

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)**  
**December 4-5, 2024, Quarterly Meeting**  
**Albany Hilton Garden Inn – Albany Medical Center**

Topic/ Key Points
<p><b>Day 1 Call to Order – Present:</b> Marilee Boylan, Naomi Brickel, Sebastian Chittilappilly, Devin Fernandez, Alan Gallagher, Valerie Gambino-Carelli, Jenny Hutkowski, Dawn Kalleberg, Kenneth Klassert, Hillary Nichols, Tonya Robinson-Mayer, Robert Statham, Toni Sullivan, Jeffrey Tamburo, Tonia Weichmann, Melinda Dolezal, Andy Sink, Linda Schramm, Sheena Bassett, Lorie Boyd, Jumoke Branco, Pam Brehm-Bisaillon, Julianne Venneman, Caitlin Ohlson</p> <p><b>Excused Day 1:</b> Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, Talanda Jackson-Franklin, Brenda Shannon, Peter Herrig, Julia Kelly</p> <p><b>Absent Day 1:</b> Maryann Donnelly Sigona, Meesha Johnson, Mary Lafrance, Stephanie Woodward</p> <p><b>Guests/Public Day 1:</b> Meghan Parker, Eric Selzo, Julie Lloyd, Ryane McAuliffe Straus</p>
<p><b>Day 2 Call to Order – Present:</b> Marilee Boylan, Naomi Brickel, Sebastian Chittilappilly, Devin Fernandez, Alan Gallagher, Valerie Gambino-Carelli, Jenny Hutkowski, Dawn Kalleberg, Kenneth Klassert, Hillary Nichols, Tonya Robinson-Mayer, Robert Statham, Toni Sullivan, Jeffrey Tamburo, Tonia Weichmann, Stephanie Woodward, Julia Kelly, Andy Sink, Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, Linda Schramm, Sheena Bassett, Lorie Boyd, Jumoke Branco, Pam Brehm-Bisaillon, Julianne Venneman, Caitlin Ohlson,</p> <p><b>Excused Day 1:</b> Talanda Jackson-Franklin, Brenda Shannon, Melinda Dolezal, Peter Herrig</p> <p><b>Absent Day 2:</b> Maryann Donnelly Sigona, Meesha Johnson, Mary LaFrance</p> <p><b>Guests/ Public Day 2:</b> Julie Lloyd, Ryane McAuliffe Straus</p>
<p><b>Review of the agenda:</b> Hillary Nichols</p>
<p><b>Additional Agenda Items:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• None</li> </ul>
<p><b>Presentation:</b>  <u>Subminimum Wage To Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) Project</u>  <b>Meghan Parker, ACCES-VR</b>  <b>Erick Selzo, New York Association on Independent Living</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ACCES-VR is conducting the SWTCIE project to transition individuals with disabilities from subminimum wage employment to competitive integrated employment. This is a five-year demonstration project funded by the Rehabilitation Services Administration with three objectives: increase the number of people working in competitive integrated employment, decrease the number of people working in subminimum wage employment, and disrupt the flow of people entering subminimum wage employment after high school. ACCES-VR will partner with a number of organizations, including the New York Association on Independent Living, to accomplish these goals and evaluate the efficacy of the project.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Public Comment</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No public comment.</li> </ul>
<p><b><u>ACCES UPDATES</u></b>  <b>Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, Deputy Commissioner</b>  <b>Linda Schramm, Assistant Commissioner</b></p> <p><u>Topics and Questions Requested by Members</u></p> <p><b><u>What innovative strategies has ACCES-VR seen in other states you would like to implement in New York State?</u></b></p>

Answer: New York is seen as a model by other states so during the monitoring visit, Linda Schramm was asked to present at a Vocational Rehabilitation conference in October.

### **What are ACCES-VR's next steps in the Employment First Executive Order?**

Answer: From an ACCES-VR perspective, we are already an Employment First agency because that is what we do- employment. The WIOA Combined State Plan lays out our employment goals and strategies. We are waiting for more information from Chief Disability Officer Kim Hill regarding what they want for us. Our everyday mission is Employment First, but in our collaborations with other agencies is where we can see room for growth and initiative.

### **The Federal government is struggling to be a model employer, especially due to retention. Where is the data on federal employment shared?**

Answer: ACCES-VR cannot speak extensively on this because we do not have specific data on federal employment. We can review if we have data on voluntary or involuntary separation. We do have data on all ACCES-VR customers, so we know whether each customer is still employed six (6) and twelve (12) months after the case is closed.

### **Office of Special Education and ACCES (OSEA)**

- The restructuring at New York State Education Department of Special Education and ACCES is still ongoing. The unit will officially be known as OSEA and takes effect in January 2025; there was firm consensus from the start neither unit would absorb the other. A vision is beginning to develop for OSEA because the Commissioner of Education wanted a seamless transition to OSEA and areas of collaboration between the two units are beginning to be identified. Currently, the beginning and the end of the educational journey are a focus. Early intervention for individuals with disabilities in pre-kindergarten and creating more opportunities for these children is very important. Transition to ACCES from schools after graduation is also a critical area for identifying challenges.

### **ACCES-VR Staffing Update**

- The Manager of Service Delivery and Quality Assurance Monica Toye-Smith has retired after 30 years of service. The new team lead for Quality Assurance is David Morgan and the new team lead for Service Delivery is Malgorzata Zegarska-Sanders. Both team leads are currently reporting directly to Linda Schramm.
- The new Manager of Policy, Training, and Interagency Collaborations is Julianne Venneman. In addition to her previous role overseeing the Policy Unit, she will now oversee the Training Unit as well as all interagency grants and initiatives, including but not limited to: Most Integrated Setting Coordinating Council, Employment Transition Model, State as a Model Employer, Council on Developmental Disabilities.
- Pam Brehm-Bisaillon has moved to District Office Administration in Central Office. She will provide support to 25 District Offices through technical assistance, capturing data and improving efficiencies.
- Pat Sheppard, the previous manager of the Syracuse District Office, is now the new Manager of Transition and Youth Services. He will guide and support the TAYS Senior Counselors and the Policy Unit in Central Office.
- Danielle Malloy is retiring as Regional Coordinator, and Bethanne Guest-Bergum will be the new Regional Coordinator for Buffalo, Syracuse and Rochester.

- In 2024, 60 new Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors were hired, seven (7) of whom were trainees. Staffing and team building were a large focus of 2024, to better serve the needs of customers.
- The traineeship leading to some of these hires was highlighted as a best practice by other states. New York State will present on this traineeship at the next Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR), a bi-annual conference held for vocational rehabilitation administrators where RSA, the federal oversight agency, is also present.

#### Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Summit

- ACCES-VR is close to finalizing the plans for two Pre-ETS summits taking place in late spring and early summer. These summits will be opportunities for trainings and information on Pre-ETS, including presentations from National Technical Assistance Center: The Collaborative (NTAC:C) and Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM), as well as opportunities for staff training.

#### Training Updates

- ACCES-VR has instituted several new training initiatives. The Training Unit is creating a New Staff Onboarding program, with a series of modules to ensure all new staff have the same important information to be successful. Two of the modules are now complete and many others are in development. Two new cohort series trainings have begun, the first for Senior Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (SVRCs) and the second for Directors of Counselors (DOCs). The focus of the cohort trainings will be giving support, providing technical assistance, listening to their needs, discussing supervision issues, and sharing best practices.

#### **SRC Comments/Questions:**

Comment: A lot of job placements are made through local BOCES; perhaps that is an area where ACCES-VR could develop a presence.

Question: Is there any precedent to send someone from the State Rehabilitation Council to CSAVR meeting or the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Council?

Answer: Yes, there are three conferences which in the past, the Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council has attended, including the National Coalition of SRC, the CSAVR, and one other.

#### **Interagency Reports:**

##### **American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS):**

- No update.

##### **Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID):**

- TRAID recently closed its data year for 10/1/2023-9/30/2024. During this year the 12 regional TRAID Centers documented:
  - 155 loans of 299 devices
  - 60 demonstrations
  - Cost savings of \$23,700.96
  - 477 devices added to the inventory

- TRAIID participated in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Annual DREAM Symposium in Albany and presented on assistive technology and accessibility for job seekers. A similar training was provided for the NYS Association on Independent Living on 10/17. We will be conducting a similar training at APSE/ Association of People Supporting Employment First in May. TRAIID held its biannual Directors' Meeting. Topics discussed included best practices and succession planning among other things.

**Disability Rights New York/Client Assistance Program/Protection & Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (DRNY/CAP/BAPSS):**

- Disability Rights New York and the Client Assistance Program are continuing their work to attend outreaches to the Pre-Employment Transitions Services population. Disability Rights New York has attended five transition outreaches to local high school students and at local colleges that were having a disability awareness day for incoming freshmen. Disability Rights New York is also focusing on creating outreach materials that will explain what services are available (such as ACCES-VR) to individuals with disabilities in the criminal justice system, and foster care system. Disability Rights New York is looking forward to continuing this work during 2025.

**New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH):**

- ACCES-VR is participating in an OMH-led Certified Community Behavioral Health Clinic (CCBHC) Policy Academy. CCBHC is an integrated care model for both mental health and substance use disorders and has an IPS/employment component, as well as peer services, psychiatric rehabilitation, crisis and case management supports. The Policy Academy is led by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
- Personalized Recovery Oriented Services (PROS) is in the process of a redesign based on what's been learned since its implementation in the mid aughts. Implementation was planned for November 2024 but was delayed due to the regulatory promulgation schedule, so is now looking like Spring 2025. When implemented, we anticipate seeing an increase in community-based services, enhanced support for education related goals, and a shift from more clinically based staffing models to rehabilitation practitioners
- Regional Employment Liaisons (RELs) are subject matter experts on the NYESS team that have been supporting PROS programs to implement IPS and connect to essential supports like ACCES-VR and DOL, amongst other key employment related topics. They are now transitioning to supporting Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) teams, of which there are approximately 120 statewide. PROS will continue to receive support, of course.
- We continue to implement the OMH Employment Plan, which seeks to equip everyone from leadership to frontline staff with the knowledge, language and tools necessary to engage in the employment conversation. Key to this is the implementation of Employment 101 requirements and companion tools for all programs, with a specific focus on Clinic and Housing, not just psych-rehab or employment programs. While this plan was initiated before the Employment First Executive Order, it is essentially how OMH operationalizes Employment 1st principles and practices, a component of which is connecting folks to ACCES-VR.
- As of 2025, Julie Lloyd, Director of Rehabilitation Services in the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Treatment, and Care Coordination, will be OMH's representative to ACCES-VR's State Rehabilitation Council.

### **New York State Independent Living Council, Inc. (NYSILC):**

- No update.

### **New York State Commission for the Blind (NYSCB):**

- No update.

### **New York State Education Department- Office of Special Education (OSE):**

- Multiple Pathways for High School Diploma
  - At the November Board of Regents meeting, the New York State Education Department (NYSED) presented its robust timeline and implementation plan aimed at transforming education in New York, aligning with the recommendations from the Blue Ribbon Commission on Graduation Measures. This initiative, designed to promote greater equity within the education system, is informed by extensive stakeholder engagement, including parents, educators, administrators, school support staff, representatives of higher education, and the business community. To learn more about the implementation plan and timeline, please see the [Graduation Measures press release](#). Additional information is available on NYSED's [Graduation Measures website](#).
- School District Roles and Responsibilities as Established by Section 511 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)
  - The New York State Education Department Office of Instructional Support and Office of Adult Continuing Career Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) have posted a [memorandum](#), *"School District Roles and Responsibilities as Established by Section 511 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in Assisting Students with Disabilities to Maximize Opportunities to Achieve Competitive Integrated Employment,"* to remind school districts of certain requirements under WIOA regarding assisting students with disabilities in achieving competitive integrated employment.
  - As part of transitioning from school to employment, students should earn at least a minimum wage and be employed in integrated settings working alongside non-disabled co-workers. However, suppose competitive integrated employment is not an option. In that case, the requirements pursuant to section 511 of WIOA, and outlined in the [Joint Agreement](#) for the Coordination of Transition Services between the New York State Education Department (NYSED) Adult Career and Continuing Education Services – Vocational Rehabilitation (ACCES-VR) and Office of Special Education (OSE), should be followed.
  - *Staff from [ACCES-VR](#) are available to provide technical assistance and consultation to school district personnel about the regulatory requirements of section 511 regarding students seeking or continuing subminimum wage employment.*
- New York State Federal Fiscal Year 2022 Part B State Performance Plan/Annual Performance Report
  - The New York State (NYS) Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2022 State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR) is now posted on the Office of Special Education's [SPP/APR](#) webpage.
  - The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) requires each state to have in place a SPP, submitted every six years, that evaluates its efforts to implement the requirements and purposes of the IDEA and describes how the state will improve such implementation. States must report annually on their performance towards the SPP targets in the APR.

- Based on the information from the NYS FFY 2022 SPP/APR, other State-reported data, and other publicly available information, the United States Department of Education, Office of Special Education Programs has determined that New York State needs assistance in implementing the requirements of the IDEA. Information regarding the NYS 2024 Determination under section 616(d) of the IDEA is now posted on the Office of Special Education (OSE) [NYS Determination under the 616](#) webpage.
- *Questions may be directed to the OSE Policy Unit at 518-473-2878 or [SPECED@nysed.gov](mailto:SPECED@nysed.gov).*

#### **New York State Department of Labor (DOL):**

- Equitable Transition Models Demonstration Grant- This is five-year demonstration grant project for NYSDOL to work with the Office of Mental Health (OMH) and ACCES-VR, among others, to serve multiply marginalized youth and young adults with disabilities in their transition to work. The grant is currently in the hiring phase, and the pilot will begin in January of 2025 in the Capital Region, which should be staffed by then. Once work begins at the pilot site, we will take the lessons we learn there to the other areas: Columbia-Greene, Monroe and Hempstead.
- Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development- This is a four-year grant to serve participants under the care and custody of the Department of Justice's Bureau of Prisons. DOL will work with the vendor Roots of Success to deliver an environmental literacy pre-apprenticeship certificate to these participants. The cohorts with Roots of Success have not started yet with training because of the difficulty of obtaining the technology needed to train the participants in the correctional facilities. Currently, 20 people at the correctional facility in the North Country are approved and approximately 15 people at the correctional facility in Otisville are planned to participate in the first cohort. The plan is to have a new cohort of individuals enter the program every three to six months.
- DOL was invited to participate in an advisory council for New York City Talent's Center for Workforce Accessibility and Inclusion Center (CWAI). The CWAI is a result of a partnership between the New York City Mayor's Office for People with Disabilities and the New York City Department of Small Business Services. The first meeting of the advisory group was in October 2024, and the group will meet to network and collaborate several times per year.

#### **New York State Office for People With Developmental Disabilities (OPWDD):**

- OPWDD and ACCES-VR/Commission for the Blind have submitted a MOU for administrative review. OPWDD is engaging with other state agencies to complete MOUs to share resources to more effectively and efficiently serve people with disabilities, and to increase employment outcomes.
- OPWDD and ACCES-VR and NYS Commission for the Blind launched an interagency partnership to leverage resources and enhance service delivery to increase employment outcomes for New Yorkers with developmental disabilities. Regional Liaisons/Coordinators from all 3 state agencies will meet regularly to:
  - Increase interagency collaboration and shared resources
  - Improve transitions between agencies
  - Implement best practices and new projects
- The Career Specific Vocational Training classes are in their second year of implementation. To date, more than 200 people have completed the classes and enrolled in supported employment for job development in the occupation related to the class. OPWDD has an

additional two years to pilot this training and seek ongoing funding. The Eight Career-Specific Vocational Training projects include:

- Region 1 - Hospitality Occupational Skills Training
- Region 2 - Janitorial Vocational Training Program and Education, Assessing and Training for Success (EATS) for Food Service
- Region 3 - Hospitality Training Program and Retail Vocational Training
- Region 4 - Janitorial and Custodial Career Development Program)
- Region 5 - Basic Office Skills Training and Custodial Services Training Program

### **SRC Business:**

#### **Vote to Update Mission Statement**

- The Executive Committee reviewed a revised mission statement submitted from the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee. This would update the Mission Statement of ACCES-VR's State Rehabilitation Council to the following:

*ACCES-VR's State Rehabilitation Council advises, reviews, and analyses ACCES-VR policy, programs, and services. The Council makes recommendations and partners with ACCES-VR to continually improve the accessibility, quality, and timeliness of vocational rehabilitation services which lead to competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities.*

- The vote was unanimous, and the Mission Statement was updated to the above.

#### **Vote for Chair and Vice-Chair for 2025**

- Toni Sullivan will be the Chair of ACCES-VR's State Rehabilitation Council for the 2025 calendar year.
- Marilee Boylan will be the Vice-Chair of ACCES-VR's State Rehabilitation Council for the 2025 calendar year.

### **Committee Reports**

#### **Executive Committee Report:**

- The Executive Report Committee has spent time reviewing comments from the Quality Assurance and Improvement Committee on the bylaws. The Executive Committee would like to thank the QAI Committee for all their work on these.

#### **Annual Report Committee:**

- The Annual Report Committee submitted the final draft to ACCES-VR leadership and plans to submit the Report to RSA on time for December 31<sup>st</sup>.
- The Committee may update the application again next year, and they would also like more unique stories submitted for the Report.

Question: Will the full SRC be able to review the report before it is submitted to RSA?

Answer: The Report is currently with ACCES-VR leadership, which is the final step before submission to RSA. The Annual Report Committee reviewed it on behalf of the full SRC; if the Executive Committee or full SRC would like to review the Report in upcoming years, the timeline for completing the report will need to be adjusted to allow for that review.

#### **Business Engagement:**

- The Business Engagement Committee is discussing how to best to schedule presentations of interest for the full SRC and plan to work with the Executive Committee in the following year.

The Committee would also like to see New York Association of Training and Employment Professionals (NYATEP) as part of the SRC.

**Membership:**

- The Membership Committee confirmed the slate of six candidates voted on by the full membership were approved by the Board of Regents during their November 2024 meeting. The Membership Committee will begin planning their orientation, and they will be present at the next meeting in March of 2025.

**Pre-ETS:**

- The Pre-ETS Committee submitted a recommendation to ACCES-VR, and they feel ready to move on to their next project. They will be asking for input from the leadership in 2025 and ACCES-VR on what areas they can focus on in the new year.

**Quality Assurance Improvement:**

- The Quality Assurance and Improvement (QAI) Committee has completed their review of the entire guiding principles. Their edits will be put forth for review by the Executive Committee, and then the full SRC in the coming year. First, the Executive Committee has reviewed the Mission Statement, and now the full SRC will vote to accept it.

**Motion to adjourn: Robert Statham. Second: Tonya Robinson-Mayer.**

**Old Business:** None

**Next Meeting March 5-6, 2025  
Hilton Garden Inn, Troy, New York**