

**State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) March 29-30, 2023, Quarterly Meeting
Albany Hilton Garden Inn – Albany Medical Center**

Topic/ Key Points
<p><u>Day 1 Call to Order – Present:</u> Sebastian Chittilappilly, Joseph Delgado, Maryann Donnelly Sigona, Devin Fernandez, Alan Gallagher, Valerie Gambino-Carelli, Nancy Grant, Jenny Hutkowski, Talanda Jackson-Franklin, Dawn Kalleberg, Mary Kitzel, Anthony Morano, Hillary Nichols, Tonya Robinson-Mayer, Robert Statham, Toni Sullivan, Andrew Sink, Jumoke Branco, Caitlin Ohlson, Linda Schramm, Lorie Boyd, Pam Brehm-Bisaillon, Michelle Harap</p> <p><u>Excused Day 1:</u> Naomi Brickel, Melinda Dolezal, Kathleen Grosvenor, Peter Herrig, Julia Kelly, Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, Evelyn Pugh, Brenda Shannon, Jeffrey Tamburo</p> <p><u>Absent Day 1:</u> None</p> <p><u>Guests/Public Day 1:</u> Kim Osmani- Cornell University, Gina Oswald- Cornell University</p>
<p><u>Day 2 Call to Order – Present:</u> Sebastian Chittilappilly, Joseph Delgado, Maryann Donnelly Sigona, Devin Fernandez, Alan Gallagher, Valerie Gambino-Carelli, Nancy Grant, Jenny Hutkowski, Talanda Jackson-Franklin, Dawn Kalleberg, Mary Kitzel, Anthony Morano, Hillary Nichols, Tonya Robinson-Mayer, Robert Statham, Toni Sullivan, Andrew Sink, Jeffrey Tamburo, Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, Jumoke Branco, Caitlin Ohlson, Linda Schramm, Lorie Boyd, Pam Brehm-Bisaillon, Michelle Harap</p> <p><u>Excused Day 2:</u> Naomi Brickel, Melinda Dolezal, Kathleen Grosvenor, Peter Herrig, Julia Kelly, Evelyn Pugh, Brenda Shannon</p> <p><u>Absent Day 2:</u> None</p> <p><u>Guests/ Public Day 2:</u> None</p>
<p><u>Review of the agenda:</u> Joe Delgado</p>
<p><u>Additional Agenda Items:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • None
<p><u>Review and approve December 6-7, 2022, minutes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minutes not available for approval at this time. Will review at next meeting.
<p><u>Public Comment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No public comment.
<p><u>Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) Focus Group</u> Kim Osmani and Gina Oswald <i>Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, Cornell University</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A focus group was conducted by the Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability for three hours with present members of the SRC. Questions designed to align with the priority areas RSA designated for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment were distributed beforehand, and the conversation was facilitated by Kim Osmani from the Yang-Tan Institute. Members of the SRC not presented were invited to submit their responses via email. Results of this focus group will be included as part of the CSNA and will be available upon its completion.
<p><u>Interagency Reports:</u></p> <p><u>Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No update. <p><u>Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID):</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No update.

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

- No Update.

New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH):

- This year's budget contains a historic investment in employment.
- Two new counselors hired in Central Office as Employment Liaisons to support the PROS Employment Initiative. The purpose of this initiative is full implementation of the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model, a type of supported employment for those with mental illness.
- OMH leadership is holding community engagement sessions throughout the state. The goal is to gather qualitative data to better inform new initiatives.
- Kim Hill, the Chief Disability Officer, is spearheading the State as a Model Employer of People with Disabilities workgroup.

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):

- At the September Board of Regents meeting there was an emergency adoption of amendments to the Commissioner's regulations relating to remote instruction, and its delivery under emergency conditions, for students with disabilities in approved private schools, state-supported schools, state-operated schools, and approved preschool special education programs.

New York State Department of Labor (DOL):

- Virtual reality headsets were issued to career centers through a contract with TransfrVR. Headsets allow job seekers to virtually engage in career exploration activities in various industries, i.e. mechanical science, advanced manufacturing, health careers.
- The vendor provides headsets, software, and training to the career centers.
- Columbia Greene Workforce Disability Employment Summit on May 18, 2023, in Hudson, NY as part of NY Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (NY SCION) initiative. This event will feature a variety of speakers, highlighting the work of Disability Resource Coordinators around the state.

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

- New York one of only 11 states to receive new technical assistance grant from DOL's Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), intended to focus on systems enhancement to increase competitive integrated employment.
- OPWDD is leading the NEON initiative, in collaboration with OMH, DOL, and NYSED's Office of Special Education and ACCES-VR.
- OPWDD is collaborating with OMH on data integration. Examining employment data already monitored to inform policy-making decisions.
- Cross agency training.
- Exploring areas where braiding of services can occur.

SRC Comments/Questions:

Comment/Question:

Response:

ACCES Updates:

Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, Deputy Commissioner
Linda Schramm, Assistant Commissioner

High School Equivalency Updates:

- No updates.

Bureau of Proprietary Schools Updates:

- Audit of BPSS is complete, with some areas of improvement needed. Overall, the results were positive. New leadership is incoming, and a blueprint is in development to address the results of the audit where change is indicated.

Adult Education Updates:

- Adult Education's monitoring visit will begin in June of 2023, related to WIOA compliance.
- The Media Campaign from December of 2022 to March 2023 just concluded. A presentation will be given to the Board of Regents on April 17, 2023. As a result of the campaign, there has been an increase of 800% in website traffic and 400 new individuals have enrolled across New York State.

ACCES-VR Updates:**ACCES Staffing Updates**

- Monica Toye-Smith has been promoted to Manager of Service Delivery. She has held numerous roles in the agency, including Associate Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, and Manager of Quality Assurance. She also has experience in Policy and District Office Administration.
- Julianne Venneman has accepted the position of Manager of Policy. She comes to ACCES-VR from the Commission for the Blind. She has experience as an Associate Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, an RSA liaison, coordinating the Combined State Plan, and various interagency workgroups. Her start date is April 20, 2023.

Media Campaign

- Adult Education's campaign has concluded; ACCES-VR's will launch this year. The campaign will focus on print, audio, and social media.
- Still in the early stages of planning. The campaign will be similar to Adult Education's campaign, but will be longer and offered in more languages, to reach a wider population.

New Case Management System- Aware

- Exploration for a new case management system began in October of 2017.
- Go Live is Monday, April 3, 2023. ACCES-VR chose a phased-in approach; five District Offices will go live on Monday, and the remaining ten will go live on Tuesday, April 4th.

- Multiple improvements to service, including:
 - an e-signature feature for Individualized Plan for Employment (IPEs), allowing customers to receive their IPEs and sign them in real time,
 - electronic authorizations, allowing vendors to start providing services the same day they receive authorizations, and
 - direct communication between the Statewide Financial System (SFS) and Aware.
- Three vendor contracts are already in Aware: Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS), Pre-ETS, and ASL Interpreter services.
- Vendor training will be complete by the end of this week.
- Additional contracts will be moved to Aware, on a five-year timeline.

National Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE) Grant

- New York was one of 14 states to receive funds.
- The purpose of this grant is to assist individuals engaged in, or contemplating, subminimum wage (SMW) employment in obtaining competitive integrated employment (CIE).
- The U. S. Department of Labor (DOL) provides 14C certificates to certain organizations, allowing them to pay subminimum wages to individuals with disabilities. Discussions are occurring regarding phasing these certificates out at the federal level, and this grant's focus is to transition individuals out of subminimum wage employment.
- Six counties in New York State will be the focus of this grant: Cortland, Erie, Monroe, Nassau, Suffolk, and Wayne.
- ACCES-VR will partner with various organizations to facilitate this grant, including Cornell University, the Kennedy Center for the Arts, and San Diego State University.
- Independent Living Centers in the target counties will play a critical role.
- Additional staff will be hired to facilitate this grant, including a Project Director; this position is currently under review at Division of the Budget.

SRC Comments/Questions:

Comment/Question:

The Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) contract ends December 31, 2023; how will the gap in services be handled?

Response:

There is no indication there will be an interruption in services between the current CRS contract and the next.

Comment/Question:

There have been reports of long wait times to approve accommodations for GED testing.

Response:

GED exams are administered by Pearson Vue at their testing centers. At this time, ACCES has not received inquiries regarding wait times for accommodation approval.

Comment/Question:

What is the plan for the next phases of Aware implementation? Will other documentation be uploaded to the system to allow for immediate access?

Response:

ACCES-VR is forming a timeline for the next phase of implementation, but yes, eventually all documentation will be electronic.

Comment/Question:

Will the media campaign only be offered in English and Spanish? What about American Sign Language?

Response:

We are exploring media content in additional languages, and we recognize the importance American Sign Language as one of those.

Comment/Question:

Will the ACCES-VR media campaign be regional or include the entire state?

Response:

Approximately 40% of the resources of the campaign will target the New York City area, and 60% will target the remainder of the state.

Comment/Question:

Can you provide an update on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) regarding Pre-ETS services?

Response:

ACCES-VR cannot yet provide an announcement regarding the MOU as it is still in progress. We are collaborating with the Institute of Higher Education to assist in providing Pre-ETS to college students and those still in High School. Fifty percent of individuals with disabilities drop out of their first year in higher education, so the provision of Pre-ETS services is critical.

Comment/Question:

What feedback has ACCES-VR received from vendors regarding the Aware system and have any changes been made as a result of this feedback?

Response:

Every comment received to this point has been compiled into a list, and ACCES-VR has taken each comment into consideration. Some feedback was addressed immediately where possible, and other comments will be addressed in larger updates to the Aware system (referred to as “builds”), which occur twice each year. Other suggestions may require additional funds to implement, and we are exploring those as options for future updates.

Comment/Question:

How will ACCES-VR provide support and future training to prevent turnover in staff due to the transition to Aware?

Response:

Thank you for the question. All trainings provided to staff have been recorded and are available on the website to staff for use during Go Live and beyond. As updates to the system occur, additional trainings will be provided and those will be recorded as well.

Comment/Question:

In my role at Cornell, I participated in the pilot training, and it went very well. Many individuals were able to ask questions, and people stated they felt appreciated and listened to.

Response:

Thank you for the feedback. Cornell was critical in the training of 300 plus counselors, hundreds of vendors, and all our staff. The Aware training was a major feat and a great accomplishment.

SRC Business:

Committee Reports

Executive Committee Report:

- Committee is reorganizing; chairs still to be chosen for several committees.

Annual Report Committee:

- Several new members on committee.
- First goal of the committee is to ascertain what is required for report and what additional items are allowed in report.
- Encourage the submission of artwork and success stories by ACCES-VR participants.
- Committee will begin to gather material at the June quarterly meeting.

Business Engagement:

- Committee has two new members this term, familiarizing with them with the purpose of the committee.
- Will review several great options for June presentation.

Quality Assurance Improvement:

- Committee has chosen co-chairs: Brenda Shannon and Andy Sink.
- Needs to map out core responsibilities.

Membership:

- Goal of the committee this year is to increase diversity in new members.
- New member application and letter will be mailed by end of April.
- Total of four positions to fill for the upcoming term.

Pre-ETS:

- Committee has chosen co-chairs: Tonya Robinson-Mayer and Valerie Gambino-Carelli.
- Chosen dates and times for meetings for the remainder of the year.
- Still identifying purpose of the committee.
- Committee would like to develop a survey for the SRC members to identify knowledge of SRC members and areas of concern around Pre-ETS.

4.2 Recommendations: None.

Old Business: None

Next Meeting June 6-7, 2023
Hilton Albany Medical Center