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Town Hall, Nevada State Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation 2023 Introduction:

The inaugural Town Hall Meetings Series by Vocational Rehabilitation took place on November 6 and 15, 2023, providing a platform for open dialogue with stakeholders, including clients, staff, community partners, and the public. The goal was to foster collaboration, share ideas, and explore ways to enhance the lives of individuals with disabilities.

In the subsequent sections, we will encapsulate the key topics discussed within our division, along with public comments and feedback. This effort aims to demonstrate transparency and accountability in line with the goals and objectives actively pursued by vocational rehabilitation within the communities we serve. Should you have any questions, comments, or concerns, please reach out to the Rehabilitation Administration.

We were honored to have participation from the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Administration, comprising:

- Drazen Elez (administrator)
- Mechelle Merrill (Deputy Administrator for Programs)
- Brett Martinez (Deputy Administrator for Operations)
- Sheena Childers (Bureau Chief)

Dale McWilliams (Training Officer II) served as the host and facilitator for this event. Each participant, introduced by the host, shared their educational background and journey within VR, outlining plans and implementations with the VR staff, vendors, and clients served. This event is slated to be an annual occurrence, ensuring a two-way communication channel, and soliciting input and experiences from both sides of operations.

Notable efforts showcased during the event included:

- Integration of surveys into decision-making processes and program expansion within VR
- Ensuring equal employment access for people with disabilities.
- Implementation of audit recommendations.

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- Collaborative efforts with VR counselors to enhance client satisfaction in achieving IPE plan goals.
- Recruitment of personnel aligned with the organization's vision, showing compassion, and possessing the necessary training and education.
- Successful creation of a one-page application process.
- Presence on social media platforms.
- Enhancements to the Vocational Rehabilitation website.

Stakeholders Questions, Feedback, and Comments:

Stakeholders raised several inquiries and provided feedback during the event, including:

- Clarification on response timeframes based on application and eligibility.
- Information on follow-up calls from assigned case workers.
- Timelines for developing an Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).
- Training processes for client interviews and one-way interviews.
- Positive comments on the new website's accessibility.
- Inquiries about Social Security website content related to Medicaid coverage and rules.
- Interest in online training courses at VR locations.
- Clarification on the 700-hour program.
- Public curiosity about employment-first collaboration efforts.
- Recommendations for disability-friendly employers and how to communicate with them to VR.
- Strategies for connecting youth leaving high school with VR.
- Plans to review other agency strategic plans for collaboration.
- Training for employees on the new Social Security portal.
- Public request for more individualized data on work assessments in various industries.
- Recognition of employers for disability-friendly practices.
- Outreach and engagement improvement suggestions.
- Ways for employers to connect with the Rehabilitation Division.
- Public emphasis on community partnerships as crucial support.
- Inquire about the eligibility of veterans for VR services.

In conclusion, the inaugural Town Hall Meetings Series hosted by the Nevada State Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation in 2023 marked a significant step towards fostering transparency, collaboration, and community engagement. The event provided a platform for meaningful discussions between the VR Administration and the public, reflecting a commitment to enhancing the lives of individuals with disabilities.

The outlined efforts and initiatives showcased during the event underscore Vocational Rehabilitation's dedication to continuous improvement and responsiveness to public feedback. The administration's commitment to an annual dialogue ensures an ongoing, two-way communication channel, allowing for the exchange of ideas and experiences to shape the future of VR services.

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All questions and feedback from stakeholders were diligently addressed during the town hall, demonstrating the bureau's commitment to openness and accountability. Concerns that required further research or consideration have been taken down for thorough investigation and will be incorporated into the upcoming strategic planning process.

Moreover, all client concerns that necessitate counselor input will be forwarded to the Division Manager for careful consideration and direct communication with the clients' respective counselors. This ensures that individual needs and queries are not only acknowledged but also proactively addressed within the framework of the organization's commitment to personalized and effective service.

As we move forward, the Bureau looks forward to building upon the momentum generated by this Town Hall Series, working collaboratively with the community, and striving to create an inclusive and supportive environment for individuals with disabilities. The commitment to excellence, openness, and responsiveness will continue to drive vocational rehabilitation in its mission to empower individuals and create pathways to success. Thank you to all who participated, and we anticipate further constructive engagement in the future.

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