentation. "Power of Play: Opening Doors in a Small Town" is the name of her presentation. The intent is to reach more families of children with disabilities or special health needs and the professionals who support them, especially those who may have never had an opportunity to attend in the past.

January 9, 2020 Update: The dates have changed. See below.

- Saturday, March 21, 2020 from 10 am – 2 pm at a location to be determined in Springfield, VT
- Tuesday, March 31, 2020 from 4 pm – 8 pm at the Eastside Restaurant in Newport, VT
- Thursday, April 2, 2020 from 8:30 am – 1 pm at the Delta Hotel (formerly Trader Duke's) in South Burlington, VT
- Saturday, April 4, 2020 (time/location to be determined) in Burlington, VT. The focus audience will be parents from New American communities. As with all conference dates, everyone is welcome to participate!

B. April 2, 2020 Card Room Event (Statehouse)

November 7, 2019 Update: An agenda will be formed as we move closer to the event.

January 9, 2020 Update: This event will run in tandem with an onsite Youth Advocacy Council meeting and it is the hope that there will be Youth Advocacy Council members present at the card room event.

C. SILC Olmstead Summit (tentatively scheduled May 2020)

The State Independent Living Council (SILC) hasn't had this event for three years. We were asked by the Vermont Affordable Housing Coalition and Housing Conservation Board to present before the Olmstead Meeting.

September 5 Update: This is the 20th anniversary of the SCOTUS Olmstead decision that forced the integration mandate in 1990. The Vermont Olmstead Plan is gathering dust with legislators never hearing of it. We are looking to find out what has been done to date to fulfill the Olmstead requirements and what needs to be done going forward.

November 7, 2019 Update: There has been much interest and more information will be available as the date approaches.

January 9, 2020 Update: Much progress has been made in the planning. There are new partners aboard and it will most likely be held at Capital Plaza. The planning team is currently looking for sponsors to help cover the cost of the event.

D. [Disability Awareness Day](#) (March 12th – Statehouse)

Sarah reported that the budget for a keynote speaker was reduced. Instead, they are planning to host a panel of legislators who have disabilities. The planning group is excited about highlighting people with disabilities who are in elected office and leadership positions.

E. SILC Networking Breakfast (February 4th, Statehouse Cafeteria)

Sam shared that this will take place from 7:30am-9:30am. It is not just for SILC members as all are welcome to attend. As the SRC and SILC are mandated to work together, this would be a perfect vehicle for SRC members to take part in the networking with legislators and our advocacy friends. If you can be there, please be there.

F. January 22nd Deborah Lisi-Baker Awards

Sarah shared that the Vermont Center for Independent Living will be hosting this awards ceremony at the VCIL office in Montpelier from 10:30am-12:00pm. The Youth Advocacy Council will be among the group of award winners this year and all are invited to attend. To RSVP, email or call Stefani at (802) 224-1820 or smonte@vcil.org

Conclusions:

See above for events to attend and/or to play a role in helping to plan.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

See above.

9) Other Business (Group)

Discussion:

A. Introduction to February Presentations

Martha reminded the group that at the October retreat the AOE committee prioritized dual enrollment as a topic to learn more about. As a result, Jess DeCarolis from the Vermont Agency of Education will be attending the full council meeting to give a presentation. This is of particular importance as the AOE committee determined that dual enrollment numbers for students with disabilities are low and it is important for dual enrollment to be more available to students with disabilities. Martha also shared that the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) high school data will be released next week, and that the middle school data will be released in six to eight weeks

Sam shared that Tom Hamilton, Executive Director of the State Independent Living Council (SILC), will also be presenting at the February meeting about why the SRC and SILC should be working closely together.

Conclusions:

See above

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

10) Adjournment (Sam Liss)**Discussion:**

Sam requested a consensus vote to adjourn, citing the time. All approved.
Vote unanimous 5-0-0

Conclusions:

The meeting was adjourned at 1:47pm

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 1/13/2020
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, **Kate Larose**, 1/13/2020
- Minutes approved, **Committee**, 3/5/2020
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, **Kate Larose**, 3/9/2020

Legislation with No Movement to Report at This Time

- [Stop the Wait Act](#) (S.2496; H.R.4386)
This bill would eliminate the five-month waiting period plus eliminate the general two-year waiting period for Medicare after determination of SSDI. This bill is important because when people begin receiving the appropriate healthcare the sooner they are able to get back to work.
- [Capability Act](#) (H.R. 3070)
Representatives Seth Moulton (D-MA) and Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA) introduced on June 4th, 2019 an amendment to the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in order to establish a demonstration program to assist transition-aged youth with covered disabilities in obtaining customized, competitive integrated employment. This Act may be cited as the "Customized Approaches to Providing and Building Independent Lives of Inclusion for Transition-aged Youth Act of 2019" or the "CAPABILITY Act of 2019". The bill creates six competitive grants for states that would span four years. The states that earn the grants would use them on pre-employment transition services that support Americans with autism spectrum disorder or intellectual and developmental disabilities that comply with requirements applicable to competitive, integrated employment.

On June 3, 2019 the bill was referred to the House Committee on Education and Labor. The details will be in the regulations.

November 7, 2019 Update: No movement.

January 9, 2020 Update: No movement.

- **Disability Employment Incentive Act** (S.255)

A bill to amend the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 to include individuals receiving Social Security Disability Insurance benefits under the work opportunity credit, increase the work opportunity credit for vocational rehabilitation referrals, qualified SSI recipients, and qualified SSDI recipients, expand the disabled access credit, and enhance the deduction for expenditures to remove architectural and transportation barriers in the handicapped and elderly.

On January 29, 2019, the bill was reintroduced. The bill text had not changed from last year. It will expand three existing tax credits to support employers who hire individuals with disabilities and make workplaces more accessible to those employees.

September 5, 2019 Update: There is bipartisan support and is just sitting in committee. 1) It would double the opportunity tax credit from \$15K to \$30K 2) employers could include those on SSDI and SSI and 3) extends credits to employers who eliminate transportation and physical barriers to employment for people with disabilities and seniors.

November 7, 2019 Update: No movement.

January 9, 2020 Update: No movement.

- **Long Term Unemployment Elimination Act** (S.1920)

On June 20, 2019, U.S. Senators Chris Van Hollen (D-Md.) and Ron Wyden (R-Ore.) introduced the Long-Term Unemployment Elimination Act, which would create an innovative federal program that would generate real job opportunities for people who have been unemployed for six months or more. It would provide another funding stream through the Workforce Investment Board and encourage them to utilize their influence to reduce the possibility that PWD and others with difficulty obtaining employment to have extended periods of unemployment. This bill is in the first stage of the legislative process. It will typically be considered by committee next before it is possibly sent on to the House or Senate as a whole. It is supported by a wide range of groups.

November 7, 2019 Update: No movement.

January 9, 2020 Update: No movement.

- **Empower Care Act** (Money Follows the Person Reauthorization) (H.R.5306; S.2227)

Would reauthorize, and appropriate money follows the person Medicaid demonstration project that shifts money from institution care to home and community-based care. This is important because more people with disabilities could live at their homes and be able to work. The president signed three months of appropriation.

May 2, 2019 Update: We are still waiting for longer term legislation.

September 5, 2019 Update: This bill is still sitting in Congress.

November 7, 2019 Update: No movement.

January 9, 2020 Update: No movement.

- U.S. Representatives Brett Guthrie (R-KY) and Debbie Dingell (D-MI) introduced a **companion bill** in the U.S. House of Representatives which is **identical to the Senate bill S. 2227, the EMPOWER Act**. This bill would renew the Money Follows the Person (MFP) program as well as improve it.

September 5 Update: This bill is still sitting in Congress.

November 7, 2019 Update: No movement.

January 9, 2020 Update: No movement.

- **[Transformation to Competitive Employment Act](#)** (S.260; HR 873) Provides states, services providers, subminimum wage certificate holders, and other agencies with the resources they need to create competitive integrated employment service delivery models and the inclusive wraparound services that some individuals with disabilities will need. The clauses are also in the **[Raise the Wage Act](#)** (Senator Sanders)

September 5 Update: This is a continuation of several bills presented over several congresses. For Vermont, however, it is a moot point as Vermont already dispensed with sheltered workshops with Competitive Integrated Employment being the focus. It would allow for appropriations for the sheltered workshops to transition to integrated sustainable employment. Senator Grassley promised that when Congress reconvenes to move NCLS remove employment disincentives and Sam interpreted that he would put it in an appropriations bill.

November 7, 2019 Update: This bill would phase out sheltered workshops for people with disabilities and also has funding to transition to competitive integrated employment. This bill has bipartisan backing.

January 9, 2020 Update: No movement.

- **The Social Security 2100 Act (H.R. 860)**, Introduced in the House on 1/30/2019, this bill increases various Old Age, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (OASDI) benefits and related taxes.
 - The bill increases the primary insurance amount (e.g., the amount a Social Security beneficiary receives if the beneficiary begins receiving benefits at normal retirement age) by increasing the percentage of the beneficiary's average indexed monthly earnings used to calculate the amount.

- The Bureau of Labor Statistics shall publish a Consumer Price Index for Elderly Consumers, which the Social Security Administration (SSA) shall use to calculate cost-of-living adjustments to benefits. Currently, the SSA uses a price index for wage earners to make such adjustments.
- The bill increases the minimum benefit amount for individuals who worked for more than 10 years by creating an alternative minimum benefit. A qualifying beneficiary shall receive that alternative minimum if it is higher than the standard calculated benefit amount.
- The bill increases the income threshold that a beneficiary must reach before Social Security benefits are taxable.
- Increased benefits from this bill shall not count as income when determining an individual's eligibility or benefit amounts for (1) Medicaid, (2) the Children's Health Insurance Program, or (3) the Supplemental Security Income program.
- Income above \$400,000 shall be included when calculating Social Security benefits and taxes. The bill also increases rates for the payroll and self-employment taxes that fund OASDI.
- The bill establishes the Social Security Trust Fund, which replaces the Federal Old-Age and Survivors Insurance Trust Fund and the Federal Disability Insurance Trust Fund.

September 5 Update: House Majority Leader Pelosi indicated that this would come to a House vote prior to the end of the year. This would extend the base of social security benefits for everyone. PWD tend to work less months than people without disabilities. The bill raises the social security benefit based upon the number of months worked. The National Council on Independent Living (NCIL) expressed the concern that it might increase the disparity but were reassured that this would not happen.

November 7, 2019 Update: No movement.

January 9, 2020 Update: No movement.

Performance Review Committee Meeting

Thursday, December 5, 2019 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

Waterbury State Office Complex

ASH Conference Room, HC 2 South, 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671

Meeting called by:

Marlena Hughes, Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:06 a.m.

Members Present:

- 1) Sherrie Brunelle
- 2) Nick Caputo
- 3) Marlena Hughes
- 4) Rose Lucenti

Members Absent:

- 1) Brian Smith
- 2) Robin Ingenthron
- 3) Bill Meirs
- 4) Deb Tucker Boyce

SRC Liaison:

James Smith

SRC Coordinator:

Debra Kobus (outgoing)

Kate Larose (incoming)

Interpreters:

None.

Speakers or Presenters:

None.

Guests:

None.

1) Introductions (Marlena Hughes)

Discussion:

Those in attendance went around the table and introduced themselves.

Conclusions:

Thanks to everyone!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

2) Approval of Agenda (Marlena Hughes)

Discussion:

Marlena asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. There were none. Sherrie moved to accept the agenda and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 4-0-0.

Conclusions:

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

3) Open for Public Comment (Marlena Hughes)

Discussion:

None

Conclusions:

n/a

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

n/a

4) Approval of Minutes for October 17, 2019 (Marlena Hughes)

Discussion:

Marlena asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the October 17, 2019 minutes. Nick moved to approve the minutes and it was seconded. No discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 4-0-0.

Conclusions:

October 17, 2019 Full SRC Minutes were approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Upload approved minutes to SRC website. Debra Kobus, December 12, 2019.

5) State Plan (James Smith).

Discussion:

James explained that WIOA requires Voc Rehab to do a State Plan. The State Plan can be viewed as our contract with the Federal

Government which is one part of the overarching State Plan. The SRC is supposed to assist Voc Rehab in developing the State Plan. The State Plan is on a two-year cycle.

The State Plan Goals and Priorities were developed by Voc Rehab and the SRC in the early spring of 2018 for the State Plan for Program Years 2018 and 2019. The Program Years for the VR program are a little confusing because they do not follow the state or federal fiscal years. The program years are as follows:

Program Year 2018: July 1, 2018 to June 30, 2019

Program Year 2019: July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020

Because we are still in Program Year 2019, we can only provide an update on Program Year 2018.

Based on the DVR/SRC Needs Assessment completed in December of 2017, DVR and the SRC have established targets for Program Year 2018 for DVR's Strategic Plan goals. DVR and the SRC have also established goals and priorities in response to the new mandates and requirements included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). In particular, DVR and the SRC established goals and priorities related to the implementation of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. All DVR goals and priorities are established within the Division's long-established strategic themes as follows:

- Organizational Effectiveness
- Valued and Empowered Employees
- Prepared Job Seekers
- Collaborative Partnerships

Review VR progress on achieving prior State Plan Goals and Priorities.

(A) Program Year 2019 Goals and Priorities

1. DVR will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.

Program 2019 Measures:

- a. **Employment retention six months post closure**
- b. **Employment retention twelve months post closure**
- c. **Median earnings six months post closure**

- d. **Credential attainment rate**
- e. **Measurable skills gains**
- f. **Employer engagement**

Program Year 2019 Target: DVR will be collecting and reporting baseline data to RSA during this period.

i. Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.

Program Year 2018 Update: DVR is a strong supporter of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. We believe the new measures support consumers to achieve their career goals and promote higher wage and more sustainable employment.

To respond to the paradigm shift, DVR has implemented a series of strategies to align program services to meet the new measures, called the Careers Initiative. DVR staff and management have welcomed the new focus on how to assist our customers to have not just a job, but a career. The new strategies include:

- **Promoting Post-Secondary Education and Training:**
DVR has realigned case service resources to support more consumers in post-secondary training and education to help them achieve credentials in high-demand, high-wage fields. For individuals who need more support to succeed in education and training, DVR is implementing a “progressive education” approach that provides an incremental and low risk path.
- **Career Assessment:** DVR is promoting the use of Modern career assessment tools that help consumers see beyond entry-level employment and identify their potential. Modern assessment tools such as Virtual Job Shadow open up consumers to potential careers they may have never considered.
- **Supporting Practice Change:** DVR has updated policy and practice to promote consumers achieving longer-term career goals. For example, counselors are encouraged to support consumers to see beyond the “right now” job they need to pay the bills and look towards a career that will help them transition to a

better life.

- **Teaming to Support the Consumer:** DVR encourages counselors to pull in another team member to support consumers in achieving their employment goals. This might include the employment consultant, the benefits counselor, or the assistive technology specialist. We also strongly encourage teaming with the Department of Labor, Adult Basic Education, and a range of other community partners.
- **Follow-Up After Placement:** DVR requires regular follow-up with consumers post-exit to promote job retention and career advancement. This can be critical for consumers who are struggling to retain their jobs. It can also be an opportunity to encourage consumers to see if they are ready for the next career step.

DVR tracks implementation of the above new strategies through a new Performance Dashboard. The Dashboard provides real-time information on these practices for staff and managers at the counselor, district, and statewide level. The Dashboard provides the counselor and manager everything they need to know at a glance. It helps them judge how they are doing within a useful frame of reference so they can focus on what they need to do to achieve desired outcomes.

The WIOA measures are extremely lagging measures, meaning most of the desired outcomes occur well after services end. For example, the measure of median earnings occurs two full quarters after case closure. As a result, the measures are not very useful in guiding the work of frontline staff on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, DVR decided to establish leading measures of activities expected to improve the longer-term WIOA outcome measures. The below section outlines these lead measures and how they are expected to influence the lagging outcome measures.

- **Leading Measure One:** The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options
- **Leading Measure Two:** The involvement of other team members (employment placement staff, benefits counselors and

others) strengthens consumer engagement in completing their employment goal

- **Leading Measure Three:** Career focused education and training leads to higher wage and higher quality employment.
- **Leading Measure Four:** VR counseling with an emphasis on career focused plans will lead to higher wage and higher quality employment.
- **Leading Measure Five:** Continued support and encouragement after closure results in better job retention and career advancement.

In Program Year 2018, sufficient data collection had occurred to begin reporting on three of the five measures that are reported at the program level (employer engagement is reported as a combined measure for all WIOA core partners):

- Employment rate in the second quarter post closure was 49%
- Median earnings in the second quarter post closure was \$3,516
- Measurable skill gains rate was 54.9% compared to 37.8% in PY 2017

2. DVR will increase the percentage of consumers earning over 110% of minimum wage and over 150% of minimum wage at closure. DVR believes in order to increase median earnings six months post closure; the agency must increase earnings at closure. Based on Needs Assessment data from 2017, 55% of DVR consumers were earning 110% of minimum wage or less at closure and only 18% of DVR consumers were earning over 150% of minimum wage at closure.

Program Year 2019 Measures:

- a. The percentage of DVR consumers with earnings greater than 110% of minimum wage at employment closure.
- b. The percentage of DVR consumers with earnings greater than 150% of minimum wage at employment closure.

Program Year 2019 Targets:

- a. 55% of DVR consumers will earn 110% or greater of

minimum wage at closure.

- b. 25% of DVR consumers will earn 150% or greater of minimum wage at closure.

i. Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.

Program Year 2018 Update:

For cases closed successfully in Program Year 2018, 58% had wage rates at or above 110% of the minimum wage and 23% were earning 150% of the minimum wage (above \$16 per hour) or more.

As noted, DVR has established a performance dashboard to tracking leading and lagging indicators. The dashboard is visible to all staff and provides them with real time data. We determined it was important to track wages at closure within the dashboard. However, rather than having two measures, earnings at 110% and 150% of minimum wage, we determined it would be clearer to have a single measure earnings at 125% of minimum wage. Using this measure the data shows the following:

- **Program Year 2017:** In Program Year 2017 901 individuals were closed employed. The percentage earning 125% of minimum wage at closure was 33%.
- **Program Year 2018:** In Program Year 2018 877 individuals were closed employed. The percentage earning 125% of minimum wage at closure was 38%.

While we cannot draw conclusions from a single data point, Program Year 2018 was the first year of implementation of the DVR Careers Initiative. However, the increase in the percentage of closures at or above 125% of minimum does coincide with the implementation of the initiative. We need additional data points over time to determine if this is a trend.

- 3. DVR will increase consumer opportunities to participate in and gain industry recognized credentials in middle skills professions. Industry recognized credentials are a proven mechanism for consumers to access higher wage employment. This will include sector-based training programs in collaboration with the Career and Technical Education Centers and Community College of Vermont.**

Program Year 2019 Measure: Number of individuals achieving credential attainment.

Program Year 2019 Target: DVR will be collecting baseline data during this period.

i. Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.

Program Year 2018 Update:

During Program Year 2018, 361 participants enrolled in some kind of training or post-secondary education beyond the high school level, ranging from basic skills preparation to graduate programs. Of the 244 enrolled in programs potentially leading to a credential, 48 participants completed a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized credential in PY 2018.

- 4. DVR will continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS). Employer engagement continues to be a critical activity to ensure DVR consumers have access to employment opportunities.**

Program Year 2019 Measure: Employer engagement with DVR as tracked through the CWS Salesforce account management system.

Program Year 2019 Target: DVR will maintain active relationships with 2,500 employers statewide during the program year.

i. Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.

Program Year 2018 Update:

During this period CWS had relationships with 2,418 discrete employers. The CWS Business Account Managers had 5,672 recording activities with those employers (introductory meetings, informational interviews and business tours). These activities generated 4,175 opportunities for DVR consumer. An opportunity might include:

- A job shadow or informational interview
- A training placement
- An OJT placement
- A competitive job opportunity

We believe the above data indicates that CWS continues to produce robust engagement with Vermont employers resulting in increased opportunities for DVR consumers.

5. Consumer satisfaction with DVR services will be maintained or increase.

Program Year 2019 Measure: Bi-annual consumer satisfaction survey.

Program Year 2019 Target: DVR will achieve an 79% or better overall consumer satisfaction rating. Consumers reported an 79% overall satisfaction rating in the most recent survey (2016).

DVR will also develop a process to assess student and parent satisfaction with Pre-ETS services. DVR will explore approaches to conducting such an assessment and develop metrics to track.

i. Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.

Program Year 2018 Update: The DVR Consumer Experience Survey is conducted every three years to determine consumers' overall satisfaction with the program. The survey is conducted by a third-party research firm, Market Decisions Research (MDR), who have an extensive background in working with other VR agencies nationwide. Seven hundred consumers were contacted to provide information for our 2019 survey.

The results from our 2019 survey were outstanding. Market Decisions Research found that of the consumers surveyed:

- 81% reported that they were satisfied or very satisfied with DVR.
- 96% said that they would recommend that friends or family members seek help from DVR.
- 92% of consumers reporting that they are satisfied with their experience working with DVR staff and DVR Counselors; this statistic has risen two percent from our previous survey in 2016.

An area where DVR has enjoyed consistently high rates of satisfaction is in consumers feeling that they were treated by DVR staff with dignity and respect. In the 2019 survey, 98% of consumers reported feeling that they were treated by DVR staff with dignity and respect. The largest

improvement in customer experience was seen in the ability of consumers to communicate with their DVR Counselors. In 2016, 88% of consumers were satisfied with their ability to contact their counselor; in 2019 this percentage has risen to 91%, an all-time high for the agency.

The Market Decisions Research survey also included for the first time, measures of satisfaction for youth in transition. 97% of youth reported that they found working with a transition counselor helpful. Only 11% reported having problems working with their DVR Transition Counselor. To get more qualitative data DVR is contracting with Market Decisions Research to conduct focus groups with youth in early 2020. We hope data from the focus groups will help inform how we provide services for students and youth going forward.

6. **DVR will implement a comprehensive quality assurance process incorporating the new AWARE case management system. In 2017 DVR successfully implemented the AWARE case management system. This system will provide DVR with a powerful new tool to upgrade the quality assurance process.**

Program Year 2019 Measure: Design and implementation of the quality assurance system.

Program Year 2019 Target: Process evaluation of QA system (to be determined).

- i. **Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.**

DVR implemented a comprehensive case review process starting on October 1, 2018. The review process is built into the AWARE case management system which tracks completion. The case review system tracks both compliance and quality issues. DVR required that supervisors review 5 cases per quarter for full time counselors.

For Program Year 2018, DVR completed 100% of the required case reviews. DVR staff and managers find the system easy to use and very helpful in supporting good case work. This also resolved a prior year audit finding.

7. DVR will continue to implement highly effective Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) for students statewide.

Program Year 2019 Measures:

- a. The percentage of high schools statewide that have at least one student actively participating in Pre-ETS through DVR.
- b. The percentage of all potentially eligible students statewide who are participating in Pre-ETS through DVR.

Program Year 2019 Targets:

- a. 90% of high schools statewide will have at least one student participating in Pre-ETS through DVR.
- b. 20% of potentially eligible students will participate in Pre-ETS through DVR.

i. Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.

Program Year 2018 Update:

The out posting of 14 DVR transition counselors to work exclusively with high schools has proven very effective in securing access for students.

- In Program Year 2018 all 54 Vermont Supervisory Unions have referred students to DVR for services.
- In Program Year 2018, DVR served 2,280 high school students statewide, approximately 42% of the eligible student population.

DVR has clearly done an effective job ensuring access to Pre-ETS services for all potentially eligible high school students.

8. DVR will implement the following strategies to mitigate FFY 2016 and FFY 2017 reductions in re-allotment funding that resulted in substantial cuts in services and capacity:

- Partnerships with other programs and state systems to sustain employment services for people with disabilities;
- Increasing program income through the Ticket to Work program;
- Exploring federal and state grant opportunities to pilot new service models; and

- Continually assessing the assignment of DVR resources to ensure funds are going toward activities that are most likely to result in an employment and career outcome.

Program Year 2019 Measures:

- a. State government or other community agencies that have contributed resources to sustain programs affected by the loss of re-allotment.
- b. Social Security Administration Ticket to Work and Cost Reimbursement revenue.
- c. Federal or state grant applications.

Program Year 2019 Targets:

- a. Baseline
- b. DVR will generate \$2.5 million in Ticket to Work Revenue in Program Year 2019.
- c. DVR will apply for at least one grant application in Program Year 2019.

i. Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.

Program Year 2018 Update:

- The Division of Developmental Services (DDS) has stepped in to provide additional funding for supported employment to back fill the loss of DVR resources. The new funding has sustained capacity for job placement and job development that would have otherwise been lost.
- DVR generated \$1,720,534 in Ticket to Work during Program Year 2018. The lower than expected revenue was primarily the function of the Social Security Administration suspending payments for two quarters for administrative reasons. Since then, Ticket to Work revenue is on track to meet the 2019 program year goal.
- DVR has formed a Development Team to meet regularly to explore funding opportunities. DVR applied for two grant applications during Program Year 2018.
 - o DVR applied to SAMSHA for a supported employment program designed to serve adults with psychiatric disabilities in the outpatient

program. Unfortunately, DVR's application was not selected for funding

o DVR applied to the Kessler Foundation to support a pilot called Better Option than Social Security (BOSS). BOSS will provide innovative strategies to assist SSI/SSDI beneficiaries work at substantial levels. DVR is currently one of six finalists for this funding.

9. With the implementation of Pre-ETS, the DVR caseload has trended towards serving a younger cohort. DVR needs to ensure the needs of middle-aged and mature workers are still adequately addressed, and in particular, the following cohorts:

- Adults ages 35 to 55
- Adults aged 55 and above

Program Year 2019 Measures:

- a. The number of individuals receiving services in these cohorts.
- b. The employment outcomes by age cohort.
- c. Consumer satisfaction as measured in the DVR satisfaction survey.
- d. Services provided by age cohort.
- e. Other measures as identified by DVR and the SRC.

Program Year 2019 Target:

DVR will be collecting baseline data for this reporting period.

i. Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.

Program Year 2018 Update: Of the 5496 participants with Individualized Plans for Employment (IPE) receiving services in Program Year 2018, 58% were under the age of 35 when they began IPE services; 1506 (27%) were between the ages of 35 and 55 and 807 (15%) were 55 and older.

The wage rate and hours worked per week at closure were greater for older participants. Median number of hours worked per week were 32, compared to 25 for those under age 35. Median hourly wage at rehabilitation was \$15 for

those over age 55 and \$12.50 for those age 35 to 55, compared to a median of \$11.50 for the younger population.

A higher proportion also exited successfully: 48% and 42% respectively, compared to 32% for those under age 35. However, it is more difficult to maintain contact with younger participants after job placement through the 90 days of stable employment required to claim a successful outcome. Evidence from PY 2017 exits shows a similar rate of successful VR case closure for these age groups (51% for age 55 and up, 40% for those aged 35 to 55, and 31% for under age 35). However, the employment rate in the second quarter post-exit for these groups was 46% for both of the older age groups, compared to 52% for those under age 35. In other words, the higher employment rate for older adults compared to youth may have more to do with stability and maturity than with employment outcomes.

10. DVR will continue to seek options for supported employment for the following underserved populations in the state:

- a. Individuals with developmental disabilities who do not meet the developmental services system eligibility criteria or system or care priorities;
- b. Individuals with TBI who need onsite support;
- c. Individuals with psychiatric disabilities who do not meet the Community Rehabilitation and Treatment eligibility criteria; and
- d. Individuals with other severe disabilities who need supported employment.

Program Year 2019 Measure: DVR will track and report the results of specific initiatives related to these populations.

Program Year 2019 Target: Thirty individuals in the above categories will receive supported employment services.

i. Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.

DVR has had little success to date in expanding supported employment for these populations. The primary issue is that there is no infrastructure necessary for the ongoing

support services required for populations that do not meet eligibility for mental health and developmental services.

The SAMSHA grant application referenced under Goal and Priority #8 was intended specifically to provide supported employment for individuals with psychiatric disabilities who did not meet Department of Mental Health eligibility for supported employment. Unfortunately, that application was not selected for funding.

DVR is exploring using unobligated Title VI-B funds to expand supported employment services for individuals with developmental disabilities who do not meeting the developmental services system eligibility criteria or system or care priorities. We are looking at three communities in the State where the need is most pressing.

11. DVR will improve the outcomes for students and youth with emotional/behavioral disabilities served through the JOBS Supported Employment Program.

Program Year 2019 Measure: Total number of consumers achieving a successful employment outcome (VR 26 closure).

Program Year 2019 Target: A total of 250 successful employment outcomes.

i. Identify Goals and Priorities that have been achieved.

Program Year 2018 Update: DVR is waiting on latest data from the Program Evaluation Unit.

To align the JOBS Programs to the wider DVR Careers Initiative, we have spent the last year working with the agencies to establish new performance measures. We felt it was very important that JOBS youth should be included in the Careers Initiative and that our contracted performance measures should reflect that intent. The JOBS program staff and managers were closely involved in the development of the new measures. There is strong buy in and support. The new measures are laid out below:

- Total Number of Youth Served with DVR IPE
- Total Number of Youth Who received at least One Career Assessment During the Fiscal Year (50% of Total Served)

- Total Number of Youth Enrolled in Career Focused Training or Supported Education During the Fiscal Year (30% of Total Served)
- Total Number of Youth Placed in Competitive Employment for Ten Working Days (70% of Total Served)
- Total Number of Youth with a Higher-Wage IPE Goal during the Federal Fiscal Year (30% of Total Served)
- Total Number of Consumers employed at or above 125% of Vermont minimum wage at any time during the Federal Fiscal Year (30% of Total Served)

ii. Identify Goals and Priorities that need to be brought forward.

Goals and Priorities to be brought forward will be determined at the Full SRC meeting following this meeting.

iii. Identify new proposed Goals and Priorities to be added.

New proposed Goals and Priorities will be determined at the Full SRC meeting following this meeting.

iv. Formalize Goals and Priorities to bring to the Full SRC's meeting following this meeting for a vote.

This will occur at the Full SRC meeting following this meeting.

Conclusions:

See above.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

6) Other Business (Marlena Hughes)

Discussion:

Agenda items for the **February 6, 2020** meeting include:

Focus: The Needs Assessment.

- 1) Review data relating to the following:
 - a) National and Vermont Population Data from the American Community Survey.
 - b) Individuals Who are Minorities and Eligible for DVR Services.
 - c) The Need for Supported Employment Services.
 - d) Adults with Psychiatric Disabilities.
 - e) Adults with Developmental Disabilities.

- f) Other Unserved or Underserved Individuals with Disabilities.
- g) Older Vermonters with Disabilities.
- h) Individuals with Physical Disabilities.
- i) Individuals with Traumatic Brain Injury.

2) What are the PR committees' observations and findings?

Conclusions:

James may update the agenda and will send out any changes prior to its confirmation.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Present proposed agenda to Marlena and James, SRC Coordinator, 1/15/2020.

7) Adjournment (Marlena Hughes)

Discussion:

Marlena asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Sherrie moved to adjourn, and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 4-0-0.

Conclusions:

Motion to adjourn approved at 11:57 a.m.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, Debra Kobus, 12/10/19.
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, Debra Kobus, 12/10/19.
- Minutes approved, Committee, 2/6/2020.
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, SRC Coordinator, 2/11/2020.

Parking Lot/Items Forward

1) Presentation requested when data is available:

- a further breakdown of the demographics of those we serve (i.e. those receiving public benefits, etc.);
- a comparative of outcomes by group;
- Pre-ETS VR students with a state by state comparison. James said that this information was provided in the Needs Assessment a couple of years ago, but Alice will include this information in her presentation.

James and Alice Porter, Open.

2) James will invite two or three VR counselors to come in and share successes/challenges and the story behind them. Being able to illustrate some of the challenges would be a good way to frame it (i.e. criminal history, substance abuse, housing, etc.) as it would give us some understanding where additional advocacy could be created.

James Smith and VR Counselors, Open.

3) To parking lot 12/6/18 pending availability of data:

- ELL Stats (% of portion of population they are serving)
- Data on certifications (people achieving outcomes)

Rose Lucenti, Open.

4) To Parking Lot from 12/6/18:

Have a VR rep that works with Corrections come in and do a presentation.

Coordinator to remind committee, Open.

5) To Parking Lot from 12/6/18:

PR Committee members generate questions for Aware.

Coordinator to remind committee, Open.

Draft Minutes
SRC STEERING COMMITTEE
Thursday, January 9, 2020, 2:00 PM – 3:30 PM
Waterbury Vocational Rehabilitation, Room Cherry A
HC 2 South 280 State Drive, Waterbury, VT 05671

Meeting called by:

Sarah Launderville, Chair, called the meeting to order at 2:13pm

Members Present:

- Marlena Hughes, Chair, PR Committee
- Sarah Launderville, SRC Chair
- Sam Liss, Chair, AOE Committee
- Diane Dalmasse, Director, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

Members Absent:

- Sherrie Brunelle, Chair, P & P Committee
- Brian Smith, SRC Vice Chair

SRC Liaison:

- James Smith

SRC Coordinator:

- Kate Larose

Interpreters:

None

Speakers or Presenters:

None

Guests:

None

1) Introductions (Sarah Launderville)

Discussion:

Those in attendance went around the table and introduced themselves.

Conclusions:

Thanks to everyone!

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None.

2) Approval of Agenda (Sarah Launderville)

Discussion:

Sarah asked for any proposed additions or changes to the agenda. There was a request to add two additional items to the agenda under Miscellaneous: "2021 Meeting Dates" and "James Update". Sam moved to accept the agenda and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 3-0-0

Conclusions:

Motion passes: today's agenda accepted.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

3) Open for Public Comment (Sarah Launderville)

Discussion:

No one from the public was present.

Conclusions:

n/a

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

None

4) Approval of Minutes for November 7, 2019 (Sarah Launderville)

Discussion:

Sarah asked for any proposed changes or amendments to the November 7, 2019 minutes. There were none. Sam moved to approve the minutes and it was seconded. No discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 3-0-0

Conclusions:

November 7, 2019 minutes were approved.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

Upload approved minutes to the SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 1/13/2020

5) Miscellaneous

A. James Update (James)

James shared that he has a family event on the day of the next SRC meeting so will not be able to attend the performance review committee or the full SRC meeting. He has asked Alice Porter to attend in his place at the performance review committee meeting. Diane will be present at the full council meeting and will be available to answer questions about the relevant draft goals and priorities in the state plan.

B. Status of Appointments Update (Kate)

Kate shared that the Governor's office emailed yesterday with news that six appointments had been approved: Helena Kehne, Kristen Carpentier, Danielle Dubois, Gina D'Ambrosio, Patricia Wehman, and Ana Kolbach (three members are replacing other members and completing out their terms, and three are initial appointments). She has also reached out internally regarding five reappointments that were requested last year and expired September 2019 (Brian Smith, Martha Frank, Sherrie Brunelle, Sam Liss, Rose Lucenti). Sam stated that his understanding from previous years is that SRC appointments continue to remain valid after expiration date so long as the Governor did not appoint someone to fill their place. James shared that in the past there have been two VR counselors on the SRC which would be good to have moving forward and also asked Kate to work with Nat Piper who is a business outreach manager to identify one more employer. Kate asked how new appointments should be shared. Sarah requested that bios be shared at their first meeting. Sam requested that it would also be good to share these on the website if possible. Diane asked that we go around the table at the first meeting so new members could say a few words about themselves as way of introduction. It was requested that, moving forward, Kate check in with new and potential members about their SRC role association being shared publicly.

C. 2020 Retreat Venue (Kate)

Kate shared that the Trapp Family Lodge has availability for October 1, 2020, and they are able to offer the same pricing as last year with rental of the Mozart room for \$100 and meals at \$34 per person. The hotel is tentatively holding the space until next week. It was agreed that we will move forward with the Trapp Family Lodge.

D. Vote: 2021 Meeting Dates

Kate presented a draft calendar of 2021 meeting dates and potential locations which have been reserved. She also shared that the card room request for 2021 has been submitted to the Sergeant-at-Arms. Committee members shared concerns about Cherry C as a meeting room as it can be too noisy when there are meetings in the adjoining room. Kate will look at booking Cedar or Ash for these meeting dates. Sarah asked for a motion to accept the 2021 meeting dates and times. Sam so moved, and it was seconded. No discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 3-0-0

Member Phone Conversation Learnings (Kate)

Discussion: Kate shared the results of the 11 one-on-one phone conversations she has had thus far and stated that four more meetings are in process of being scheduled. Committee members took turns sharing their thoughts.

Diane

- We need to develop a comprehensive onboarding protocol that should include initial orientation and ongoing training.
- Thanks to Sam and Tim there are transportation resources we can access and we need to figure out what the process is for arranging rides and then make it a clear and straight-forward process.
- Concerned about the notion that people may not be feeling safe as a meeting accessibility issue, and we have both introverts and extroverts on the council and we want to enable all to participate. We need to think through ground rules for how we ensure that meetings are as accessible as possible.
- We are always trying to make these meetings interactive with less talking heads and we need our agendas to reflect that moving forward.

Sam

- What stood out for me are the statements made about using one's advocacy experience and passion to better include people with disabilities but also in contributing to ways that VR and the SRC handle the employment process.
- Also appreciated seeing that some members shared their gifts regarding good writing skills as they can capture the gist of what's being said in plain language and we need to use that.
- Ensuring that training includes how VR fits in with independent living and the disability rights movement.

Marlena

- As an educator I am really into inclusion and am jazzed up about the ideas for interactivity. I especially like the idea of having a road map and seeing meeting agendas move towards interactivity as every voice matters.

James

- I am wondering about creating a template for the full SRC meetings that includes a sample layout to follow (for example, one presentation, one interactive item, one decision making item, etc.) to help us to always follow a similar structure just as teachers have lesson plans that encompass different learning styles. I like the idea of regular calls from Kate to members to check in but wondering if quarterly might be too much.
- Most of the agenda items comes from VR and the steering committee. How about having a way for members to suggest agenda items?
- Sharon Behar is a consultant who can perhaps talk to us and share how we can create an agenda template that works for all.

Sarah

- Like the idea of new member onboarding
- We have a member who has the ability to write in plain language who we can use as a resource. More cognitive accessibility in our materials would be great.

- The idea of moving the microphone around as we cannot hear people around the table.
- Making sure we address the transportation issue. People have not approached it this way, but requests for transportation are reasonable accommodations requests and we need to be cautious and careful about emails going out to everyone. Would like to see the process streamlined and have all requests go through Kate.
- The idea of the coordinator checking in with folks quarterly. This seems like a proactive way to identify any issues or barriers to participation and it builds communication and trust. Even if people don't feel comfortable sharing or naming a need or concern at the first meeting perhaps by the third check-in they will feel comfortable to share.
- The list of what we all bring to the table is awesome and I continue to be impressed with the group.

Sarah asked if there was anything named that Steering Committee members would not be in support of. Everyone agreed with the ideas shared and Kate was asked to work on these items in the months ahead.

Conclusions:

See above.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Request contract from Trapp Family Lodge, **Kate Larose**, 1/13/2020
- Schedule meeting with Nat Piper, **Kate Larose**, 1/13/2020
- Confirm what information is shared on the Governor's website about SRC members, **Kate Larose**, 1/13/2020
- Check in with James about second VR counselor council member, **Kate Larose**, 1/13/2020
- Reserve rooms and upload approved 2021 meeting schedule to the website, **Kate Larose**, 1/30/2020
- Email draft goals and priorities to Kate to be forwarded to SRC, **James Smith**, 1/30/2020
- Reach out to Tim Bradshaw and Morgan Prouty to get clarity on the transportation request process, **Kate Larose**, 1/13/2020
- Update workplan to reflect the requests above, **Kate Larose**, 1/30/2020

6) Agenda Discussion for February 6, 2020 Full SRC Meeting (Group)

Discussion:

To the extent possible, the group expressed interest in having the February agenda reflect the recommendations and conversation above including breaking up the two presentations and asking that the presenters build in or be prepared for something interactive such as an activity or discussion. As we will have new members, introductions will be extended to 16 minutes. To aid in this, we will have bios of the six new members included in the meeting packet. Tom will

need to be before the break. Diane suggested interspersing business items with the presentations (for example, having introductions and approval of agenda, followed by Tom, other business, then Jess, etc.) She asked if Kate could draft out the next meeting with this in mind. James mentioned that it would be good to report back to the full SRC about the actions that have been taken as a result of the conversations and their input. Sarah shared that she will include this in her report. Marlena moved to accept the agenda below with the understanding that Kate will email a revised draft and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 3-0-0

- A. Introductions- 16 minutes
- B. Approval of Agenda
- C. Open for Public Comment
- D. Presentation: Tom Hamilton, SILC- 45 minutes
- E. Vote: SRC Chair
- F. Vote: SRC Vice Chair
- G. Approval of Minutes – December 5, 2019 Full SRC
Consent Agenda – Approved Committee Minutes & Coordinator’s Report
- I. Committee Chair Updates (5 minutes each with no written reports)
- J. Director’s Report- 10 minutes
- K. VR Regional Managers’ Updates (Nancy Dwyer and Hib Doe)- 5 minutes
- L. Break
- M. Vote: State Plan Presentation (Diane)
- N. Presentation: Jess DeCarolis, Dual Enrollment, Agency of Education- 45 minutes
- O. Other Business
- P. Round Table
- Q. Adjournment

Conclusions:

See above

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Report back to the full SRC about the actions that have been taken as a result of the conversations and their input, **Sarah Launderville**, 2/6/2020
- Draft February SRC agenda with above recommendations in mind, **Kate Larose**, 1/15/2020
- Reach out to Jess and Tom regarding participation times and request for interactivity, **Kate Larose**, 1/15/2020
- Request bios from new members to be shared at the February meeting, **Kate Larose**, 1/15/2020

7) Other Business (Sarah Launderville)

Discussion:

Kate identified that, per the November meeting minutes, the intent was to plan for the April, June, and December SRC presentations at today's meeting, but that it didn't make it onto the agenda.

Conclusions:

Move this item to the next meeting agenda.

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Determine items that should be presented to the full SRC for the remainder of 2020 and share these at the next Steering Committee Meeting, **All Committee Chairs**, March 5, 2020

8) Adjournment (Sarah Launderville)

Discussion:

Sarah asked if there was a motion to adjourn. Marlana moved to adjourn, and it was seconded. No further discussion. All approved. Vote unanimous 3-0-0

Conclusions:

Motion to adjourn approved at 3:29pm

Action Items, Person Responsible, Deadline:

- Draft minutes uploaded to SRC website, **Kate Larose**, 1/13/2020
- Draft minutes emailed to Committee members, **Kate Larose**, 1/13/2020
- Minutes approved, **Committee**, 3/5/2020
- Approved minutes uploaded to website, **Kate Larose**, 3/9/2020

Coordinator's Report February 6, 2020

Greetings SRC Members,

How quickly my first two months have flown by in my new role! I am grateful for the time spent with Debra, along with the patience and support of VR staff during my training period. And I am grateful that I had the opportunity to have conversations with many of you.

When I served as a Peace Corps volunteer years ago—a 20-year-old fresh out of college—I was perplexed and frustrated by the requirement that we weren't allowed to start any projects our first three months in village. Instead, we were told, our job was to ask questions and listen. For months I felt like I was spinning my wheels, sure I was wasting my time and that of others, *talking* instead of *doing*. But looking back, I now realize the inherent wisdom in this requirement as what I learned from those conversations, and the relationships I built, enabled my work to be successful in the long term. (And I haven't had a job since that I didn't start this way!)

My learnings from these one-on-one SRC member phone conversations are included below and were shared with the Steering Committee last month. I know they will serve me well in this position and help to guide my work in the year ahead. Thank you!

I am also happy to share the news of six new appointments. Please join me in welcoming our newest members to the SRC:

- Ana Kolbach
- Danielle Dubois
- Gina D'Ambrosio
- Helena Kehne
- Kristen Carpentier
- Patricia Wehman

When I started back in December, I found myself wondering what my work as the SRC coordinator would look like. Today I'm finding truth in this dictionary definition:

“Coordinate: to bring the different elements of a complex activity or organization into a relationship that will ensure efficiency or harmony.”

As such, please don't hesitate to pick up the phone or shoot me an email or text if there's something I can do to make your participation easier- that's my job 😊



Kate Larose, SRC Coordinator
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kate.larose@vermont.gov

Member Phone Conversation Learnings



What We Most Appreciate About SRC Membership

- Love getting to know and work with other members of the group (who are passionate, inspiring, and tireless advocates)
- Excited about contributing towards the SRC mission
- Impactful work that directly helps Vermonters
- The ability to work with the dedicated, talented, and responsive VR leadership
- Learning more about the work and resources is helpful to own life and/or work
- The fact that people work together towards a common goal
- That it serves as an independent voice when it comes to advocating for funding and policy change, and it is a collaborative and valuable partner
- How inclusive, welcoming, respectful, and thoughtful they are
- The focus on continuous improvement



Gifts We Bring to the Table

- Empathetic and skill in building interpersonal relationships
- Good listener
- Intelligence
- Excellent writing skills
- Experience facilitating training and ensuring all can engage in meaningful ways
- Lived experience as a VR consumer, person with a disability, or parent of a child with a disability: “I’ve been there”
- Depth and history of professional and personal expertise

- Prepares for meetings by reading all materials and making a point to not miss any meetings
- Advocacy
- Humor
- Skill in identifying and addressing barriers to employment
- Compassion
- Strong desire to help
- Ability to write in plain language
- Marketing, social media, and publicizing events
- Recruitment
- I'm rehabilitative employment ambassador and salesperson to the business community
- Knowledge of WIOA and other federal programs
- Passion for providing excellent customer service



Suggestions Made

Participating Beyond Meetings:

- People shared their desire for hands-on, active participation beyond just meeting participation: “I want to engage, but am not sure where to plug in.” “I would love to be involved in project-based work.”

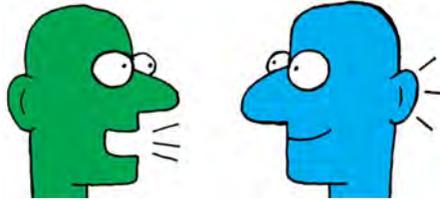
Transportation:

- Across the board, people shared that transportation needs to be better addressed to increase meeting participation (people offered it or shared that they needed it). People both using and listening to the conference call option said engagement is harder on Skype vs. in-person participation.

Accessibility:

- Making sure everyone has opportunity to contribute and can provide input based on the method that works best for them. This includes accommodations, time built-in to council and committee agendas, and meeting facilitation to support this (e.g., “Let’s hear from someone we haven’t yet. Who else would like to speak on this item?”), jargon busting, and keeping speakers to times listed on agenda.

- Have the chair of the meeting sit in front of a microphone and pass it around as needed to be near people who are speaking. Remember to periodically invite input from the phone as it is hard to jump in to conversations when not physically present in the room.



Member Orientation/Retention Ideas Shared

- Periodic updates on the appointment process as it takes a long time
- Bring back the new member orientation sessions
- Consider having ongoing training throughout the year vs. just a one-time orientation
- Having an introductory meeting with SRC or committee chair or coordinator (what they envision for the SRC, where their strengths fit in, what to expect at the first meeting, etc.)
- “First meeting felt very formal...how might we get these to feel more welcoming?” (Several people mentioned shyness, social anxiety, or that additional opportunities to get to know their fellow members would help with an even warmer welcome as they join the council.)
- “A debrief after attending the first meeting would have been useful”
- Content provided in a way that meets a range of learning preferences
 - Historical overview of disability rights movement
 - The national handbook
 - Updated list of acronyms
 - What VR does, what SRC does, how they are interrelated and different
 - Mission and vision of the SRC and what do we want to accomplish in next 2-5 years, etc.
 - A “road map” of external/community partners
 - An overview of SRC decision making authority
 - Expectations of being a council member, voting, our work as a group
 - The different roles of board members and the importance of the different perspectives they bring to the table (i.e., business/employer, parent, individuals with disabilities, state agency, etc.)
 - Roberts Rules refresher
- Consider quarterly check in phone calls: the coordinator could reach out to members via telephone to see how things are going, address any needs, and answer any questions.



Questions Posed

- *“How can I contribute the most?”*
- *“Are people feeling safe enough to talk about different experiences and share diverging viewpoints on an issue?”*
- *“How might we further increase the diversity of SRC membership?”*
- *“How can we create materials that are more accessible (for example, plain language, options beyond just reading, etc.)?”*
- *“How can we ensure a balance of all voices being heard: people who do this work, and people who live this work?”*
- *“What are the barriers to participation and what can we do to address them?”*
- *“What can we do to ensure member retention and engagement for the long-term?”*
- *“We have tried to make meetings as interactive as possible...what else can we do create more opportunities for interactivity and input?”*

Director's Report

Kessler Foundation Award – We were in fact awarded roughly \$500,000 over two years from the Kessler Foundation. The grant award will fund **Vermont Works 2.0**, an initiative to support people who receive SSDI benefits to work at a level that ceases their benefits. Teams consisting of a VR Counselor, a Benefits Counselor and a VABIR Employment Consultant in Rutland and Bennington will support 200 people over two years. We will be adding a 6th Benefits Counselor which will get us back to one BC for each region. We have two very strong teams who are committed to and excited about doing this work. We will be reviewing current caseloads, reaching out to people closed as working and still receiving SSA benefits and marketing to Ticket holders who may never have heard about VR. We are working with Spike a professional marketing firm to develop our marketing strategies. We plan to open recruitment April 1st. Stay tuned. We think this work will have national significance.

WIOA Unified State Plan – James and staff are in the final stages of writing the VR State Plan. James shared the Goals and Priorities Section and has integrated your feedback for a final vote during this meeting. There is a State Workforce Development Board meeting on February 20th where they will approve the entire plan for submission. We anticipate setting targets with VDOL and AOE for the Common Performance Measures.

Progressive Education – We have reinvigorated the Progressive Education Charter and created 3 new goals: (1) Ensure staff have the training and support framework for career planning, (2) Each district will have routine connections with education and training providers in their community, and (3) Business account Managers and Employment Consultants identify career ladders, in-house trainings and opportunities for advancement within the businesses they serve. Meeting the 35% statewide target for participation in education and training on the dashboard is a priority for this year.

Performance Management Training – Supervisors and managers attended a day long training designed to provide them with tools for recognizing and retaining our high performers. It was very well facilitated by Sharon Behar, our organizational development specialist. Staff feedback has been exceptional.

The **Individual Development Plan** was reviewed as part of this training. Feedback from the Employee Engagement Survey was that we did not ask staff about or support career development. So, the IDP will be done annually coinciding with the performance evaluation. We are excited to roll this out and it will hopefully improve staff satisfaction.

McClure Foundation - Our Development Team is hard at work identifying opportunities for new revenue, specifically to integrate best practices from our Linking Learning to Careers grant into the core VR program for youth in transition. We are drafting a Letter of Intent to the McClure Foundation to sustain LLC post-secondary options for youth – due 2/6/20.

VR Priorities – The VR Senior Management Team spent a half a day updating our Wildly Important Goals (WIGs) spread sheet for this calendar year. It was very affirming to see what we accomplished last year and to identify our goals for this upcoming year. I will pass around a copy of the document so you can get a sense of the work ahead.

Motivational Interviewing - We are contracting with Trevor Manthey, our original MI trainer to return to do advanced MI training with staff and to re-engage the management team with MI. We are also going to bring Stephen Andrews here for a two-day intensive training for our MI coaches. We are also contracting with Stephen to do coding and scoring on audio tapes for proficiency.

Invest EAP – Steve Dickens and Marc Adams are working on two new initiatives. A partnership with Blue Cross Blue Shield to provide behavioral health screening and a partnership with SHRM to develop a certification program for Recovery Friendly Work Places.

New VR Staff Training Program – Heather Batalion, VR Staff Development Coordinator, will be working with CCV to finally complete an on-line training program for VR staff with a focus on VR Counselors. CCV will develop this program on their e-learning platform and host it for us.

Process Mapping – The Expanded VR Management Team will meet 2/11 to debrief the VR process mapping that was completed over calendar year 2019. We

will share the ahas that happened locally, reflect on the experience, discuss statewide changes and the use of process mapping going forward.

(I) State's Goals and Priorities.

Based on the DVR/SRC Needs Assessment completed in December of 2017, DVR and the SRC have established targets for Program Year 2020 for DVR's Strategic Plan goals. DVR and the SRC have also established goals and priorities in response to the new mandates and requirements included in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). In particular, DVR and the SRC established goals and priorities related to the implementation of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. All DVR goals and priorities are established within the Division's long-established strategic themes as follows:

- *Organizational Effectiveness*
- *Valued and Empowered Employees*
- *Prepared Job Seekers*
- *Collaborative Partnerships*

(A) Program Year 2020 Goals and Priorities

1. DVR will align services to support consumers in achieving the WIOA Common Performance Outcome Measures.

DVR is a strong supporter of the WIOA Common Performance Measures. We believe the new measures support consumers in their career goals and promote higher wages and more sustainable employment. However, the WIOA measures are extremely lagging, meaning most of the desired outcomes occur well after services end. For example, the measure of median earnings occurs two full quarters after case closure. As a result, the measures are not very useful in guiding the work of frontline staff on a day-to-day basis. Therefore, DVR decided to establish leading measures of activities expected to improve the longer-term WIOA outcome measures. The section below outlines these lead measures and how they are expected to influence the lagging outcome measures.

- **Leading Measure One:** The use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options
- **Leading Measure Two:** The involvement of other team members (employment placement staff, benefits counselors and others) strengthens consumer engagement in completing their employment goal
- **Leading Measure Three:** Career focused education and training leads to higher wages and higher quality employment.
- **Leading Measure Four:** VR counseling with an emphasis on career focused plans will lead to higher wages and higher quality employment.
- **Leading Measure Five:** Continued support and encouragement after job placement results in better job retention and career advancement.

Targets for the Lead Indicators:

- 50% of cases will include use of career assessment tools to support exploration of higher wage and higher skill options.
- 50% of cases will involve other team members (employment placement staff, benefits counselors and others) to strengthen consumer engagement in completing their employment goal
- 35% of consumers in plan status will be enrolled in career focused education and training that leads to higher wages and higher quality employment.
- 35% consumers in plan status will have plans directed to achieving careers in higher wage employment
- 75% of DVR consumers will continue to be engaged in DVR services after job placement.

2. DVR will increase the percentage of consumers earning more than minimum wage at closure.

DVR believes that in order to increase median earnings six months post closure, the agency must increase earnings at closure. Based on Needs Assessment data from 2017, 55% of DVR consumers were earning 110% of minimum wage or less at closure and only 18% of DVR consumers were earning over 150% of minimum wage at closure. These numbers improved by Program Year 2018 as follows:

- 58% had wage rates at or above 110% of the minimum wage at closure
- 38% had wage rates at or above 125% of minimum wage at closure
- 23% had wage rates at or above 150% of the minimum wage (above \$16 per hour) or at closure

DVR's continued focus of careers and higher wage employment will further improve these results. Therefore, the Program Year 2020 targets are as follows:

- 65% of DVR consumers will earn at or above 110% of minimum wage at closure
- 50% of DVR consumers will earn at or above 125% of minimum wage at closure
- 30% of DVR consumers will earn at or above 150% of minimum wage at closure

3. DVR will increase consumer opportunities to participate in post-secondary education and training and gain industry recognized credentials.

Post-secondary credentials are a proven mechanism for consumers to access higher wage employment and meaningful careers. In Program Year 2018, 244 participants were enrolled in programs potentially leading to a credential, and 48 participants completed a post-secondary degree or industry-recognized credential. DVR seeks to dramatically increase participation in program years 2020 and 2021.

Targets:

Program Year 2020 Target: 500 DVR consumers will enroll in training leading to a credential and 125 DVR consumers will achieve a credential

Program Year 2021 Target: 600 DVR consumers will enroll in training leading to a credential and 150 DVR consumers will achieve a credential

4. In partnership with VDOL, DVR will create more opportunities for DVR consumers to participate in apprenticeship programs and pre-apprenticeship programs.

Apprenticeships offer DVR consumers the opportunity to earn money while receiving necessary training to achieve a credential. Apprenticeships generally lead to higher wage employment. The development of apprenticeships is a new strategy for DVR. Therefore, we have partnered with the Vermont Department of Labor to establish apprenticeships for DVR consumers.

Targets:

Program Year 2020: 10 DVR consumers will enroll in registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

Program Year 2021: 15 DVR consumers will enroll in registered apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship programs.

5. DVR will establish a Charter Group to determine how to improve transition services for youth and implement those improvements.

In 2015, DVR implemented a major restructuring of school to work transition services in response to the WIOA requirement to provide Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). This included establishing a cadre of VR counselors and Youth Employment Specialists to work exclusively with high school students. DVR believes it is time to reassess this restructuring and look at how both Pre-ETS and VR services for students and youth could be improved.

In Program Year 2020 the Charter Group will develop a series of recommendations on how to improve and enhance Pre-ETS services in Vermont. Upon review and approval by the DVR management team, these recommendations will be implemented in Program Years 2020 and 2021.

6. DVR will improve outcomes for students and youth with emotional/behavioral disabilities served through the JOBS Supported Employment Program.

To align the JOBS supported employment programs with the wider DVR Careers Initiative, we have spent the last year working with designated agencies to establish new performance measures. DVR felt it was very important for JOBS youth to be included in the Careers Initiative and that our contracted performance measures reflect that intent. The JOBS program staff and managers were closely involved in the development of the new measures. There is strong buy in and support. The new measures are listed below:

- Total number of youth served with a DVR IPE
- Total number of youth who received at least one career assessment during the fiscal year (50% of total served)
- Total number of youth enrolled in career focused training or supported education during the fiscal year (30% of total served)
- Total number of youth placed in competitive employment for ten working days (70% of total served)
- Total number of youth with a higher wage IPE goal during the federal fiscal year (30% of total served)
- Total number of consumers employed at or above 125% of Vermont minimum wage at any time during the federal fiscal year (30% of total served)

7. DVR will explore and implement strategies to better serve job seekers with disabilities who are 55 and older.

Vermont is the second oldest state in the USA (behind Maine). More Vermonters are or want to stay in the workforce beyond retirement age. The Vermont economy needs older workers to meet the workforce needs of employers in the state. Despite this, Vermont DVR has only seen a modest increase in the percentage of applicants 55 and older. DVR will plan and implement strategies to engage older job seekers. These may include job fairs specifically for older workers, targeted outreach, staff training, and new partnerships. Because DVR is still in the planning stage, we have not developed specific targets for Program Years 2020 and 2021.

8. DVR will continue to expand efforts to effectively serve employers through Creative Workforce Solutions (CWS).

Employer engagement continues to be a critical activity to ensure DVR consumers have access to employment opportunities and careers. Creative Workforce Solutions is the employer engagement

and marketing arm of DVR. DVR measures employer engagement through the following three metrics:

- **New Employer Contacts:** These are defined as new contacts with employers who have never engaged with CWS
- **Employer Activities:** These are defined as ongoing engagement activities with employers who have an ongoing relationship with CWS
- **Employer Opportunities:** These are defined as specific consumer opportunities such as a job opening, training opportunity, work based learning opportunity, company tour or informational interview

The annual targets for the CWS team for Program Years 2020 and 2021 are as follows:

- **Contacts:** 750 new contacts per program year
- **Activities:** 2,250 distinct engagement activities per program year
- **Opportunities:** 2,500 discrete consumer opportunities developed per program year

9. DVR will continue to seek opportunities to expand and/or improve services for underserved populations including individuals who need supported employment.

DVR recognizes that there continue to be populations of Vermonters with disabilities that are unserved or underserved in the state. These include, but are not limited to:

- Individuals with severe disabilities who need supported employment services but are not eligible for long term supports through the Division of Developmental Services or the Department of Mental Health.
- Individuals with disabilities who are offenders and are transitioning into the general community
- Individuals with substance abuse/use disorders
- Survivors of traumatic brain injuries

DVR has formed a development team to explore opportunities to expand or improve services to address the unmet needs of these groups. This includes exploring new partnerships or expanding existing partnerships with other agencies, funding sources and stakeholders. It also includes the development of grant applications to implement new services or expand and improve existing services.

10. DVR will continue to track consumer satisfaction with the program's services through the bi-annual consumer satisfaction survey. DVR will also implement strategies to assess student and youth satisfaction with vocational rehabilitation and pre-employment transition services.

DVR contracts bi-annually with an independent survey organization to assess consumer satisfaction statewide and by district. This data is critical to helping us improve services and provide better customer service. DVR has consistently maintained high overall rates of satisfaction. In 2018, 96% of consumers said that they would recommend that their friends or family members seek help from DVR; this is up one percent from the 2016 survey. Another area of strength revealed in the 2018 survey, was 92% of consumers reporting they were satisfied with their experience working with DVR staff and DVR counselors; this is a two percent increase from the previous survey.

In part because of the implementation of Pre-ETS in Vermont, the overall population served by DVR has trended younger. In Program Year 2018 over 50% of participants were either youth or students

under the age of 24. Because of this shift we think it is important for DVR to develop new strategies to assess student and youth satisfaction with DVR services.

Targets:

- In the 2021 Consumer Satisfaction Survey, at least 96% of DVR consumers will report they would recommend DVR to family and friends and 92% will report they were satisfied or very satisfied with their experience working with DVR staff and counselors.
- In Program Year 2020, DVR will implement youth specific strategies to assess satisfaction with VR and Pre-ETS services.

11. Identify the goals and priorities in carrying out the VR and Supported Employment programs.

See Goals 6 and 8 in Section (A)