



WSRC QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

August 14, 2025

9:00am-3:30pm

Members Present: Danna Summers, SILC Representative, Kenmore
Jill McCormick, Parent Advocate Representative, Puyallup
Jennifer Bean, Council Chair, Client Assistance Program, Bellingham
Jennifer Tabiando, CRP Representative, Lynnwood
Liz Gallagher, Workforce Board Representative, Lakebay
Laurae MacClain, Tribal VR Representative, Nespelem
Aimee Elber, Disability Advocacy Representative, Spokane
Michele Stelovich, Labor Representative, Everett
Alexandra Toney, Council Vice-Chair, OSPI Representative, Olympia
Dana Phelps, DVR Director, Ex-Officio, Olympia
Lesa Dunphy, DVR Counselor Representative, Ex-Officio, Colville

Members Absent: Katrina Simmons, Recipient of Services Representative, Tacoma
Matt Newton, Business Representative, Tacoma
Edward Nicholson, Business Representative, Vancouver
Noelle Green, Recipient of Services Representative, Olympia

Council Staff: Shelby Satko, WSRC Executive Director, Olympia
Jolie Ramsey, WSRC Executive Assistant, Olympia

Visitors:

Wendy Quarles, Aaron Dickson, Ann Martin, Ashely Curtin, Chrissy Dahlgren, Christina Frye, Courtney Williams, David Mueller, Eliza Lester, Elizabeth Gordon, Kristina Zawisza, Lauren Peterson, Mandy Kipfer, Mari Heusman, Maria Buxbaum, Rena Van Meter, Shawn Walsworth, Stacie, Susie Calhoun, Tammy Bowen, Verena Strydom, Steven Potter, Lucinda Heidel, Toby B., Rosa Quiroz, Mike Gorday, Renee Silva, Zandra Leitch, Deona Koberstein, Megan Grundbrecher, Sonya Sanders, Jamie Grund, Erin Lloyd, Rebecca Jansson, Haley Tresenriter, Yvonne Bussler White, Robb St. Lawrence, Stacie Nuckolls, Lan Totten, James Williams

Call to Order— Meeting called to order at 9:02am by Jen Bean, Council Chair

Motion: Approval of May 2025 quarterly meeting minutes

First: Michele Stelovich **Second:** Jill McCormick

No edits, no abstentions. **APPROVED**

Executive Committee: Jen Bean

- 2026 quarterly meetings
 - Schedule: Feb. 12-13, May 14-15, August 13-14, November 12-13
 - State budgetary restrictions on travel to be taken into consideration.

Motion: Approve the nomination of Michele Stelovich as 2025-2026 Council Chair, and Jennifer Bean as Vice Chair.

First: Jennifer Tabiando **Second:** Aimee Elber

No edits, no abstentions. **APPROVED**

- Subcommittee leadership 2025-2026
 - CSPE: Matt Newton
 - P&P: Jen Tabiando
 - Partnership: Alex Toney
- Recruitment for a Business/Labor representative is ongoing.
- Member Appreciation: Jen Bean, Alex Toney, Laurae MacClain, and Lesa Dunphy received certificates of appreciation for their leadership roles on the council.

CSNA Listening Session: Drew Karhan

- Michele Stelovich: Having more than 90 days of extended services would be good. How to break the cycle of service provider.
- Jen Bean: Increase in individuals who are neurodivergent. Some folks do not qualify for services. There are often barriers to working with a CRP. It comes down to communication.
- Chrissy Dahlgren: Only having 90 days of retention has been a big barrier for people who don't qualify for DDA. But DDA getting rid of the IQ requirements has opened it up for more people to apply for DDA and I have been getting more people assessed for this reason. I would love to see more training for DVR on Neurodiversity and how to provide counseling and services from a Neurodivergent affirming lens. I unfortunately have seen a lot of my customers harmed by counselor stereotypes about what an Autistic or ADHD'er looks like and what they are limited to. Part of the issue is that there are almost no CRP's who are skilled and able to do professional type CBA's. With customers who have higher education and want career type jobs, I almost never refer to a CRP because I know they will only be able to do entry level CBA's. High caseloads make it very hard. Huge demand for services. Intakes booked months out. Seeing more people with more complex needs. More unhoused people coming in for services. Supported employment is so important—receiving the necessary supports to do a job successfully. It's a struggle to get people DDOS or social security services. A lot of transition services in statewide high schools are being cut due to budget cuts. For both higher acuity students and students with disabilities. Diagnoses for underserved, underrepresented populations, such as African American women.
- Christina Frye: Funding for services, transportation, vendor capacity to meet needs, access to appropriate services to meet personal care needs. Sharing information between agencies leads to better coordination and reduces admin. Burden on students and families.
- Aaron Dickson: I feel like we tend to think about our work from our own siloed perspective (1 employment plan), but we need to think from the service recipients perspective (3+ different plans for employment with DVR, employment agency, school, etc.) Also, I think we will have a lot more

opportunities for white collar jobs for people with IDD because of AI being able to help summarize documents into plain language and to support with writing professional emails.

- Danna Summer: I want to mention that neurodivergence and immigrant community masking can happen same time. The clients may downplay their struggles.
- Jill McCormick: Understanding an individual's true functionality. So many PWD are highly capable and credentialed, and employers often want to place them in entry level jobs. He needs some prompting and coaching to decide what he wants to do. Supporting families with their choices. Why is it important for their child with disabilities to have employment.
- Eliza Lester: Access to socioeconomic and disability-related resources in a high cost-of-living, high resource-demand state is a major barrier to success. When participants are under-resourced (due to a litany of reasons including but not limited to insurance issues, rural access, high demand with low staff availability, etc.), they sometimes have less emotional, mental, and physical bandwidth to navigate the world of work and its stressors; let alone navigate the stress that sometimes accompanies the DVR process. We assist our participants with addressing their disability-related barriers to employment. We might be able to assist in the short-term, but how will success be maintained when their doctor can't see them for four months, their pharmacy hasn't filled their prescription in a week and a half, there are no reliable mental health counselors who a) accept their insurance and b) don't have a months-long waitlist, and they're behind on rent but can't qualify for a housing voucher?
- David Mueller: As an individual with a learning disability—specifically Auditory Processing Disorder—I have faced persistent challenges when navigating AI-driven resume screening processes. Although I possess relevant skills in my field, I do not hold a degree. My primary difficulty lies in acquiring foreign languages, as I retain less than 7% of auditory information. Consequently, AI screening often presents a significant obstacle, frequently resulting in my application being excluded before it can be reviewed by a human.
- Verena Strydom: Many customers have legal barriers, homeless, or housing insecure.
- Jen Tabiando: transportation continues to be a barrier. Good communication in their customers' native language, getting an interpreter can be a barrier.
- Danna Summers: Dialects are so important, another part knows the legalize language and DDA/DSHS vocabulary. I'm a Russian language interpreter. It's quite challenging sometimes explain something to the families. We need better training for CRP staff to help highly capable PWD to apply for higher paying and advanced forms of employment. High quality work options.
- Liz Gallagher: staff turnover impacts communication between agencies. It would be great if WIOA programs keep customers busy moving forward while they're waiting to meet with a counselor, i.e. Program capacity is an issue. Hard to coordinate with DVR, because other programs are designed to be a quick turnaround, whereas DVR is a longer program. When to refer to a Title 1 vs. Title 3 program would be helpful. We need training to work with people with disabilities, especially with people who won't be able to get into DVR right now due to order of selection. So that Work Source programs are more capable of providing services to them. Work on that coordination piece easier for both staff and customers to navigate. The lack of resources has caused a big distraction and has made it hard to find bandwidth to coordinate and meet with partners like we did pre-covid times.
- Rosa Q: I think what has happened with this huge turn over is that the community partnerships have been lost. We as a collective need to re-educate ourselves and our community on what we all have to offer. Once we go back to that we can start to work better together.
- Michele Stelovich: Covid really broke a lot of these partnerships. We used to do "road shows", meet and greets, sharing best practices, etc. Work has changed so much, we don't have the same

connections we once had. Spoke about going through labor unions, there are issues where if you don't know someone, you are put at the bottom of the list.

- Liz Gallagher: The lack of resources has caused a big distraction and has made it hard to find bandwidth to coordinate and meet with partners like we did pre-covid times.
- Jen Bean: Discrimination of older people with disabilities. People with multiple points of the potential for discrimination in the workplace.
- Lesa Dunphy: another barrier is the lack of communication with employers. Those conversations are not being had.
- Pablo Villarreal: Spoke about that lack of consistent communication and engagement between DVR business specialists and employers.
- Alex Toney: Also spoke to the potential to build better efficiency within the public school service system to support students with disabilities to find higher quality/high paying jobs. Helping them explore what their interests and talents are, and how that can translate to job skills and career pursuits.
- Laurae MacClain: rural areas continue to be a challenge to serve. Transportation, lack of jobs.
- Courtney Williams: I feel WASILC can support this effort- we are working on engaging with intention for the broader cross disability community.
- Aimee Elber: Having good communication and relationships between DVR and higher education student support services would help bridge gaps.
- Lesa Dunphy: Transition youth in rural areas are very underserved.

DVR Director Updates: Dana Phelps

- Angela Ramirez named new Sec. of DSHS.
- Dept. of Education budget proposal impacts on DVR
 - Would reduce DVR's annual grant by \$6.6 million. That is more than 10% reduction.
 - Eliminates supported employment grant, approximately \$400K annually.
 - Eliminates funding for Client Assistance Program, approximately \$275K annually.
 - Work requirements for SNAP and Medicaid are likely to increase demand for DVR services.
- Federal VR budget impacts
 - Feds have not put out their guidance yet.
 - We will not have the funds to provide DVR services for all who want them.
 - If the DOE VR budget proposal passes as is:
 - DVR will need to replace the lost supported employment grant with the general VR grant funding
 - Costs continue to increase
 - DVR and DSB will work together to ensure that funding is available to operate CAP.
- The Senate Appropriations Committee had a bipartisan budget proposal which would:
 - Provide VR grant funds with a cost of living allowance.
 - Fund the supported employment and CAP.
 - Will continue to monitor final decisions made by Congress.
- There may be a continuing resolution. CSAVR continue to advocate in D.C.
- We don't want to overspend, so we may need to close all categories for a time to have the ability to pay for everyone on a caseload.
- The following are changes to federal programs, including SNAP and Medicaid

- HRI now requires a state match for federal funds, somewhere between 5-15% match. Increased state match requirements for SNAP based on error rates will cost WA state between \$100-\$300 million annually.
- Change to the cost share for administering SNAP will cost state additional \$66 million. They're changing it from 50-50 to now 25% federal and 75% state costs.
- SNAP work requirements will impact an additional 137,304 Washingtonians.
- Reduces food benefits for more than 920,000 people.
- Adds community engagement requirements of 80 hrs. per month for Medicaid. Who is exempt from this is very unclear.
- Limits the impact of Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) Act payments in SNAP to households with elderly or disabled members.
- Adults Basic Education funding eliminated.
- Matching funds
 - Goes into effect Oct. 2027.
 - Some things have already been defunded. Because there is so little clarity from the federal level, it is difficult to forecast.
- State Budget impacts
 - The budget implemented for the state had the following impacts
 - School to Work funding reduced \$2.4 million
 - Other DVR funding reduced \$1.7 million. Cuts in travel, equipment purchases
 - 26 DVR positions were eliminated in response to the reductions.
 - We have added some counselors in offices statewide to help reduce caseload size.
- Funding for Tribes
 - DVR and DSB received funding in the state budget to support tribes working with people with disabilities seeking employment.
 - DVR and DSB are working with interested Tribes to define the specific contract terms.
 - Hope to share success stories about what was accomplished with the additional funding to tribes.
 - The intent is to provide flexibility to the Tribes so they can utilize the funds in multiple ways.
- Intake wait times
 - Multiple offices are experiencing delays in intakes.
 - Two factors are contributing to this:
 - Increased interest in DVR services
 - High caseload ratio in offices
 - Working to promote staff retention
 - DVR is adding VRC positions to offices with a high caseload ratio, including Puyallup and Tacoma.
 - SeaTac and Kent are working to fill counselor vacancies.
 - As new counselors are available the intake appointment dates will shift.
- Customer Behavior Trends
 - DVR is experiencing escalation of concerning behavior among a subset of people we are serving. Threatening the safety of staff, threatening to bomb office buildings, etc.
 - DVR does not have a process to navigate such cases.
 - In response we are taking the following actions:
 - Establishing a challenging cases protocol—Policy being drafted modeled on long term care protocol.
 - Provided guidance to staff regarding inquiries about staff whereabouts.

- Working with DSHS broadly as the issue is not isolated to DVR.
- Provided safety trainings in several offices in collaboration with other parts of DSHS.
- Partnering with Behavioral Health and Economic Services for their guidance to develop these policies.
- DOC might be a good place to explore for additional collaboration to develop policies.
- Intake, IPE, and Assessment Changes
 - We have identified changes to the IPE form which is being programmed in WAVES.
 - Working to reduce administrative burden. Focus on developing a relationship with the customer. Training team will begin staff training in October.
 - Vocational Assessment—We have changed the vocational assessment documentation as part of changes to the plan.

DVR Fiscal Updates: Jamie Grund, Haley Tresenriter

- Hayley Tresenriter is the new DVR Finance and Budget manager; she started on June 1st.
- Budget has been signed by the governor. Working on our allotments.
 - Wage increases 3% and 2%
 - Tribal VR funding is \$1.1 million
 - Government efficiency
 - Reducing expenditures on equipment, travel, management/admin, and goods & services.
 - Reduce admin expenditures, reduce school to work, SB 5253 unfunded.
- Supplemental SFY 25 is \$8 million in federal appropriation.
- We did not overspend our state or our federal funds.
- SFY 2026 budget
 - SFY 26 appropriation is \$85 million
 - Our current appropriation does not support the SFY 26 budget. We will overspend unless we close more categories.
 - Intra-agency spending includes IT services. Network access, servers.
- VR Basic support 2024
 - We are in the 2nd year of this grant, which closes Sept. 30th. We will have fully spent this grant, and will not be sending any money back.
 - We have exceeded our Pre-ETS 15% as a state.
- VR Basic support 2025
 - We will be asking for \$5 million in re-allotment funds. This is not a guarantee. We will not know until Sept.
 - This would increase Pre-ETS 15%, or \$9.1 million.
 - Pre-ETS is averaging \$770K a month
 - Increases our state match
 - Requesting \$500K in supported employment
- Proposed budget for the Dept. of Education
 - Total impact to DVR in FFY 26 is roughly a \$6.6 million reduction.
 - Eliminates funding for the Client Assistance Program.
 - Training for customers has increased by 29%.
 - There was a 7% overall increase in client service costs from SFY 24 to SFY 25.
 - School to Work spending reduced from SFY 24 to SFY 25.

- \$4 million spent thus far this fiscal year. We are in good shape.
- What happened with Pre-ETS spending in Bellevue? It is very low.
- FFY 25 YTD is \$2.2 million
- DVR did *not* reduce travel expenses to provide customer services or for meetings with our tribal partners.

Region 1 Updates: Angela Merritt, Mary Crago

- Many staff are co-located with Work Sources. Colville, Kennewick, Sunnyside, Walla Walla, Omak, and Spokane. Some of our offices operate out of the WorkSource offices.
- Many staff travel long distances to reach rural areas.
- Staffing
 - Vacancy in Yakima unit and in Pullman. Some positions have been open for a while. Need for quality candidates.
 - Staff layoffs: Lost three rehab techs, a business specialist, and four admin asst. positions.
 - Some rehab techs serve a VRC in their office and are assigned to one at an outstation.
- Most regional offices are scheduling intakes out 1-2 weeks. Spokane is booked out into November though. This is due to new counselors.
- Average caseload is 70-80. A few counselors have 100+.
- Success statistics from 9/1/24—7/21/25
 - Engagement with customers has improved.
 - Completed 1,344 eligibilities in average of 42 days.
 - 723 IPEs completed in an average of 86 days.
 - Focusing on fixing errors in Waves. Reports are helping catch errors and better manage caseloads.
 - Tribal relations and shared cases with Tribal VR are strong.
 - Tribal relationship building: 701 plans with Colville, Omak, Spokane, Yakima, Kalispell, Coeur d'Alene, and the American Indian Community Center and the Native Project in Spokane. They meet quarterly as a group.
- Transition work in ESD 105
 - Services established in 25 schools, focusing on rural and underserved areas.
 - Providing Pre-ETS. Currently working with Yakama Nation Tribal school.
 - Rosa coordinates services in Toppenish, Sunnyside, and Wapato.
 - Many contractors available in the area.
 - DCYF serving juvenile rehabilitation youth.
- Youth Strides
 - Youth Strides is modular curriculum designed for students that is inclusive and adaptable for various learning styles.
 - Designed to serve Pre-ETS students aged 14-22.
- TECH-Prep Research Project
 - Research study being conducted by Washington State Univ, Univ. of Wisconsin Madison, and Virginia Commonwealth Univ.
- Assistive Technology
 - ATAP provider in Region 1 is Shaun Hegney. He talks to staff, attends unit meetings, he has done demos of certain AT equipment to increase awareness of what is available. He holds monthly office hours for staff to ask questions.

Yakima, South-Central Unit Updates: Becky Gellerson, Franciso Felan

- They have had good staff retention in the past 3-4 years. Strong, competent staff.
- There is a lack of providers in some areas. A regional psychiatrist retired and individuals were traveling great distances to see one. A staff member was able to contact a licensed psychologist/neuro and they are now contracted to provide assessments virtually.
- Internet services throughout the region can be a barrier. Jamie Parker reached out to advanced internet, asked about if they could serve the underserved area. Made them a vendor, and now that area has internet.
- Working to build better relationships with schools.
- Customer Service and Rapid engagement
 - We want to take the computer out of the intake. To build rapport, relations. Really talk to the person. We took it out. Only bring out the computer at the end if they decide they want to sign up for services.
- Consistent contact with customers—97% of cases have had activity within 30 days or less.
- VRS involvement in cases.
- Becky holds information sessions with customers, taking this work off the VRC's plates.
- Labor market statistics
 - 30% went to post-secondary
 - We focus on dreaming big. Look beyond "survival jobs".
- Save jobs by VRCs going to customers' employers and advocating for them, helping employer to consider what is needed for job retention.
- Participant success stories were shared
- South Central Unit: Francisco Felan
 - They have been fully staffed for a couple years.
- Staff participated in Treaty Days on June 6
- 41 employers have committed to register for the Yakima Employability Career Fair
- Lack of interpreters. Contacted Leilani Martinez, she connected them with Convo Now. They will be at the job fair. It's an on demand ASL platform.
- WinCo is the largest employee-owned grocery store in the country. They are opening a headquarters in Ellensburg. They have a program for people with disabilities to have a job.
 - Francisco is meeting with them to partner with them. They have a 6-week internship program, including simulated training before working on the floor.

Yakama Nation Tribal VR Updates: Ashley Whitefoot

- The program began in January 2024. Started accepting applications for VR services in May 2024, started serving in June 2024.
- Had to figure out finances. Communicated with tribal council, tribal administrators, to reorganize the program.
- Do not serve descendants, only members of the Yakama Nation.
- Serve within a 70-mile radius of the Tribal VR office.
- Yakama Nation is made up of 14 different tribes. They provide culturally appropriate services.
- Prioritized comparable services. Works with Native Workforce Development program. They provide training and job placements.
- Some tribal members who live off the reservation do not always know what services are available to them from Tribal VR.
- Customers have computers at the Tribal VR office they can use.

- Question about what happens to ABLE account money if the recipient passes away:
<https://www.ableunited.com/?faq=what-happens-after-the-death-of-a-beneficiary-2>

Public Comment

None

Council Wrap up

- Jen Bean: Robust discussion on the needs assessment. Themes: Partnership and coordination are more important now more than ever.
- Jill McCormick: reflected on how the approach is different across the regions. Taking a team approach is personalized from region to region, as the needs in each community look different.
- There is a wide variety of specialized expertise across the state.
- Michele Stelovich: Challenges create opportunities to innovate in a way that really services individuals. What is the bright side of the circumstances that have been forced upon us.
- Liz Gallagher: I think it's important to just highlight what's been said about these improvements taking time. I appreciate this council so much for keeping a close pulse on everything and giving plenty of grace and understanding around implementation challenges when we are all also so anxious to fix things. lean into that grace y'all. We are going to need that critical eye yet graceful heart to endure whatever comes next.
- Lesa Dunphy: The creation of float VRCs has greatly helped.

Meeting adjourned at 3:26pm