

**NEVADA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (N.S.R.C.)
MEETING MINUTES
May 12, 2020**

Teleconference only

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kacy Curry
David Nuestro
Shelley Hendren
Jean Peyton
Judith Swain
Rebecca Rogers
Mary Brabant
Julie Bowers
Rachel Jefferies
Alison Stephens

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Joshua Baker

GUESTS/PUBLIC:

Jack Mayes, Nevada Disability and Law Center

STAFF:

Justin Taruc, Deputy Attorney General
Victor Kersey, VR Southern District Manager
Sheena Childers, VR Southern District Manager
Matthew Dorangricchia, VR Northern District Manager
Drazen Elez, Deputy Administrator of Operations
Mechelle Merrill, VR Bureau Chief
Marla Robinson, Administrative Assistant

1. **CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, AND VERIFY TIMELY POSTING OF AGENDA**

Kacy Curry, Chair called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. Marla Robinson proxy for Javier Fernandez NSRC liaison called the role.

Ms. Robinson determined a quorum was present and verified that the posting was completed on time in accordance with Open Meeting Law. Per Governor Sisolak's extension of the Declaration of emergency directive 006, no physical meeting place was determined, and no physical posting of the agenda was done. The only posting required by the Deputy Attorney General's office was displayed on the DETR and Nevada Public Notices website.

2. **FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

3. **APPROVAL OF THE FEBRUARY 11, 2020 MEETING MINUTES**

Ms. Curry began the discussion by asking if there were any corrections, modifications or changes to the February 11, 2020 meeting minutes. Ms. Curry indicated that on page 2, section 5, the 3rd paragraph the survey date range should read September 2018 to August 2019. Beginning on page 12 through 17, the acronym "DSU" should be spelled out to read as "Designated State Unit". Ms. Hendren indicated for the purposes of the meeting minutes it will be changed to read "VR". A motion was made by Jean Peyton to approve the minutes with the changes noted by Kacy. Motion was seconded by Julie Bowers. All in favor, none opposed, non-abstained, motion carried, minutes approved.

4. **NSRC MEMBERSHIP UPDATE**

Shelley Hendren, Rehabilitation Administrator began by advising the council that this is the last meeting for 2 of its current members, Jean Peyton as a former VR client who has served 2 terms and Julie Bowers from the Department of Education. Ms. Hendren and Ms. Curry both expressed their gratitude and input for their service on the council. Ms. Hendren indicated there are still several vacant positions on the council. The current vacancies, which include Jean and Julie's positions, are a Former VR Client, rep. from the Dept. of Education, Native American Section 121 VR Program rep., Client Assistance Program (CAP), Workforce Investment Board and 3 Business, Industry & Labor vacancies. Ms. Bowers indicated someone from the Dept. of Education will be applying to a position on the council. Mr. Jack Mayes applied for the CAP vacancy and his application was submitted to the Governor's office and no appointment has yet been made.

5. **ELECTION OF NSRC CHAIR AND VICE-CHAIR FOR TERM JULY 1, 2020 THROUGH JUNE 30, 2021**

Ms. Hendren began by referencing the council's Bylaw's, article 2, section 3 which references elections and the duties of the positions. Elections shall be held at the last regularly scheduled meeting of the State fiscal year. Council members will nominate and elect officers to the offices of Chair and Vice-Chair from its members eligible to vote. Voting members of the council may serve as Chair or Vice-Chair. If Co-Chairs are elected, the Council will define and publish in its minutes the duties of each of the officers as are differentiated from Chair and Vice-Chair. The new officers will take office on the first day of the succeeding State Fiscal Year. New members shall be required to attend and participate in the Council, New member orientation and training. Section 4 is the Duties of the Officers. The Chair shall direct all Council business. In addition, the Chair shall be responsible for communication with Division Liaison regarding Agendas, Training and Meeting minutes. The Vice-Chair shall act in the stead of the Chair when the Chairman is not available to fulfill his/her duties. The Vice-Chair Shall Chair the State Plan/Needs Assessment Committee.

Ms. Hendren asked if any member would like to either volunteer or nominate someone for the position of Chair? Jean Peyton nominated Kacy Curry for Chair. A vote was taken by the council, all in favor, none opposed, none abstained, motion carried. Ms. Curry was nominated as Chair for term July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

Ms. Hendren asked if any member would like to either volunteer or nominate someone for the position of Vice-Chair? Kacy Curry nominated Joshua Baker for Vice-Chair. Alison Stephens volunteered to be Vice-Chair if no one else volunteered. David Nuestro also volunteered to be Vice-Chair if no-one else volunteered. A vote was taken by the council to have David Nuestro continue as Vice-Chair, all in favor, none opposed, none abstained, motion carried. Mr. Nuestro was nominated as Vice-Chair for term July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021.

6. **VOLUNTEERS FOR THE STATE PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING SCHEDULED FOR JULY 28, 2020**

Kacy Curry began by asking for volunteers for the State Plan subcommittee to assist VR in reviewing/revising the Goals, Strategies and Performance Measures for SFY21. Mechelle Merrill, Jack Mayes, from the Nevada Disability and Law Center, David Nuestro, Mary Brabant, Kacy Curry, Alison Stephens and Judy Swain all volunteered. A motion was made by David Nuestro to establish the State Plan Subcommittee. Judy Swain seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed, none abstained, motion carried.

8. **OTHER REPORTS**

Ms. Curry reported that the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) is working on the state plan.

Jack Mayes, Executive Director of the Nevada Disability and Law Center (NDALC) reported on the Client Assistance Program (CAP). Since the COV-19 pandemic hit, the agency has been working on many items. Transportation safety plan is being looked at on how clients are going back to work. Issues pertaining to unemployment, particularly those who are deaf and autistic. With VR client's the biggest complaint is

communication delays as VR offices are currently closed. CAP is also monitoring the oversight for Independent Living. The centers were allocated funding through the CARES Act and will be monitored to see how it's implemented in Nevada. Both Northern and Southern centers will be receiving funds to provide services to client's effected by COVID-19.

7. **CONSUMER SATISFACTION QUARTERLY RESULTS FROM MARKET DECISIONS RESEARCH (MDR)**

Ms. Hendren began the presentation with the data from the results of the first trimester of the survey. Trends to watch. Most consumers of VR/OIB services are positive about their experience and are satisfied with the services provided them. Youth in transition are most positive overall.

Positive trending metrics: Fewer consumers reporting problems, communications with staff, experience with VR services.

Negative population trends: Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) consumers are increasingly less positive about their experience as all metrics declined in trimester 1 of 2020 and most having declined for two consecutive trimesters. Ease of the application process and accessibility of the VR office declined significantly. Consumer satisfaction and positivity trends downward the longer they remain in service. Consumers in service longer than 18 months are least positive overall.

Core Metrics

Summary of Domain Scores - Service Population - First Trimester 2020

Domain	General VR	Youth in Transition	Older Individuals who are Blind
Overall Satisfaction and Expectations	75	79	82
Experience with Services Provided by VR	78	82	82
Experience with Staff and Counselors	87	89	84
Communications with Staff	75	80	83
Customer Control and Involvement	79	82	82
Outcomes and Meeting Goals	79	86	84
Ease of the application process for VR services	77	77	54
Accessibility of the VR office for someone with your type of disability	90	92	77
Satisfaction with current employment	76	80	-
Would you tell your friends with disabilities to go to the VR program for help? (% yes)	90%	96%	96%
Did you experience any problems with VR or the services they have provided to you? (% no)	73%	88%	84%

The trend of Ease of Application Process over the past 3 trimesters is a concern. VR has had in-person training with the transition staff in particular and in cooperation with the quality assurance team the VR application process is being simplified. The application will only have the elements that are required by law. At the intake process is when the other elements of the application will be addressed.

Benchmarks Breakdown

Summary of Domain Scores - Period of Service - First Trimester 2020

Domain	Overall	In service IPE to 6 months	In service 6 to 12 months	In service 18 months or more	Closed cases
Overall Satisfaction and Expectations	77	85	74	74	74
Experience with Services Provided by VR	79	86	77	75	77
Experience with Staff and Counselors	87	92	88	85	85
Communications with Staff	77	84	76	74	74
Customer Control and Involvement	80	87	78	77	79
Outcomes and Meeting Goals	80	87	82	81	73
Ease of the application process for VR services	76	76	74	78	76
Accessibility of the VR office for someone with your type of disability	90	92	87	92	88
Satisfaction with current employment	76	-	79	66	81
Would you tell your friends with disabilities to go to the VR program for help? (% yes)	91%	96%	91%	93%	86%
Did you experience any problems with VR or the services they have provided to you? (% no)	76%	83%	77%	73%	73%

Experience with Staff and counselors is on an upward trend as well as communication and customer control and involvement. VR referral is also on an upward trend.

Trending

Summary of Domain Scores - Trending

Domain	2018 T3	2019 T1	2019 T2	2019 T3	2020 T1
Overall Satisfaction and Expectations	75	75	67	77	77
Experience with Services Provided by VR	77	77	70	77	79
Experience with Staff and Counselors	87	87	83	88	87
Communications with Staff	75	75	70	75	77
Customer Control and Involvement	79	79	78	80	80
Outcomes and Meeting Goals	81	80	76	82	80
Ease of the application process for VR services	77	77	77	74	76
Accessibility of the VR office for someone with your type of disability	92	91	89	90	90
Satisfaction with current employment	79	81	79	75	76
Would you tell your friends with disabilities to go to the VR program for help? (% yes)	91%	94%	92%	92%	91%
Did you experience any problems with VR or the services they have provided to you? (% no)	69%	71%	63%	73%	76%

Core Metrics in Summary

All OIB core metric scores declined in trimester 1 of 2020, with most in their second consecutive trimester of decline since trimester 2 of 2019.

OIB consumers rated their experience much lower in two key areas: Ease of the application process (54 for OIB vs. 77 for both General and Youth in Transition). Accessibility of VR office (77 for OIB vs. 90 for General and 92 for Youth in Transition).

Those in the IPE to 6-month period of service are more positive than consumers in service longer than 6 months. Those in service longer than 18 months generally express the lowest scores of any service period. Closed cases are most satisfied with their employment but experienced more problems and are less satisfied with their outcomes and meeting goals.

Overall positively trending metrics (2 consecutive trimesters of positive gain). Fewer consumers reporting problems, communications with staff, experience with VR services.

Consumer Feedback

Among consumers expressing a negative view at any point, the most common feedback is that changing counselors too often causes problems with their services. Others mentioned problems with forms and paperwork they found hard or complicated. Communication is frequently identified as a main point and area for improvement.

	Overall (n=318)
Changing counselors, switching too much, causes problems	27%
Forms and paperwork hard, complicated	24%
Better communication needed	22%
Counselor did not return calls, emails or follow up	20%
Calls, mail not returned for days, weeks, had to wait too long for return call	19%
Need more information about services offered, not enough information provided	18%
Services offered by VR were not effective	17%
Did not receive employment, VR could not find me a job	17%
Counselor was not helpful or supportive	15%
Lots of paperwork, too long, make it shorter	14%

Moving Forward

Data collection is currently paused but will be resumed as soon as possible.

When data collection resumes, consider adding COVID-19 specific questions to assess how pandemic has affected consumers. "In what ways has the recent coronavirus pandemic affected your experience with Vocational Rehabilitation?". "Have you stopped looking for work or put VR services on hold due to the coronavirus pandemic?". "Did you lose your job due to the coronavirus pandemic?".

9. **REHABILITATION DIVISION UPDATE/COVID-19**

Ms. Hendren began her update by referencing Governor Sisolak's Declaration of Emergency related to COVID-19 that was issued on March 12th. On March 15, he issued directive 001 which closed all schools and non-essential state entities on March 16th which include Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation, Bureau of Services to Individuals who are Blind or Visually Impaired, Blind Business Enterprise of Nevada. Were determined to be all non-essential services and were ordered to be closed until further notice. Directive 003 issued on March 20th closed all non-essential businesses. The current stay-at-home order goes through May 15th. State agencies have not been allowed to reopen. VR is meeting and establishing a plan for when we reopen. Social Distancing, wearing of Personal Protective Equipment.

On April 5th the Governor issued a memo regarding the State's fiscal dilemma. "Nevada's economy has suffered tremendously, as a result we are headed into a new reality and need to take a different direction with our state budget that reflects this reality. One does not have to be a statistician or a budget analyst to know that government budgets require are taking significant hits. That is why I have asked the governors finance office to work with agencies to review budgets and make recommendations for budget reduction".

VR had a target for budget reduction and as a result VR submitted a plan for budget reduction for SFY20 and SFY21. VR's plan does not include layoffs to staff or cut's in client services. The governor issued a state of fiscal emergency. The revenue that Nevada generates to pay for its government obligations comes mainly from tourism, hotels, gaming, sales tax and fees from mining. Since these businesses are essentially closed there is no income coming into the state. That is why the state cannot be funded as it was determined in the last legislative session. These cuts are to the general fund. All federal matching funds are currently affected.

Mechelle Merrill, Division Acting Deputy Administrator began her update with reviewing the timeline of BVR/BSBVI response to COVID-19.

Timeline:

March 12, 2020

- Rehabilitation Administration creates our first COVID-19 response, shared with all staff statewide. (included)

March 13, 2020

- Held statewide GoToMeeting to discuss 3/12 COVID-19 response and discuss plans, hear comments, concerns, address fears.
- Notice sent to job developers informing that agency is limiting service due to COVID-19
- Script shared with all staff to share with clients and vendors informing of agency COVID plans
- List created of all staff who self-identified as "vulnerable" for determination of priority for working from home/VPN

March 15, 2020

- Governor Sisolak outlines Nevada's first COVID-19 status and directives-closure.

March 16, 2020

- Notice of closure posted to all VR Nevada Social Media outlets-offices closed per Governor
- Staff are all sent home "until further notice" told to work from home as much as possible, paid ADMIN leave for all non-work hours.
- Developed list of staff who could potentially work for ESD/UI if called-all non-vulnerable
- SARA blast sent to all clients informing them of office closures and informing that all Rehabilitation Counselors would be monitoring their work email and SARA while working from home.

March 17, 2020

- District Managers told to begin weekly GoToMeeting calls with all regional staff for program

N.S.R.C. Meeting Minutes
May 12, 2020

updates, directives and employee morale.

- BSBVI Low Vision Clinic in Las Vegas cancelled until further notice
- Administrative update sent to all staff statewide

March 19, 2020

- List of priority for VPN and all contact info provided to IDP
- DocuSign approved and initial contact made with a few staff-no roll-out
- 2nd notice sent to all vendors that VR is non-essential and closed. Assurance that bills for past work will be paid.

March 20, 2020

- All summer camps and internships cancelled vendors notified
- DETR informed all staff that they must disclose to Human Resources if they or someone they reside with is COVID-19 positive or presumptively positive
- Every VR counselor is emailed a list of all their clients, including phone numbers and emails to ensure contact. All are told to make weekly calls to their clients to check in, see if there is anything we can do to help, share resources, provide counseling and guidance

March 25, 2020

- Employee Assistance Program contact and resources sent to all staff statewide

March 27, 2020

- Plan for return of "skeleton crews" to Westbay and Corporate offices in support of those working from home. Receiving mail, billing, calls, mailing out needed items, supplies, etc.

March 31, 2020

- COVID-19 tab on VRNevada.org created with links to resources and information pertinent to the COVID crisis, VR services and State guidance.

April 3, 2020

- DocuSign Nevada VR kick-off meeting-anticipate full release May 12, 2020

April 8, 2020

- VR Statewide online training provided: "Positivity-Staying Positive While Working from Home"

April 13, 2020

- All staff successfully working from home, except those working in support of ESD/UI, being trained to work ESD/UI or the 2 individuals identified as vulnerable and do not have internet access in their homes.
- Skeleton crews begin at Westbay (Las Vegas) and Corporate Blvd. (Reno)

April 16, 2020

- 6 Southern staff begin 2 days of training to support ESD/UI and be able to assist individuals with disabilities to submit UI claims.

April 20, 2020

- 12 total Rehab Division staff (BVR/BSBVI/BEN) are working in support of ESD/UI in Las Vegas and Carson City.

April 21, 2020

- Rehab Administration is given notice by a staff person on the northern skeleton crew that they were potentially exposed to COVID-19.
- Rehab Administration closes the Corporate Blvd. office till further notice.
- Staff are noticed of the potential exposure and office closure.
- That night, Corporate Blvd. office is deep cleaned

April 22, 2020

- Exposed individual is notified by their physician that they must test for COVID-19 exposure.
- Individual is tested, results expected April 23, 2020.
- Based on that outcome, reopening date will be determined and staff notified.

Consumer Satisfaction Survey status: MDR has continued to conduct VR's surveys. A meeting with MDR is scheduled for June 1, 2020 to determine where we stand and what is to follow. Response to the

surveys due to COVID-19 may vary due to the impact of the virus on consumers.

Needs Assessments Focus Groups status: Were held in Las Vegas the week of March 9th through March 13th. Due to the office closures the remaining focus groups were not able to be conducted. The responses taken during these time frames from Las Vegas probably no longer reflect the primary concerns and priorities of the community. It would be beneficial to reach out to the provider, San Diego State University, to discuss redoing the focus groups.

Third Party Cooperative Agreements (TPCA) and Monitoring Visits status: Unfortunately, the visits were scheduled right when the order to close was issued. At this point until schools and school districts reopen the monitoring visits cannot be completed.

Suspended services/job development status: VR is still working to support clients who choose to continue to seek employment or need assistance for an essential job.

What we have been able to do/where we are now: Services that are appropriate to continue providing are services to sustain an essential job, services to achieve an essential job, support for purchases of cell phone and internet services, all required Assistive Technology, mental health and support of counseling and guidance by professional, higher education by distance, medical remediation.

A volunteer group of VR staff has been established and are working in support of the Governor's reopening plan. Identified plans from other agencies have been shared as well as consideration of the CDC and WHO guidelines. Currently state and local offices remain closed in consideration of phase 2 on May 30th. VR will continue to finalize its plan for when reopening is announced in a safe manner for staff and clients. Counselors are performing virtual intakes, using the GoTo Meeting platform. In mid-May VR will go live with DocuSign a program that gives the ability for clients to sign documents virtually.

Consequences to program year outcomes status: VR's case closure goal for SFY20 was 822. Currently we are at 334. Intakes are still taking place. There will be many program consequences VR will struggle with. VR has about ½ million left for client services until June 30, 2020. VR staff are teleworking at home and have access to our case management system. DETR is implementing a new phone system that will allow a person's work phone number to be routed to their home computer or personal cell phone device to conduct business.

10. **COMMENTS BY THE COUNCIL**

Ms. Curry asked if there were any comments. Ms. Hendren indicated to please plan on a full day's agenda for the September 22, 2020 meeting as there are many agenda items that were not presented at this meeting that are scheduled for the next meeting. Jean Peyton thanked everyone for the opportunity for spending time with people who share the same vision as she does over the past 6 years that she's been on the council. Julie Bowers also thanked the council for allowing her the opportunity to be a council member.

11. **SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

12. **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

N.S.R.C. Meeting Minutes
May 12, 2020

Edited By:

Javier Fernandez
Javier Fernandez, N.S.R.C. Liaison

Approved By:

Kacy Curry
Kacy Curry, Chair