

State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)
September 13-14, 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, Melinda Dolezal, Maryann Donnelly Sigona, Devin Fernandez, Alan Gallagher, Valerie Gambino-Carelli, Jenny Hutkowski, Talanda Jackson-Franklin, Dawn Kalleberg, Julia Kelly, Anthony Morano, Hillary Nichols, Brenda Shannon, Robert Statham, Toni Sullivan, Jeffrey Tamburo, Jumoke Branco, Caitlin Ohlson, Julianne Venneman, Lorie Boyd, Pam Brehm-Bisaillon, Michelle Harap</p> <p><u>Excused Day 1:</u> Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, Linda Schramm, Naomi Brickel, Nancy Grant, Mary Kitzel, Tonya Robinson-Mayer, Andrew Sink,</p> <p><u>Absent Day 1:</u> Peter Herrig, Evelyn Pugh</p> <p><u>Guests/Public Day 1:</u> None</p>
<p><u>Day 2 Call to Order – Present:</u> Joseph Delgado, Melinda Dolezal, Maryann Donnelly Sigona, Devin Fernandez, Alan Gallagher, Valarie Gambino-Carelli Jenny Hutkowski, Talanda Jackson-Franklin, Dawn Kalleberg, Julia Kelly, Anthony Morano, Hillary Nichols, Brenda Shannon, Robert Statham, Toni Sullivan, Jeffrey Tamburo, Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, Linda Schramm, Jumoke Branco, Caitlin Ohlson, Julianne Venneman, Lorie Boyd, Pam Brehm-Bisaillon, Michelle Harap</p> <p><u>Excused Day 2:</u> Naomi Brickel, Sebastian Chittilappilly, Nancy Grant, Mary Kitzel, Tonya Robinson-Mayer, Andrew Sink</p> <p><u>Absent Day 2:</u> Peter Herrig, Evelyn Pugh</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 June 6-7, 2023, minutes:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • June 6-7, 2023, minutes reviewed. No abstentions. Robert Statham motioned to approve; Sebastian Chittilappilly seconded. All voted in favor of approval.
<p><u>Public Comment</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No public comment.
<p><u>ACCES UPDATES</u> Ceylane Meyers-Ruff, Deputy Commissioner Linda Schramm, Assistant Commissioner</p> <p><u>Adult Education</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adult Education had its onsite federal monitoring visit from the Office of Career, Technical, and Adult Education (OCTAE). • Some findings are anticipated, including the non-existence of a state workforce board (SWIB), the lack of memorandums of understanding between Department of Labor and Adult Education, and several questions in the fiscal space. • Once OCTAE provides the corrective action plan, they have 45 days to respond; this is due in October. <p><u>Bureau of Proprietary School Supervision</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New schools are coming on board, most of which are in the New York City area, necessitating inspections of schools.

- There are robust consumer protections in place regarding the schools, and there are health and safety issues regarding certain home health aide schools; need to establish a way to determine how qualified the graduates of these programs are
- There are companies offering to do all the paperwork needed to enroll in these schools, and there are concerns regarding the legitimacy of these companies.

HS Equivalency

- There is a new GED exam, and all testing centers need to be fully functional. The newest testing centers are still onboarding, and there are significant technology and security requirements which were not anticipated.
- Examples: Chromebooks cannot be used for testing; their security is insufficient. Computers must be spaced apart, so there are a limited number of computers in a room and a limited number of individuals able to test at the same time.
- Reimbursement rates for test centers are very low. The true cost of the actual number of test centers needed is just becoming clear.

ACCES-VR

- This year is the 33rd anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. Governor Kathy Hochul hosted a celebration to mark the occasion at the Governor's Mansion in July, an event that was the first of its kind. This event was well-attended by disability rights advocates, individuals with disabilities, and professionals in the field.
- Governor Hochul has issued an executive order committing New York State to becoming a model employer of people with disabilities. As part of this initiative, ACCES-VR will use funds to authorize competitive work experiences through vendors, creating paid internship opportunities at state agencies. Department of Labor has received funding for a position to coordinate this initiative.
- October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM). ACCES-VR has collaborated on multiple events with other agencies in New York, and this year's theme is "Advancing Access and Equity." The 2nd annual DREAM Symposium will be sponsored by Chief Disability Officer Kim Hill on October 3, 2023. For the first time an event will be hosted by the Civil Service, the first annual DREAM Celebration, on October 5, 2023, and NYSED is honored their Chief Information Officer Michael St. John will deliver the keynote address.

Subminimum Wage to Competitive Integrated Employment (SWTCIE)

- ACCES-VR received this grant from Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The purpose of the grant is to assist those individuals with disabilities engaged in, or contemplating entering, subminimum Wage (SMW) employment to obtain competitive integrated employment (CIE).
- September of 2023 marks one year since the beginning of this project; October of 2023 begins year two.
- The project is almost fully staffed. ACCES-VR is excited to announce Meghan Parker has been hired as the Project Director. All positions for the grant, except for one, have been hired and staff have begun work.
- Contracts with the Independent Living Centers (ILCs) are almost finalized. The first cohort of individuals the project will target are individuals currently engaged in subminimum wage employment, and ILCs will seek to transition them to competitive integrated employment (CIE) via customized employment. ILCs have expertise in customized employment, and they

will update the required Career Counseling, Information & Referral (CCIR) service structure to deliver customized employment.

- One of the industries targeted by the grant is the healthcare sector. Written into the grant is the creation of a Personal Support/Direct Support Academy. The goal is to create a credential for people with disabilities to certify as direct support professionals.

Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS)

- WIOA requires ACCES-VR to spend 15% of its federal funds on Pre-ETS. This 15% is in combination with the New York State Commission for the Blind (COB). For the 2021-22 program year, the total percentage spent was 14.5%. ACCES-VR spent 15%; COB did not.
- Although it was acknowledged the 14.5% was a combined outcome, a co-corrective action plan was provided for both agencies. ACCES-VR declined the corrective action plan and requested technical assistance moving forward, including additional training for staff. Additionally, ACCES-VR highlighted the increase from 8% spent on pre-ETS to 15% in one program year.
- The collaboration is underway with Mohawk Community College (MVCC) to provide Pre-ETS to their students, as well as local area middle and high school students. This project is in the early stages, and work is focused on identifying students who would benefit from Pre-ETS. The Utica District Office is assisting.
- Next, ACCES-VR will be partnering with CUNY and has identified the following community colleges as potential partners: LaGuardia Community College, Borough of Manhattan Community College, and Kingsborough Community College.
- Beginning this Fall, CUNY will send a letter to every senior, congratulating them on being accepted to the CUNY system and encouraging them to select their campus. These students may come to ACCES-VR, and their goal may or may not be obtaining a college degree, or they may or may not need college coursework to achieve their employment goal. This will have an impact on how services are provided; ACCES-VR will need to be flexible to accommodate these customers.

St. Regis Mohawk Tribal Collaboration

- ACCES-VR is seeking to increase collaboration with the St. Regis Mohawk tribe. Currently, there is a great working relationship, and there is an ACCES-VR representative who meets with tribal VR monthly.
- ACCES-VR is updating the MOU for customers who are served dually, by both agencies. Goals include extending Pre-ETS to eligible and potentially eligible students and cross agency training
- This is part of a larger conversation Commissioner Rosa is having with various tribal nations and other entities, such as the Indigenous Mascot Advisory Group.

Core Rehabilitation Services (CRS) Contract

- ACCES-VR has finished scoring proposals from prospective vendors. For those who passed, their proposals are now with the fiscal unit.
- Two vendor applicants failed because they had not pre-qualified through New York's Grants Gateway. The Grants Gateway pre-qualification can expire, so it is important for vendors to verify they are still qualified, prior to bidding on any NYS contract. Other vendors failed for a portion of a service; others failed for an entire service.
- There is an appeal process for those vendors who failed that will be shared with them at the time they are notified of their failure for the bid.

- For those who were approved, there are multiple steps in the approval process, including contract administration, Division of the Budget, and Office of the State Comptroller. Vendors should be notified of their passing by November, with a start date of service in January.
- The Training Unit is actively preparing trainings for this new CRS Contract. They have begun weekly trainings for a few staff a time on what is new, with all staff beginning trainings in October. Vendor trainings will begin December and January, once the restricted period has ended.
- Please send all questions to CRS2024@nysed.gov; all questions will be answered and compiled into a FAQ, which will also be posted to the website.

Policy Updates

- ACCES-VR will be reviewing policy proposals that will increase ACCES-VR's contribution towards college training and non-degree training services, public input opportunities are being held in October and the QAI Committee will be provided the draft policy updates

SRC Comments/Questions:

Question/Comment: Thank you for sharing these updates, these are wonderful.

Response: Thank you for your feedback.

Question/Comment: Will CRS trainings for vendors be virtual?

Response: Yes.

Question/Comment: Will vendor trainings be open to everyone or grouped regionally?

Response: They will have RSVPs required and be capped at a certain number. There will probably not be additional group requirements; that will create unnecessary difficulties.

Question/Comment: Has ACCES-VR considered an open house format, where counselors and vendors can speak directly?

Response: That would be a different event entirely; currently, we are focused on training just staff, and then just vendors, on the basics of the new CRS contract.

Presentations

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, Kim Osmani- Project Director

Yang-Tan Institute on Employment and Disability, Cornell University

- ACCES-VR engaged the Yang-Tan Institute to conduct its Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. This Assessment consisted of three phases: a review of literature and analysis of state and national data, a group concept mapping, and a focus group conducted with the full SRC. A presentation was given by Kim Osmani from the Yang-Tan Institute on the highlights of the data analysis, barriers to servicing ACCES-VR's customers, and recommendations to overcoming these barriers. The long-term impact of the Covid-19 pandemic was discussed, as were suggestions for conducting the next Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

Program Year (PY) 2024-2027 NYS WIOA Combined State Plan, Julianne Venneman

Manager of Policy Unit, Central Office, ACCES-VR

- The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) stipulates the require core partners create and follow a state plan every four years. The SRC is required to review and comment on ACCES-VR's portion of the plan, and ACCES-VR is required to respond to this feedback.

These comments and the response are then added to the plan. A presentation was given by Julianne Venneman from ACCES-VR's Central Office on the purpose of the plan, its required partners and components, and the timeline for the SRC's review, response, and contribution to the plan.

Interagency Reports:

Advisory Council on Postsecondary Education for Students with Disabilities:

- Has not met since previous meeting of the SRC in June 2023.
- Will provide update at the SRC's December 2023 quarterly meeting.

Technology Related Assistance for Individuals with Disabilities (TRAID):

- TRAID continues their public reach-out campaign, to various offices and locations.
- TRAID has provided 181 short term loans (of 60 days or less) of 277 devices. They have provided 76 open-ended loans (more than 60 days) of 140 devices.
- TRAID has given 57 demonstrations, comparing different devices. These occur at ACCES-VR orientations and BOCES centers, among other locations.
- TRAID will be giving a presentation on October 18, 2023, at the Fulton Montgomery Schoharie (FMS) Workforce Solutions Career Center on employment technology.
- TRAID will be at TRAID on the Trails! on Saturday, September 16, 2023, from 10am to 2pm at Inner Harbor Creekwalk in Syracuse, NY. Adaptive recreational equipment will be available to try and use in an outdoor setting.

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

- CAP: New advocate hired, Julio Cedeno.
- DRNY: Staff will work from home permanently. Physical locations in Albany, Brooklyn, and Rochester will be maintained, but reduced in size.
- Work continues to release new marketing materials and update the website.
- Begun to publish Fact Sheets on many different topics, including advocacy resources; they can be viewed at www.drny.org.
- In honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (October), DRNY will facilitate a virtual panel discussion entitled "Exploring Diverse Careers in Disability Advocacy" on October 19th at 3pm EST.

New York State Office of Mental Health (OMH):

- No update.

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):

- OSE has a newly redesigned website, transition to a more modern platform. This went live at the start of the school year, specifically the transition planning page, and all feedback is welcome.

- The Board of Regents voted to update regulations on the use of corporal punishment. Specifically, uniform guidelines were enacted to prohibit the use of corporal punishment, seclusion, and prone restraints, as well as to further limit the use of timeout and physical restraints. Annual reporting requirements are included, as well as new policy and training requirements for staff.
- The State Performance Plan (SPP)/Annual Performance Report (APR) has been posted to the website. The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act of 2004 requires each state to report annually on 17 indicators to the federal government. A determination is then made as to whether that state is meeting the requirements of the IDEA. The determination for New York State for FFY 2021 is Needs Assistance.
- The youth advisory panel advising OSE of the real-life impacts on people with disabilities is accepting applications. All meetings will be held virtually, and the panel needs high school students from all regions across the state. The deadline to apply is September 27, 2023.

Comment/Question: Is there anything OSE is particularly proud of regarding the State Performance Plan?

Response: Some targets are set by the federal government and others by New York State, but we are meeting our graduation and drop-out target rates as a state.

New York State Department of Labor (DOL):

- New York Systems Change and Inclusive Opportunities Network (SCION): Currently there are 30 Disability Resource Coordinators (DRCs) across the state; three more DRCs were hired for the New York City area. A new technical advisory was issued to extend SCION an additional two years, until December 31, 2026. When the policy was updated, it was thought it would incentivize other local areas to hire DRCs, but six local areas decided not to participate.
- Fusions licenses have been updated through 2026, allowing individuals to use both JAWS and Zoom technology in one license. All career centers have been approved to have these licenses. DOL will continue to explore new technology to serve individuals with disabilities and are working with TRAIID to accomplish this.
- DOL has applied for the Partners for Reentry Opportunities in Workforce Development (PROWD) funding opportunity. If awarded, this grant will award several million dollars to provide support for incarcerated individuals to prepare them for successful employment when they return to their communities.
- DOL is participating in an interagency committee of all mandated Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) partners, as well as others such as OPWDD, the NYS Council on Children and Families (CCF), NYS Division of Human Rights, to better coordinate services and set goals for deconstructing silos in workforce development.

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

- OPWDD published new supported employment (SEMP) regulations administrative memo, including updates for improvement. The public comment period ended September, and OPWDD is crafting their response. The new regulations will be effective January 1, 2024.
- OPWDD is continuing to work with ACCES-VR on transition between OPWDD and ACCES-VR agencies. A new response time will be implemented to increase the speed of the transition, and improvements by both agencies should ease the transition as well. The agencies are meeting monthly to identify which services can be sequenced, and which can be braided. More information will follow.

- Several vocational training programs teaching different job skills, including basic office skills, food service, retail, and hospitality, have received financial awards from OPWDD.
- Marketing campaign began as partnership and has grown into the EmployAbility campaign. Business owners are encouraged to take the EmployAbility pledge and embrace a philosophy of inclusivity. A website, toolkit, and trainings are available to support the employment of qualified individuals with disabilities and provide consumers with accessible environments in structure and communication.

Comment/Question: The new SEMP regulations are very exciting. There seems to be confusion on the part of care managers regarding how OPWDD and ACCES-VR services can work together. Has there been any thought on how to get this information to care managers and families?

Response: This has been a topic of discussion at the monthly meetings between the agencies. One area of exploration is how to increase this information at the front door, the beginning of services. Several improvements are in progress which, when they come to fruition, should improve this.

Comment/Question: For the EmployAbility training, if you are getting more providers signing up than businesses, what is the plan to attract businesses? Have you thought about asking every provider who attends bring a business representative with them?

Response: Great idea! The first set of training will be for people who signed the EmployAbility pledge specifically, including providers. We are working on targeting our next round of marketing specifically to businesses.

SRC Business:

Committee Expectations

- The first draft of ACCES-VR's section of the WIOA Combined State Plan will be sent to all SRC members at the beginning of November. Please review the document both individually and during your committee meetings in the month of November. Please submit feedback and comments to your committee chairs; there will be time during the committee meeting portion of the December quarterly meeting to refine your responses. These are due for submission to ACCES-VR by the end of the first day of the December quarterly meeting. Please focus on the perspective of all individuals with disabilities from across New York State.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee Report:

- No update.

Annual Report Committee:

- The Annual Report Committee has collected all the Committee Reports and will begin the review/editing process.
- Success stories are still being accepted. Please send headshots and release forms; watch for reminder emails from the committee.

Business Engagement:

- The Business Engagement Committee has brainstormed presentation ideas for the December meeting including Clean and Equitable Energy Developmental (CEED) certificate,

cannabis regulations on the state and federal regulations, the Micron Technology chip factory with their regional workforce development board, or the Advance to Apprenticeship program.

Membership:

- The Membership Committee would like to present the following candidates for the 2024-2026 three-year term: Marilee Boylan, Meesha Johnson, Kenneth Klassert, Mary LaFrance, Tonia Weichmann, and Stephanie Woodward. These candidates would serve from January 1, 2024, to December 31, 2026.
- A motion is made by Valerie Gambino-Carelli to approve these candidates to forward to the Board of Regents for approval. The motion is seconded by Maryann Donnelly Sigona. The vote is unanimous; the slate of candidates is approved as presented.

Comment/Question: Should the candidates be notified they will proceed onward?

Response: Yes, it is a lengthy process from interviewing through Board of Regents approval. We will contact the candidates to inform they have moved to the next phase of the process.

Pre-ETS:

- The Pre-ETS Committee is considering a panel presentation, similar to the Board of Regents presentation, of Transition and Youth Services success stories. The committee is compiling ideas for the presentation and outlining next steps.

Quality Assurance Improvement:

- The Quality Assurance and Improvement (QAI) Committee received the results of the last Consumer Satisfaction Survey from ACCES-VR. After reviewing the results, the committee has compiled a list of questions, suggestions, and feedback they will forward to ACCES-VR. They have asked Julianne Venneman, Manager of Policy, to attend an upcoming committee meeting to discuss the methodology of the survey and suggestions moving forward.
- When the committee receives response from ACCES-VR to the questions and feedback, they will share them with the full SRC.

4.2 Recommendations: None.

Old Business: None

Next Meeting December 5-6, 2023
Hilton Albany Medical Center