

## **WSRC QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES**

*November 13, 2025*

*9:00am-3:03pm*

**Members Present:** Michele Stelovich, Council Chair, Labor Representative, Everett  
Jennifer Bean, Council Vice Chair, Client Assistance Program, Bellingham  
Jill McCormick, Parent Advocate Representative, Puyallup  
Jennifer Tabiando, CRP Representative, Lynnwood  
Liz Gallagher, Workforce Board Representative, Lakebay  
Jana Finkbonner, Tribal VR Representative, Bellingham  
Aimee Elber, Disability Advocacy Representative, Spokane  
Alexandra Toney, OSPI Representative, Olympia  
Matt Newton, Business Representative, Tacoma  
Dana Phelps, DVR Director, Ex-Officio, Olympia  
Verena Strydom, DVR Counselor Representative, Ex-Officio, Kirkland  
Katrina Simmons, Recipient of Services Representative, Tacoma  
Danna Summers, SILC Representative, Kenmore

**Members Absent:** Noelle Green, Recipient of Services Representative, Olympia  
Edward Nicholson, Business Representative, Vancouver

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

### **Visitors:**

AJ Bayaca, CES, Aaron Dickson, Alan Knue, Alfredo, Allison Carroll, Amal Grabinski, Amanda Crain, Amanda Anderson, Amber Steele, Anna Winterrose, Angela Gomez, Angela Merritt, Annie Sumpter, Ashanti M-T, Ashlee Wiley, Ashley Corral, Ashley Curtin, Ashley Johnson, Ayan Elmi, Becky Gellerson, Ben-Goodwill, Ben Martin, Brandy Hanson, Brenda Kim, Brian Nichols, Brit Nuckles, Bruce Larson, Cami Falcon, Carrie Bayha, Carrie Givens, Carrie Morehouse, Cassie Glenn, Cathy Eylar, Cec Anson, Chelsey Mercer, Chelsie Brann, Chris Pierson, Christina Frye, Chloe Pinckney, Christine Magnuson, Chrissy Dahlgren, Clarisa Braulick, Christy Osborne, Carla Caballero-Jackson, Clayton McCrary, Chelsey Mercer, Courtney Williams, Cynthia Waterman, Dala Rice, Dani Cook, Daniel Bravo, Danielle Schrauth, Danielle McGuffin, Darren Paschke, David Stewart, Don Redford, Deona Koberstein, Doug Burkhalter, E Boggan, Emily Hart, Mary DuPuis, Eliza Lester, Elizabeth Gordon, Emily Hart, Erica Vogel, Erin Lloyd, Faizah Shukru, Francisco Felan, Gabriel Delgado, Gail Russell, Gina Solberg, Hannah Adira, Heather Evans, Helen Christensen, Holly Herrick, Holly Montana, Jaime Britton, James O'Brien, Jamie Grund, Jami Mitchell, Jamie Rasmussen, Janet Fisher, Janet Hammerman, Janet Pouvi, Janel Goebel, Janet

Vaupel, Jared Bradshaw, Jacqueline Wilkins, Jeanese Hime, Jenn Ramirez Robson, Jennifer Huard, Jen Francis, Jen Chong-Jewell, Jennifer Snow, Jessica Bell, Jessica Smith, Joanne Ogg, Jolene Greenough, Johanna Hudson, Joy Osstyn, Julie Pollard, Julia Smith, Karen Williams, Kathy Powers, Katie Mirkovich, Katina James, Katherine Bournelis, Kelly Franklin, Kerrylin Ramsey, Kim Bayston, Kim Lappala, Kresttian Foster, Kierra Fears, Kristin Nguyen, Kristin Wade, Kristina Zawisza, Lauren Peterson, Lee Olson, Leilani Martinez, Lesa Dunphy, Linda McDonald, Linda Padgett, Linda Wilkinson, Lisa Cook, Lisette Falk, Liz Drennan, Loree Bauge, Lorraine Floyd, Mandy Kipfer, Marika McCaddon, Marcella Taylor, Mark McEnderfer, Martha Chavez-Ward, Mary Revenna, Mari Heusman, Mike Gorday, Melanie Coleman, Melinda Bocci, Melissa MacDonald, Michele Hernandez, Michelle Sari, Nicole Samateh, Nancy Quisenberry, Natalie Cobb, Nicole Garner, Nikki-Chinook, Pablo Villarreal, Patricia Acevedo, Paula Bouwer, Rachael Beamis, Rhonda Nester, Rena Van Meter, Renee Silva, Rich Robinson, Richard Wilson, Robb St. Lawrence, Ronnie Oswald, Rosa Estrella, Ryan Newell, Ryan Welch, Sam Blazina, Sarah Lowes, Sean Yoshimatsu, Selena Walker, Shannon Haber, Shari Johnson, Sharon P, Shawn Walsworth, Sherlisa Steele, Stephanie Cole, Stacia Gerds, Stephanie Simmons, Steven Potter, Sonya Sanders, Sue Saxton, Susy Stremel, Sundus Ali, Tammy Bowen, TJ Protho, Tara Zink, Toby B, Thavy Mon-Hing, Tracy-PAVE, Tricia Wiltse, Yael Herbstman, Yesenia Escalante, Yvonne White, Zandra Leitch.

**Call to Order**— Meeting called to order at 9:02am by Michele Stelovich, Council Chair

## Executive Committee

**Motion:** Approval of August 2025 quarterly meeting minutes

**First:** Matt Newton                      **Second:** Jill McCormick

No edits, no abstentions.      **APPROVED**

## DVR Updates

DVR Director Updates: Dana Phelps

- DSHS has a new Secretary named Angela Ramirez.
- Federal shutdown ended yesterday, Nov. 12. Continuing resolution goes through Jan. 2026.
- Many states nationwide are not in a financial position to fund VR in their states, but WA State is.
- Our federal partners know the importance of VR and to fully fund the program.
- SNAP will be funded through the end of 2026.
- Verbal, physical, and written threats have been made to DSHS, DVR staff have increased this year. DVR leadership created a customer behavior expectation. Yvonne Bussler-White has drafted a challenging case protocol. It outlines for the most extreme cases as well. DVR will collaborate with the Client Assistance Program.
- Update cooperative agreement with Tribal VR to address customer behavior, how we communicate that decision to partners at TVR programs. We should address clear and timely communication if threats are made.
- Individual DVR offices are creating their own safety protocols as well.
- DVR have been under corrective action plan for timeliness of services. That change was rolled out in early September. Overall, staff feedback has been positive and that it takes way less time to

complete an IPE in Waves. 94% of plans in October were completed within 90 days! Staff have made enormous efforts to meet this goal.

#### DVR Field Services Updates: Angela Merritt

- Staffing
  - Currently there are minimal staff vacancies.
  - Added two additional VRC float positions and two ASL interpreters hired.
- IPE Timeliness/Intake Improvement Project
  - New intake process training completed by Mandy Kipfer.
  - New participant guide and a communication agreement shared at intake.
  - Transition students will utilize the new process.
- In anticipation of closing categories, efforts are being redirected to moving participants into plan and will resume focus on intakes after all categories close.
- How is DVR planning on tracking spending on these plans? There is heightened attention to client service spending.

### Order of Selection: Information Session

#### Budgetary Considerations

- DVR entered an order of selection (waitlist) on 3/17/25, closing 3 of 5 service categories to help control costs and avoid overspending.
- Spending is not reduced enough, so DVR needs to close all 5 service categories.
- Uncertain about the FFY2026 budget.
- DVR has funding through January 2026. We must be prepared for a possible budget reduction.
- DVR continues to control costs by reducing travel expenses, limiting training and conference expenditures, reducing contracts for non-direct services, etc.

#### Customer Impacts

- Customers who are already have an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) will continue to receive services.
- Individuals with the most significant disabilities have the highest priority for receiving services.
- Service categories 1-5 are assigned at eligibility determination.
- Pre-ETS services will continue to be provided to students with disabilities.

#### Next Steps

- DVR notified the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) of our need to close all categories.
- Information to be shared with community partners.
- DVR participants impacted will be notified in writing.

### Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) Highlights

- The CSNA is a study of the vocational rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities statewide, required by federal law.
- Components of the CSNA
  - Assessment of service gaps and needs was conducted by the Interwork Institute at San Diego State University.

- Assessment of service gaps and needs of American Indian/Alaska Native individuals with disabilities was conducted by The Athena Group.
- WSRC conducted a survey about access to the workforce system.
- Quantitative analysis of data conducted by DVR planning and evaluation team.
- Findings from assessments, data analysis
  - Decline in employment rates at exit
  - Increase in median wage earnings
  - Increase in average cost per rehabilitated case
  - Barriers to success included:
    - Significant fear of losing benefits upon gaining employment
    - Housing instability
    - Discrimination by employers
  - Specific to DVR services
    - Need for smaller caseloads and improved case management system.
    - Communication gaps, better follow up. This is the most important issue to participants.
    - Variation in service delivery across DVR offices and counselors as well as inconsistencies among community-based providers.
    - Complex processes.
- Recommendations
  - Stabilize the continuity of counselor assignments despite staff turnover.
  - Continue investing in benefits planning.
  - Emphasize career training and assistive technology to support credential attainment.
  - Focus on financial empowerment.
- Workforce Section Highlights
  - Listening sessions were held with local workforce board leadership and DVR workforce system reps.
    - Access to WorkSource services
    - DVR role as a Workforce partner
    - System integration and coordination
    - Promising practices examples:
      - North Central partners with OSPI's Open Doors Youth Reengagement program. Pre-ETS and school districts provide paid work experiences.
      - South Central has developed a resource desk guide for frontline staff.
    - Challenges
    - Recommendations
      - Training for DVR Title IV reps serving on LWDB board of directors.
      - Cross training for DVR with WorkSource system partners.
      - Establish regular meetings.

## State Plan Progress Update

### WSRC's role in the State Plan

- Staff serve on planning team with DVR Policy & Strategies unit.

- Staff lead writing in consultation with Policy & Planning committee.
- Council leads public forum planning.
- The State Plan Progress update will be posted on DVR website by Jan. 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026 with a public forum on Jan. 21, 2026.
- Council may make a recommendation about data analysis. At this stage, more work needs to be done before we advance and submit a formal recommendation. Council agreed to take this to the subcommittees for further work.
- DVR must respond to input and recommendations made by the council.

## Council Updates

### Annual Report

- Reviewed the topics and content of the 2025 Annual Report.

### NCSRC/CSAVR Conference Highlights

- Partnering with Business
- Attendance was lower this year.
- A lived experience panel featured supporting youth in foster care and incarcerated young adults to reach their employment opportunities.

### Committee Highlights

#### CSPE

- Hoping to better correlate customer satisfaction survey results with the life cycle of their case and better correlate with causation. With a ROI, we can access more data to tie that together.
- Planning on diving more into program evaluation with Kristina Zawisza and her team.

## Partner Updates

### Workforce Board: Liz Gallagher

- Liz joined the [StaffUp ASAP](#) Advisory Committee, which is a 5-year grant project funded by the Dept. of Education and run by the University of Wisconsin-Stout. It's a committee of subject matter experts on VR programs. She attended as the WA state rep. for the first time earlier this month. The group supports the development of an accelerated training program that is aimed at improving VR counselor recruitment and retention. Developing an online training program. Pilot program begins 01/05/26. Participants can earn college credit. Each committee rep. can bring 2-3 volunteers to participate in the pilot program.

### Tribal VR: Jana Finkbonner

- CANAR Conference will be Dec. 2-4<sup>th</sup> in Chandler, AZ. The Navajo Tribe is celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their Tribal VR program.
- Washington State now has 12 Tribal VR programs. Coeur d'Alene also shares a couple counties in WA.

- With the end of the government shutdown, the Tribes hope to have the new 5-year grant cycle open up shortly. Anticipating that it may be late and a short grant cycle this year.
- Will work to schedule a date for the new cooperative agreement.

## Council Wrap up

- Matt Newton: Expressed appreciation for DVR leadership’s openness and guidance in making hard decisions as DVR navigates order of selection. Appreciate all the effort being made to limit the impacts on customers.
- Aimee Elber: Shared her appreciation for the council’s hard work this year, the reminder to “Dream Big”, and how it is great to hear how DVR continues to use plain language and strives to make documents accessible whenever possible.
- Jill McCormick: It has been interesting to see how council work intersects with families, students, and information systems about transition. She expressed appreciation for DVR’s partnership with PAVE, with the Dept. of Education, and the work of transition.
- Resources from chat:
  - Order of Selection FAQ: <https://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/order-selection-information#Transition-Service>
  - Staff Up ASAP Advisory Committee Opportunity: <https://staffupasap.org/>

Meeting adjourned at 3:03pm