

Washington State Rehabilitation Council

2020
ANNUAL REPORT



Washington State
Rehabilitation Council

Message

From the WSRC Chair

Dear Commissioner Schultz and Governor Inslee,

On behalf of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC), I am pleased to present the 2020 WSRC Annual Report.



The past year has required all of us to be creative and flexible as the COVID-19 pandemic unfolded. The Department of Social and Health Services Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DSHS/DVR) and WSRC experienced a rapid shift from office to remote based work. DVR staff have done commendable work adapting to required fundamental shifts in the service delivery model. I am also proud of the work the WSRC has achieved over this period of uncertainty due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council had some amazing opportunities to consult on and provide input and guidance to the DVR with the goal of improving the lives of Washington State citizens with disabilities.

It has been a busy year!

The Council engaged in person for our quarterly meetings for November 2019 and January 2020. Then as health and safety concerns related to the COVID-19 pandemic presented themselves, we shifted to quarterly virtual meetings in compliance with Governor Inslee's "Stay Home, Stay Healthy" orders in May and August 2020. Our committees continued to meet virtually between our quarterly meetings with an additional focus on how customer services and needs were shifting because of the pandemic.

As the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation made a rapid transition from office based to remote service delivery in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we advocated for federal waiver flexibilities, increased support for customers and Community Rehabilitation Providers.

We quickly realized there was a significant impact on Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs) who provide essential employment services in the field due to a dramatic reduction in referrals. WSRC reached out to VR programs in other states to learn about supports they put in place to ensure CRPs remained viable during this time. Resulting from these conversations with the Missouri VR program and council advocacy, DVR implemented a 50% bonus to payments made June 1-Oct. 31 to Community Rehabilitation Providers who continued to provide essential services during the pandemic. Additionally, DVR heard input from providers regarding the costs of accreditation and waived CARF certification during the next contract period to assist in alleviating financial pressures.

A few highlights of the past year included November 2019, when the Council toured the Hands-On @ Hyatt program at the Grand Hyatt Seattle. This program is sponsored by the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation's Pre-Employment Transition Services program to assist students gain work based learning experience working in a variety of hotel positions. WSRC was impressed with the positive impact on students participating in this paid work based learning experience.

Council members and staff also enjoyed engaging in the coordination of two momentous occasions this year: the celebration of the ADA 30th Anniversary in June, and the VR100 Anniversary Celebration in October.

The Council welcomed new members, including Michele Stelovich, our Labor representative, and Lesa Dunphy, the Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor representative on the Council. We currently have four vacant positions, including State Independent Living Council Liaison, Labor, Business, and a Recipient of Services representative. The Council is eager to add these roles and maintain strong state representation on the Council.

It is important to recognize the hundreds of volunteer hours WSRC members spend to achieve goals throughout the year. Thank you to each member for your valued contributions!

We look forward to our ongoing partnership with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in 2021!

Respectfully,
Kathy Powers, Chair

Purpose of the Council

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires states to establish a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). At the state level, Executive Order 04-04 establishes the Washington State Rehabilitation Council. As established in law and Executive Order, WSRC membership is comprised of a diverse group of volunteers representing relevant interests and perspectives from a cross section of industries. WSRC members include previous recipients of DVR services, their family members, and loved ones. They are service providers or advocates who work with DVR customers one-on-one to support their success. Members are employers, key agency representatives, and others committed to supporting the successful employment of people with disabilities.

Council members strive to ensure customers with disabilities have a voice and are heard and reflected in all aspects of DVR program development and service delivery. In addition to the constituencies they represent, Council members engage DVR customers, various partners and stakeholders to understand the collective needs, concerns and priorities related to DVR services. Empowered with this collective input, the Council partners with, and advises, DVR in shaping programs, delivering effective services, and facilitating meaningful employment outcomes.

The WSRC works in partnership with DVR to review, evaluate, and advise DVR regarding all aspects of service delivery and the outcomes achieved by DVR recipients. In addition, the WSRC supports DVR to develop, agree to, and review goals and priorities related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services that its State Plan documents.

The WSRC holds quarterly public meetings around the state. Each quarterly meeting features a DVR consumer focus group. The Council hears and collects consumer feedback to help improve program quality. The focus groups also provide an opportunity for consumers to connect with VR staff or Client Assistance Program representatives to foster discussion and resolution.

The Governor appoints Council members, which serve two consecutive, three-year terms.

Is Council work important?

// *Yes, individuals need a voice at
the highest levels of DVR.* //

~ **Peggy Frisk, CRP Representative**



2020 Council Members

Kathy Powers – Chair *
Business Representative

Justin Poole – Vice Chair
Representative of Current or Former Customer of DVR

Jen Cole
Parent Training Representative

Peggy Frisk – CSPE Subcommittee Chair
Community Rehabilitation Provider Representative

Jerry Johnsen – Policy and Planning Subcommittee Chair
Client Assistance Program Representative

Erin Williams
Business Representative

Laura (Ivanova) Smith
Customer Advocacy Representative

Laurae MacClain
Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Representative

Lesa Dunphy
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Representative

Michele Stelovich
Labor Representative

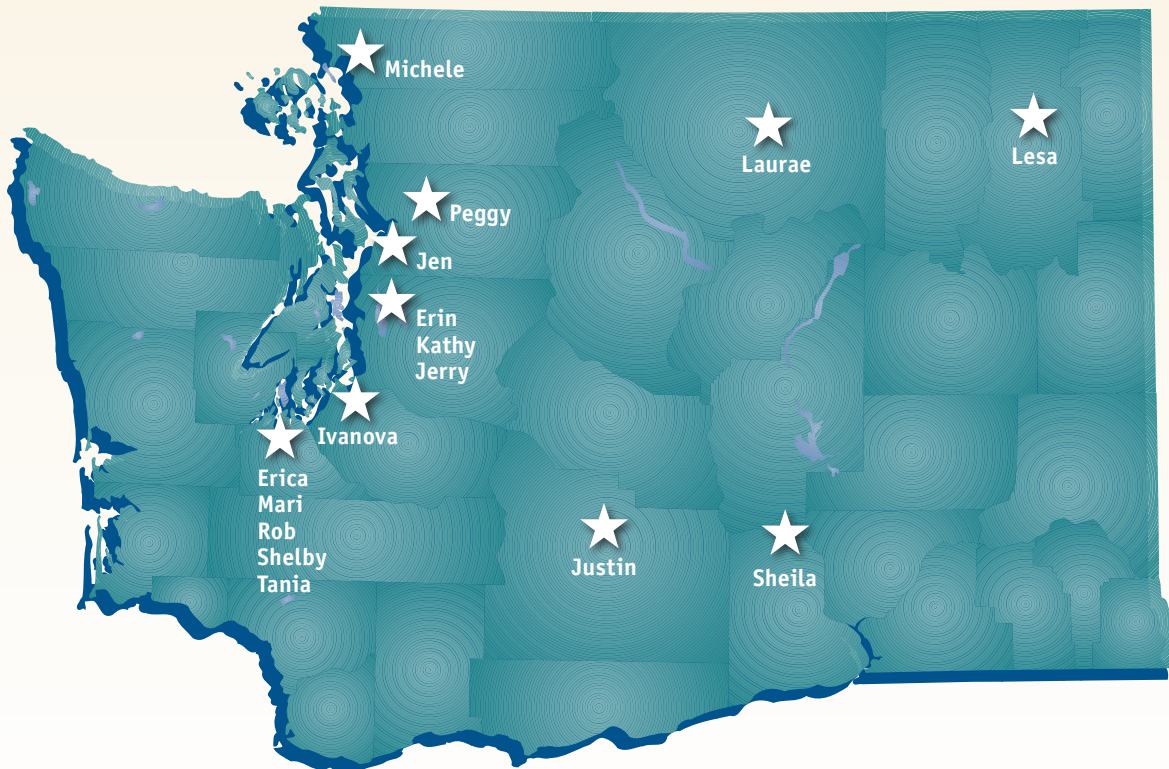
Sheila Turner *
State Independent Living Liaison

Tania May
State Educational Agency Representative

Erica Wollen
Workforce Training Representative

Robert Hines
(ex-officio) Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

*Terms ended 9/30/20



Legislative Reception

Each year, the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) partners with other Washington-based disability organizations and advocacy groups to organize and host a legislative reception during the legislative session. In 2020, the 39th Legislative Reception was held on Jan. 22.

The informal reception occurs at the State Capitol, and approximately 200 individuals with disabilities, advocates, and representatives of more than 50 organizations, attend. During the reception, individuals concerned with issues faced by people with disabilities and their families in Washington State have the opportunity to talk directly with their legislators. The reception also provides an opportunity for the disability community, and for individuals, to advocate personally for legislation of interest or concern to them.

The WSRC; the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues in Employment; the Developmental Disabilities Council; the State Independent Living Council; the ARC of Washington State; Self-Advocates in Leadership; and the State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind, collaborate on collective priorities and develop brief talking points to support individuals in communicating these priorities to their legislative representatives. This event is well known and well received at the highest levels of Washington State government.

Why work on the council?

“After attending a council meeting and reading about the work of the WSRC, I really wanted to be appointed to the council so that I could help form policy that not only met the guidelines of WIOA but met the needs of the customer. DVR should always be putting the customer first when writing policy.”

~ Lesa Dunphy, VRC Representative





Celebrations

Americans with Disabilities Act 30th Anniversary Celebration: “30 Years of Progress for All”

Celebrating 30 years of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), Washington State Rehabilitation Council staff and Council members served on the steering committee for the celebration. The program streamed live on Washington’s TVW cable channel, as well as the TVW website, and streamed live from the event Facebook page. It contained presentations by Governor Jay Inslee and Lt. Governor Cyrus Habib, Washington State’s first legally blind Lieutenant Governor. Speakers included voices of veterans with disabilities, advocates, and members from the community. The program featured musical entertainment and video footage of the historic 1990 signing of the ADA in the White House Rose Garden. The celebration also featured an interactive panel discussion with Lynnae Rutledge; Deb Cook Lewis, the Chair of the WA State Human Rights Commission; and Mark Adreon, from the Department of Services for the Blind. Event partners included Allies in Advocacy; The Arc of Washington State; Department of Services for the Blind; Developmental Disabilities Council; Disability Inclusion Network; DSHS Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; DSHS Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing; Easterseals Washington; the Governor’s Committee on Disability Issues and Employment; Health Care Authority; Northwest ADA Center; Office of Financial Management; People First of Washington; the Washington State Independent Living Council; and the Washington State Rehabilitation Council.

Vocational Rehabilitation 100th Anniversary Celebration: “Celebrating a Century of Transforming Lives”

Initially planned as an outdoor summer celebration, the pandemic and restrictions on gatherings required the planning committee to pivot plans, and make the celebration a virtual program. The program premiered on Oct. 15, 2020 on YouTube. The video featured VR Directors Michael MacKillop and Robert Hines, customer success stories, employer collaborations, and VR professional stories and experiences. The program also featured a “History of VR” featurette, emceed by the Director of Washington CAP and WSRC Vice Chair, Jerry Johnsen, and a keynote address by Lynnae Rutledge, the former WA DVR Director and past Commissioner of RSA. The DVR Communications Manager chaired the planning committee. The committee comprised representatives from WSRC; the Center for Continuing Education in Rehabilitation at University of Washington; Washington Client Assistance Program; Washington State Department of Services for the Blind; Developmental Disabilities Administration; Disability Inclusion Network; Health Care Authority; Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation; WA State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind; and Western Washington University’s Rehabilitation Counseling Program.

Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation Committee

One of the most enjoyed member activities the Council participates in is hearing from customers about their DVR experience. This is done in a variety of ways: customer satisfaction surveys, focus groups, and listening sessions. This committee takes the lead on conducting these activities throughout the year. CSPE members also evaluate the feedback and provide suggestions for DVR services and performance improvement. Their responsibilities include:

- Analyze DVR performance data as compared to Rehabilitation Services Administration measures and other indicators of program effectiveness and efficiency;
- Request and review fair hearing information for trends or areas of concern;
- Sponsor quarterly customer forums, compile feedback and analyze over time to identify areas that indicate potential problems;
- Request additional data from DVR to assess whether issues that emerge are a one-time issue or a broader concern that may need to be addressed;
- Collaborate with DVR to document the results of customer needs assessment every three years;
- Survey DVR customers to assess service satisfaction; and
- Collaborate and assess emerging trends with DVR program evaluation staff.

Customer Satisfaction Survey

This is WSRC's fourth year conducting monthly satisfaction surveys for DVR customers. Staff send surveys to customers via mail. Satisfaction surveys reflect four phases of the DVR process: eligibility, plan, closed-employed, and closed-other. Breaking down the data by phase helps the Council evaluate the effectiveness of the rehabilitation process. Staff follow up with customers by phone to ensure the gathering of enough responses in order to reflect a valid, reliable sample.

Survey recipients rate the following statements on a Likert scale.

1. My counselor does a good job keeping in touch with me.
2. My counselor understands what is important to me.
3. My counselor understands how my disability affects me.
4. My counselor cares about my input.
5. DVR moves quickly enough for me.
6. Overall, I am satisfied with DVR.

Results:

The response rate for the survey holds consistently at 20%, with an overall customer satisfaction rate of 70%. As has been the case for the past four consecutive years, the statement receiving the highest overall customer satisfaction was "My counselor cares about my input," at 82%. The area scoring lowest is "DVR moves quickly enough for me," at 70%. While we commend DVR and their staff in their commitment to customer satisfaction, the Council acknowledges areas of needed improvement.

Question	Average Rating for All Statuses	Average Rating for Closed-Other	Average Rating for Closed-Rehab	Average Rating for Eligible	Average Rating for In Plan
My counselor does a good job keeping in touch with me.	78%	66.6%	85%	78.4%	79%
My counselor understands what is important to me.	79.6%	67%	85.4%	80.4%	82.2%
My counselor understands how my disability affects me.	78.2%	66.6%	84.6%	79.2%	80%
My counselor cares about my input.	82%	70%	87.4%	70.6%	84.2%
DVR moves quickly enough for me.	70.2%	58.8%	78%	77.6%	70.8%
Overall, I am satisfied with DVR.	76.6%	61.8%	84.6%	77.6%	78.8%



Moving Forward:

In partnership with DVR, we are moving forward with our Customer Satisfaction Survey Phase 2 goals. We will achieve this long-standing goal by contracting with the Washington State University – Social and Economic Sciences Research Center (WSU-SESRC) starting in January 2021 to satisfy the following goals:

- Shifting from a monthly survey to a quarterly survey so we can obtain statewide and regional level data;
- Add supplemental survey capability; and
- Disaggregate response data by disability type, race/ethnicity, and preferred language.

These changes represent significant progress made toward a more dynamic customer satisfaction survey. The Council looks forward to the capability to gather input from a broader audience, to change questions more easily in order to target specific interests or concerns, and the ability to report at the state and region level.

Focus Group and Customer Listening Sessions

At our quarterly meetings in North Seattle and Olympia, we held in person focus groups to hear feedback from 16 DVR customers and 22 DVR staff on the topic of timeliness of services. The customer focus group breaks up into small groups paired up with council members to review a list of standardized questions to receive feedback about service delivery. A DVR staff focus group meets separately with the WSRC Executive Director and council members to learn about the barriers they experience regarding the provision of timely services to customers. The value of hearing from each group is an increased ability to narrow in on gaps in the system, in hopes to identify barriers to timely service delivery and opportunities for partnership and advocacy to achieve resolution.

With the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ensuing “Stay Home, Stay Healthy” orders, WSRC shifted the focus group format to host customer listening sessions held via Zoom or phone with six customers. Each session included a WSRC staff and one or two council members for these individualized feedback sessions, where DVR services during the pandemic was discussed. Each session had a focus on the Kent and SeaTac offices. This new method of outreach enriched the quality of qualitative data for the Council within the social limitations of the pandemic. The results of the listening sessions further prompted DVR to conduct a Remote Services Survey, in partnership with WSRC, to improve understanding of the support needs of customers during this time.

During the reporting year, a total of 22 customers and 17 DVR staff from around the state provided feedback to the Council in the form of focus groups and customer listening sessions. We continue to hear the following themes:

- Strengths of Staff
- Impact of Order of Selection
- Communication
- Timeliness of Services
- Counselor Reassignment
- Counselor Training

Feedback received since the pandemic also highlights customers’ disproportional impacts by lack of technology access and support in order to engage meaningfully in services.



Policy & Planning Committee

The Policy and Planning committee welcomed two new members this year and put forward a formal recommendation to DVR. With the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacting DVR services, the members worked closely with DVR to advise on the Division policies required to address emerging needs. Committee responsibilities include:

- Provide input to DVR's internal policies and practices.
- Seek feedback from the Client Assistance Program related to proposed changes to internal policies and practices.
- Identify opportunities to engage in DVR internal workgroups.
- Provide input to DVR on policy changes affecting DVR customers including proposed changes to the Rehabilitation Act, Revised Code of Washington and Washington Administrative Code.
- Sponsor DVR's State Plan forums and contribute to DVR priorities.
- Write the WSRC portion (section 4.2c) of DVR's State Plan.
- Participate in RSA monitoring activities.

State Plan

WSRC worked hand-in-hand with DVR in the development of the State Plan submitted as part of the Washington State Combined State Plan in March 2020. As part of the process, the Council co-hosted two public forums to hear stakeholder feedback on the State Plan regarding goals and priorities. WSRC also provided feedback on priorities for the Division to prioritize in the first two years of the plan.

Non-CRP Job Placement Recommendation

On behalf of the WSRC, the Policy Committee made its only formal recommendation of the year to DVR in June 2020, which was to rescind the Non-CRP Job Placement policy. The policy's intent was to re-evaluate the business practice of reducing referrals to Community Rehabilitation Providers who sent customers to WorkSource for a mandatory 90-day period for job placement support. The committee determined this policy did not meet the threshold for providing individualized services, further delaying the customer's achievement of their employment goal without a successful outcome. DVR acknowledged our concerns by formally rescinding the policy.

Eligibility Determination/ Priority of Service

Advocacy continues with DVR to identify key factors needed to reach statewide consistency in the Division's Eligibility Determination and Priority of Services process while in Order of Selection. As part of the Eligibility Determination Value Stream Mapping (VSM) process, a six-month pilot program started with the intent to streamline the DVR intake process for customers. The pilot program wrapped up in early 2020. Pilot-program recommendations included the implementation of a standardized intake process that promoted improved collection of records, guidance, and training, to support staff-decision making. The policy committee continues to work with DVR as the Division navigates through the steps to implement the recommendations.

COVID-19 Policy Review

During this reporting period, the Policy Committee provided analysis and feedback to the following policy issues related to impacts concerning the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Electronic signatures
- Safety procedures
- Bulk equipment purchases

Partnership Committee

Priorities for the WSRC are building relationships and advocating for the disability community through partnership work. Though it looked different during the pandemic, we continued to focus on identifying opportunities to strengthen relationships with statewide disability advocacy organizations and mandated partners as identified in 34 CFR 361.17 (h) (6). As directed under the Rehabilitation Act, the WSRC coordinates its activities with the following partners:

- State Independent Living Council (SILC)
- Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
- State Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC)
- State Behavioral Health Advisory Committee (BHAC)
- State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB)
- Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP)
- Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

The Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board went through a 360-degree strategic planning process, which included the opportunity for the WSRC Chair and Executive Director to provide input on how statewide priorities could align to improve service delivery to the disability community. WSRC also provided feedback on the Economic Recovery Plan developed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Directors of the WSRC, DDC, SILC, Governor's Council for Disability Issues in Employment (GCDE) and the ARC of Washington State continue to meet monthly to discuss opportunities for statewide priority alignment. This partnership has been essential to ensure statewide systems and communities are meeting the needs of people with disabilities disproportionately affected by the pandemic.

The Transition Collaborative continued their work this year, as outlined in the legislative proviso, to support a seamless transition for students with disabilities from school to post-school life. As part of this work, we advocated for inclusive data collection in the equity survey to identify the support needs of student with disabilities in the Career Connect Washington apprenticeship program.

