

WSRC QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

February 12, 2026

9:00am-12:24pm

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

Members Absent: Danna Summers, SILC Representative, Kenmore
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:

Aaron Dickson, Angela Merritt, AJ Bayaca, Annie Sumpter, Amanda Anderson, Ashanti, Ashley Curtin, Ben, B Murray, Brenda Kim, Chrissy Dahlgren, Christina Frye, Courtney Williams, Dala Rice, Danielle Schrauth, Deona Koberstein, David Hankinson, David Stewart, Doug Burkhalter, Elizabeth Gordon, Gabriel Delgado, Heather Van Dyke, Heidi Scheibner, James O'Brien, Jamie Grund, Jamie Rasmussen, Jen Chong-Jewell, Joshua Stevens, Krysta Van Woert, Kristina Zawisza, Laura Fussell, Linda Wilkinson, Lucinda Heidel, Mari Heusman, Maria Buxbaum, Mark Mattke, Marsha Longmeier, Mary Crago, Megan Grundbrecher, Melinda Bocci, Pablo Villarreal, Patricia Norman, Rebecca Jansson, Rena Van Meter, Renee Silva, Rosa Q, Sam Blazina, Shawn Walsworth, Sherlisa Steele, Stacie-Cascade, Stacy O'Quin Kidd, Steven Potter, Tara Zink, Thavy Mom-Hing, Yvonne Bussler-White, Zandra Leitch

Call to Order— Meeting called to order at 9:03am by Michele Stelovich, Council Chair

Executive Committee

Motion: Approval of November 2025 quarterly meeting minutes

First: Jen Bean

Second: Jill McCormick

No edits, no abstentions.

APPROVED

Public Comment

Jen Chong-Jewell:

I'm speaking to you as a parent, as a community member, and someone who once served on the rehabilitation council. I have some concerns that I wanted to share with you today, especially as a parent who has a loved one with an intellectual and developmental disability. I have long understood that his right to be supported and included in community is so important, and that means supports that he receives through the Developmental Disability Community Services and through the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. And last year we saw the biggest cuts to Medicaid, so on the federal level, which is so concerning. As a parent, I've also noted that I've seen the Office of Civil Rights under the U.S. Department of Education just more or less gutted, and I watched the rights of my son whittle away under that. And the efforts to move the Office of Special Education under the Health and Human Services department is horrifying to me. So amongst this, and all the ongoing cuts, as an example, last year we saw that DSHS eliminated case management services to individuals who are on the no-paid service list. They made cuts to other services via staff cuts, which impacted programs and eliminated them all together, such as the Meaningful Day Program for those who are in residential services.

I continue to watch millions of dollars being returned and the budget cut for 2022 Senate Bill 5790, an act to strengthen critical community support services for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I know this session we might see very weak legislation pass to address isolation restraint. I'm not hopeful, though. And over the weekend, I got to watch the legislators quietly pass an amendment to pull back funding levels to 2008 levels for Early Supports for Individuals, Infants and Toddlers with developmental disabilities. I think for the majority of folks, some of this news has been barely received or subsequently felt with maybe with the exception of the big topic of Medicaid cuts. There's so much going on, and really, I am led to the reality that most folks don't think about the quality of life of disabled folks, even if disability is the largest minority group across racial and ethnic lines.

I continue to be so concerned with what is happening with the management of the legislation for 5790, and the fact that for any student that goes into this program and doesn't receive the outcome of a job and stabilization, that those unspent funds that were attributed to an authorized for purchase thing for DVR, goes to the general service client fund, and not reinvested or protected for young adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. I worry so much about seeing this whole thing essentially disappear, because funding can't be spent, we're not investing in the right things, and as a legislator who doesn't -- for legislators who don't understand the contextual nature of what it all takes to get a job, a successful job outcome, that they will continue to believe that investing in our young people with intellectual and developmental disabilities is not a worthwhile investment.

So with all that said, and because I served on this council before when, during those years when we, the DVR was returning millions of dollars to the feds for not spending it on Pre-ETS, I understand that DVR's in a different place with that right now, but I worry that this is a similar pattern, where we will just see dollars and resources not be spent where they're supposed to be sent, and in the end, these inter-sectional cuts to the individuals who have disabilities is going to contribute to a catastrophic nightmare,

where people cannot live and work and be supported in their communities. Thank you for taking my comment.

DVR Director Updates

Federal Updates

- Congress passed a budget that included VR funding through September 2026. The Client Assistance Program, Supported Employment, and inflationary funding are also fully funded, which is great news since it was initially proposed that funding for them would be eliminated.
- Federal government has proposed to eliminate the Dept. of Education. A pathway to continue providing services is by creating interagency agreements with the Dept. of Labor for DVR and Dept. of the Interior under the Bureau of Indian Affairs. We have not seen those agreements. It is still unclear how Tribal VR funding will function.
- RSA Guidance on updating the State Plan
- Align with State Plans with the pillars Preparing for the Golden Age of Employment. Emphasis on contracts being based on performance-based outcomes.

State Legislature Activity

- No bills of concern.
- House and Senate budgets to be released later this month. Will continue to monitor how this will affect DVR and disability partners. Most of VR funding is from federal funding.
- Governor's budget proposed reductions to School to Work funding. Funding reduction would not reduce the availability of the program or delay services. Next step is, how do we carry out the intent of the law? School to Work existed before the state-only money was provided through SB5790, so it is an allowable service under the VR grant.

Order of Selection-Waitlist Updates

- DVR closed all service categories on Dec. 8, 2025.
- We are seeing a growth in the number of individuals on the waitlist. Fiscal team and data analysts continue to monitor spending and trends so that we do not overspend our grant.
- Individuals should continue to apply.

State Plan Update

- Due to RSA on March 3rd. DVR is on track to submit by the deadline. WSRC staff supported the facilitation of the public forum and two Roundtable meetings that were held with Tribal VR partners to inform the State Plan.

Executive Order 24-05

- Order signed by Gov. Inslee and supported by Gov. Ferguson to increase employment for people with disabilities, in particular with State jobs.
- Dana and the DSB Director, Michael MacKillop, are participating in a steering committee. Their work focuses on having an accessible work environment, training and education opportunities, and Supported Employment for people with disabilities.
- Fifteen agencies are participating. The majority of Supported Employment occurs within DSHS.
- Jana Finkbonner asked Dana to please inform and discuss this topic at a Tribal Directors meeting.

Complex Case Protocol and Policy

- Developed policy that provides guidance to DVR staff for cases where staff safety is threatened and aligns with existing policies used within DSHS to ensure that staff are supported.
- WSRC and CAP supported the policy development.
- Built in resources for staff to access support for post-secondary trauma and involve CAP.

- Jen Bean, CAP, shared how these kinds of threats and behaviors have increased exponentially over the last 30 years.

Questions/Comments

- Matt Newton asked how the council can support School to Work? We will not see a reduction until next year. We are tracking how many participants are in School to Work, how many are completing program with a job, etc.
- Aimee Elber asked about Executive Order 24-05. How is DVR planning to scale partnerships to ensure consistent communication, creating hiring pipelines, and are there other agencies already engaged? How will smaller WA state agencies be supported? This could be a great project for the Partnership subcommittee to work on.
 - Dana Phelps and Michael MacKillop are already talking with agency leaders about employing people with disabilities and Supported Employment. They are drawing in Workforce leads, Pablo Villarreal and Lisa Wheeler, and Business Specialists are also making inroads.
- Verena Strydom advocated for additional field staff to reduce caseload size.

Fiscal Updates

Federal budget

- Budget was passed. DVR is awaiting grand award amount and will not estimate spending until we receive the amount.

State budget-Governor's budget

- State Fiscal Year 2026—We saw a \$36K reduction due to transfers, which is common.
- State Fiscal Year 2027—We see a \$1.49 million reduction
 - Transfers reduction-\$149K
 - Admin reduction-\$52K
 - School to Work reduction-\$1.3 million

VR Basic Support Grant 2025

- We are in the 2nd year of this grant. The carryover period ends in September.
 - We are on track to fully spend the \$8.4 million grant by 9/30/26.
- Pre-ETS: only \$1.7 million to hit target

VR Basic Support 2026

- We received \$19.6 million as part of the continuing resolution.
- Need to match with state funds by 9/30/26.
 - Estimated state funds= \$17.8 million

Pre-ETS

- We have almost fully spent the Federal Fiscal Year 2025 grant and will likely transition to spending FFY 2026 grant in April.
- Currently averaging \$60K/month in staff salaries and benefits who provide Pre-ETS services.

Other Spending

- Staff travel has been reduced. Travel spending prioritized for providing customer services.
- Highest spend in the budget goes toward client services.
- Highest spend in the client service category is for Community Rehabilitation Provider services.

Question

- Jen Chong-Jewell asked: How much of unspent funds of School to Work AFPs were sent back to client service fund last year?
 - Jamie Grund answered: The Proviso expired. Any funds not spent on School to Work are spent on other customer services. The money is not sent back; it is spent providing other services.
 - Dana shared that OSPI is guiding a transition collaborative to address these needs.

Program Evaluation Updates

- Enterprise Performance Management System
 - DVR used to use a system called Results but discontinued its use in December 2025. DVR is developing an in-house system that utilizes AI, which will allow us to tailor it to our needs and adapt the system more quickly. It is not a public-facing dashboard.
- Developing methods for measuring CRP performance.
 - Will take into consideration the populations served by CRPs and local labor markets.
- Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Indicators
 - Includes employment rate, median earnings, credential attainment, and measurable skill gain.
 - Evaluated in each individual and the overall program score.
 - Forthcoming WIOA measure: effectiveness in serving employers, job retention.
 - One challenge to this data is, we do not know the adjusted targets until the program year has ended. We have had conversations with RSA about this.
- Analyzing customer satisfaction is ongoing.
- Rehab Rate
 - Ongoing challenges are tied with lowest rate in DVR records.
 - Conducted analysis on performance records, case-level factors, and identifying internal and external factors.
- Will explore what factors affect our performance. Michael Sims has focused on ongoing challenges to raise median wages and income.
- Customer Satisfaction Program Improvement Project
 - Collaborating with CSPE subcommittee

Council Priorities Updates

Executive

- Recruitment focusing on a business representative
 - Past recruitment efforts have included outreach to multiple partners such as WA Workforce Associations, Workforce Education Coordinating Board, etc. We have utilized support of DSHS Communications to create and share on DSHS social media.
- Terms ending this year are the Business rep and WASILC rep.
- Gauged interest in council prioritizing educational information about legislative bills. What support can we bring. We would not participate in direct lobbying. We would adhere to council guidelines. Discussed council capacity, amidst other priorities.

Policy & Planning

- DVR State Plan progress update. DVR will submit to RSA in March.
- Currently reviewing the On-the-Job Training policy. We have until next week to provide comments on the policy.
- Will also review WACs to see if there is anything that needs to be updated.

- Also prioritizing the Customer Services Manual, and the Financial Needs Statement as capacity allows.

CSPE

- Customer Satisfaction Survey is ongoing. We receive around 30% response rate.
- Reviewing trends quarterly with Fair Hearings.
- Customer listening sessions. Will hold sessions in March with SeaTac participants.
- Customer Satisfaction Program Improvement Project. Began the project in December, will go through September.

Partnership

- Will complete updates to the Transition Map this summer, as we receive other agency's updated logos.
- Transition Collaborative Summative Legislative Report.
 - OSPI is coordinating this interagency collaborative. Shelby, along with the Developmental Disabilities Council, are leading the community engagement effort.
 - Will hold five listening sessions, one focusing on counties, one on students and families, one on educators, one on community rehab partners, and one Tribal partners.
 - Will submit the report to State Legislature in Oct. 2026.
 - Centers on students with significant support needs who may qualify for additional supports during post-secondary transition.
- Completed work on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.
- Workforce system, transition connections, and business. Continue to evaluate how to align these systems. Dana has had conversations with Pablo about coordinating efforts with the Transition Council and business, youth in transition, and other groups.

Meeting adjourned at 12:24pm

Links shared in chat:

Executive Order [24-05 - Disabilities in State Employment \(tmp\).pdf](#)

RSA TAC: https://rsa.ed.gov/sites/default/files/subregulatory/RSA-TAC-26-01_0.pdf