



Hampton Inn Olympia
4301 Martin Way E
Olympia, WA

WSRC QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

Friday, January 24th, 2020

9:00 am to 1:30 pm

Present: Jen Cole, PAVE, Everett
Peggy Frisk, Community Rehabilitation Provider, Lake Stevens
Jerry Johnsen, Customer Assistance Program, Seattle.
Laurae MacClain, Tribal VR Representative, Nespalem.
Tania May, OSPI Representative, Olympia WA.
Justin Poole, Council Vice-Chair, DVR Customer Representative, Yakima.
Ivanova Smith, Disability Advocacy Representative, Tacoma.
Sheila Turner, SILC Liaison, Pasco.
Erin Williams, Business Representative, Seattle.
Erica Wollen, Workforce Training Representative, Olympia.

Members

Absent: Rob Hines, DVR Director, Lacey.
Kathy Powers, Council Chair, Business Representative, Auburn.

Council Staff: Shelby Satko, WSRC Executive Director, Lacey.
Mari Heusman, WSRC Executive Lead, Lacey.

Visitors: Alveshere, Don – DVR Planning & Evaluation Program Manager
Boston, Kelly – DVR Senior Manager, Olympia
Fielder, Sarah – DVR Transition Consultant
Forte, Catherine – DVR Tumwater Office Supervisor
Lystad, Amy – DVR Transition Consultant
Sheldon, Brandon – DVR Policy and Procedure Specialist
St. Lawrence, Robb – DVR Policy Manager
Vertrees, Paul – DVR Interim Chief of Field Services, Olympia

Call to Order, housekeeping, review agendas, introductions – Vice Chair – Justin Poole

- Justin Poole – Vice Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM
- Review WSRC Purpose, Vision, Mission
- Members not available today: Kathy Powers, Chair. Rob Hines, Ex Officio DVR Director

Debrief Customer Focus Group – Peggy Frisk – Subcommittee Lead – refer to WSRC Master PowerPoint

- Debrief Customer Focus Group – Timeliness
- Peggy – Customer group had a wide variety of experiences. One group was unhappy with the vendor and didn't understand they could speak to their counselor about vendor services
- Sheila – being new to the Council, really enjoyed the focus group. To have both clients and counselors attend seemed like a very effective way of soliciting feedback.
 - Sat with the counselors and found it to be very informative.
- 2 people who were deaf at a customer table but don't sign – it was difficult to keep them engaged.
- Justin – the customer group table he was at had mixed feelings – heard everything was great from one customer and from another, heard the counselor left and they had no communication from DVR.

- When customer had escalated to the supervisor, did not feel supported or that they solved the problem.
- Paul really appreciates the structure and how the Council conducts these focus groups. They're very constructive. Staff are open to hearing the feedback and interested in giving feedback as well.
- Jerry – it would be good to revisit the questions and what some of those questions mean.
- Jen – this was the first time she sat with the staff – it was great to hear their reflections. From their perspective, how important is it for staff to get implicit bias training?
 - Staff want to talk about it and have awareness about how past experiences influence how they conduct business.
 - When looking at modifying the focus group questions – being intentional to add training on structured racism, race, and disproportional outcomes. If this is something the Council cares about, we need to talk about it.
- The feeling is that the focus group is equally as beneficial for the staff to feel well supported so they can support customers.
 - Can look at the questions for the staff focus group, though it's nice to let them lead us. Maybe have standard questions, but let them lead the discussion.
 - Serving youth and timeliness and all the new expectations are adding layers to expectations on VRCs.
 - It's important for the counselors to have that positive feedback. The commitment to the clients should be more important than the metrics.
- Do Liaisons have a lower case load due to the additional job duties?
 - Caseloads are 80-100.
 - Are there guidelines setup for those roles and their work time for outside commitments? Can't be everything to everybody – it makes it harder to do good quality, focused work.
 - How to motivate and inspire staff while meeting all the obligations. How to be mindful and advocate better customer service without impacting burned out in the field.
 - It ultimately comes down to the customer. They're the ones impacted and they feel the consequences.
- Staff recruitment & retention is a big problem effecting customers. 4 staff leaving could affect around 400+ customers.
 - A generation of Rehab counselors that are retiring or close to retirement. Some are leaving earlier than expected because they feel the focus has shifted away from the customer.
 - Younger generation aren't life-long employees – that's what data has shown
 - Nationally, there are a lot fewer people seeking vocational rehab degrees. Really good counselors take years of experience to get there.
 - VR counselors are leaving for employers who offer telework, flexibility & better compensation.
 - How can WSRC help? Kelly - WSRC has been helping – the Council's footprint is all over the State Plan – but helping to keep the customer's voice in focus and keep the relationship with customers at the forefront.

Client Assistance Program – Jerry Johnsen – refer to WSRC Master PowerPoint

- The most successful DVR offices have supervisors who absorb impacts from above. They understand counselors need to work in a healthy environment.
- There are social workers and there are accountants; each teach their staff differently.
- Closures are an issue for which customers access CAP.
 - Sometimes customers aren't engaged and the pre-closure letter reminds customers to re-engage.
 - In these cases, Jerry sorts through communication from DVR to ensure the right communication has been sent. Impacts of case closer are magnified because of Order of Selection.
 - Closing and then opening back up isn't as smooth an option.
 - Post-employment services are not happening anymore either.
 - DVR will have to focus more on retention to keep jobs for customers.
- Self-employment – it's difficult, but a good option when people can't get out of their homes.

- It's a complicated service that customers and counselors don't necessarily understand.
- OOS waitlist is problematic. Jerry sits down with customers and discusses how they've been categorized.
 - Did they fully have an opportunity to talk about all their disabilities?
 - Depending on where customers are in the state, eligibility determination is being done differently.
- Half of DVR counselors have been at DVR since there has been a rigorous counselor training system.
 - Since staff are at all levels of training, they aren't always aware of services DVR can and cannot offer.
- Aurora Program at WSU – works with training persons to work in veterinarian offices – it's a great program but very expensive. DVR looks at programs like that as being on the fringe and hasn't really accepted them.
 - There are often a lot of good reasons to approach these programs cautiously, but DVR needs to open up to these opportunities for people of special populations.
 - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has made training as a huge priority – DVR should have discussions with these large institutions to identify these unique opportunities.
- Case transfers continue to be an issue for which customers seek CAP guidance.
- Race sensitivity – Jerry looks at poverty as a huge barrier for the population of customers DVR serves. How can DVR be sensitive to that as they work with customers and develop policies and procedures?
 - Transportation, shelter, these are unique issues impact customer engagement, but can't be fixed without employment.
- Don Kay retirement
 - Thank you to Don and recognizing the impact he has had for disability services nationally.
 - He was a part of the battle for civil rights and to end the “medical model” of VR services.
 - Medical model – used to look at customers like a Doctor would a patient. It's a different process.
 - Need to look at people as individuals who have a voice.
 - DVR should be a subjective model of service, not objective.

Region 3 Update – Paul Vertrees, Catherine Forte- refer to WSRC Master PowerPoint

- Performance Measures – attached
- Customer feedback: Services take too long. I don't hear from my counselor.
 - Goal is for Region 3 to never have a case in 120 days without a contact.
- Workforce Thurston Lab – is specifically staffed by DVR staff to focus on DVR customers to help them understand and better navigate the WorkSource and to better integrate the WorkSource.
 - The goal is to get WorkSource staff on the schedule and be open from 1 to 3 days per week.
- Business Specialist is part of the Business Relations team at Pac Mtn. Participates in reverse job fairs and other activities to bring DVR customers into the WorkSource.
- Adding a Transition Consultant for Pierce County.
- **Transition and Pre-ETS** – Sarah Fielder and Amy Lystad- refer to WSRC Master PowerPoint
 - TSAT – Survey conducted in partnership with WSU – Transition Consultants in each area asked schools to complete it to get a better picture of Pre-ETS services, how accessible they are, coordination of services, identifying gaps, and how to increase collaboration.
 - 97 questions and asks for a lot of thought and processing – it takes 30-40 minutes.
 - Challenges –
 - Trying to find the right Transition Consultant within schools with knowledge to answer questions.
 - Not enough time to get the answer or not getting priority as other job tasks are more pressing.
 - Teachers are wearing too many hats.
 - The most successful answers are coming from group conversations.
 - Lead to service knowledge expansion between staff.
 - Where do we go next, how to prioritize next steps for moving forward?
 - Opening the door for the DVR consultant
 - Schools are becoming more open and willing to work with DVR
 - Jen – where do all these responses go and who sees it?

Public Comment

- From 11-11:30. No comments

DVR Strategic Planning Updates – Shelby Satko, Kelly Boston – refer to WSRC Master PowerPoint

- Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)
 - Sent the outcome report to all WSRC members.
 - Kristina presented highlights at the November WSRC Meeting.
 - One section was taken out – data around transition because the numbers weren't correct. Shelby will send out the updated CSNA early next week.*
 - Shelby shared the report with everyone who gave feedback, along with the Barriers and Accessibility Solutions Committee Chairs of the state Workforce Development Boards.
 - Jerry read through the CSNA and felt really good about it; really liked it.
 - The report captured all the current challenges for VR and encapsulated the feeling of the field.
 - Really assesses the challenges in front of DVR.
- DVR State Plan – Attached
 - First section is a statement of the State Rehab Council
 - Business Management and Modernization Project – it'll be another month before the decision is made to keep STARS or move to a different case management database.
 - The work the Council did for their 2nd recommendation (drop down for why customer plans get extended) was great work. DVR will take it under consideration when they make decision on the BMMP
 - WSRC requested a policy to include 24-hour response deadline when customers contact DVR, but DSHS has a 48-hour response time policy in place already. DVR Staff felt 24-hours would be very challenging to meet. It seemed reasonable to DVR that the DSHS 48-hours response is most feasible for staff.
 - Jerry – what if people are in crisis and need response immediately?
 - Justin – or if voicemail is full for weeks at a time or the phone buttons to push to get through to the counselor are not very accessible?
 - Ivanova – will any of the training address if there is an abusive interaction for a customer? Counselors shouldn't be able to dismiss a customer if they're trying to report abuse.
 - Tania – the Council is interested in including cultural responsiveness for the future of DVR – Can we advocate for reflecting that information in the State Plan?
 - Section L – State Goals and Priorities
 - Kelly – The SRC's committee work and work we did in November are reflected throughout DVR's State Plan.
 - ELT looked at WSRC feedback, CSNA feedback, and a number of other sources.
 - Focus areas became the ideas that had the most input.
 - i.e. Timeliness - became goal one because that's what DVR heard most across the community.
 - The other goals are what DVR heard most across the community based on how much they heard on that particular item.
 - Format of the State Plan is confusing. Answer: In order to report to the Federal Government, it needs to be in this specific format, but when DVR puts together their State Plan Report, it will be put in a more user friendly format.
 - SRC Feedback for changes
 - Goal 4 Priority 2 – Implement Pre-ETS student and tracking application does that include group services.
 - Goal 1 Priority 3 – add family engagement.
 - How to operationalize this plan – how to measure progress on the goals.
 - Answer: DVR plans to break out goals into actionable annual plans.

- DVR will continue to engage the Council as they go through the planning process
 - WSRC would like to hear about the progress during at least one Council meeting per year.
- DSHS Strategic plan has to align with WIOA – just completed the DSHS Strategic plan 3 months ago.
 - Those focus areas are already reflected in these priorities.
- Open public comment on the State Plan is February 5th and will be co-hosted by WSRC

WORKING LUNCH

Debrief Meeting

- Review task list and turn in travel forms.
- Brainstorm next meeting agenda
 - Do we want to schedule a site visit at our next Quarterly Meeting (in Wenatchee)?
 - The Educational Service District (ESD) there is pretty active. It would be on Monday afternoon or built into the day-and-a-half schedule.
 - Tania – they have a strong local Transition network they have built.
 - Erica would like to do a site visit.
 - WSRC Staff will look into a site visit opportunity in Wenatchee*
 - Pick something out of the SRC-DVR Relationship book or a Rehab Law history by Jerry
 - Shelby does plan on chunking the book out for committee meetings.
 - Tania – this meeting has focused a lot on training – can we get training information on outreach or the Regional Training team or something?
 - Shelby has invited them to come to our council meetings.
 - Justin – doesn't remember the Council going to Wenatchee – would like to hear things particular to the local area, i.e. different challenges for more rural parts of the state.
 - Jen – Has the SRC ever intentionally invited city council or elected officials to reinforce local area connections?
 - Shelby has invited Community Rehabilitation Providers and can look into inviting the community WDC Directors, as well.

ADJOURN – 12:10 PM

NEXT MEETING: Tue/Wed May 5-6, 2020
 Hilton Garden Inn
 25 N Worthen St.
 Wenatchee, WA 98801