

# Washington State Rehabilitation Council

**2021**  
**ANNUAL REPORT**

# Message

## From the WSRC Chair

Dear Acting Commissioner Dobak and Governor Inslee,

On behalf of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC), I am pleased to present the 2021 WSRC Annual Report.



We continue to learn, adapt, and be creative in how the Council functions during the pandemic. During the federal fiscal year, we conducted our quarterly meetings virtually. We continually adjusted the format to find the right balance of moving our work forward, while at the same time acknowledging the demands of prolonged screen time. Our subcommittees maximized their monthly meetings in order to move their priorities forward. Despite the many obstacles we have faced this year, I am proud of the work the Council has accomplished.

In November 2020, Rob Hines left his position as DVR director after three years. Terry Redmon, during his tenure as DVR interim director, demonstrated effective leadership. DSHS leadership appointed Terry to DVR Director, effective Sept. 1. The Council was pleased to support his appointment. We look forward to working with him. The DVR Executive Leadership Team welcomed several new members during this reporting period, including newly established positions for Deputy Director and Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Administrator.

The WSRC continues to have strong leadership with Shelby Satko as our Executive Director. This is Shelby's third year as Executive Director. She continues to provide crucial support to the council. She has done a tremendous amount of work to accomplish the goals of the council. Shelby has taken part in several different projects and activities on behalf of the council, some of which include: DVR Training Steering Committee; Community Rehabilitation Provider – Independent Living Contract Workgroup; IT Workgroup for Customer Support; Disability Policy Consortium and Transition Collaborative.

Council member highlights include the retirement of Jerry Johnsen after 23 years of service to the Council as the representative for the Client Assistance Program. We welcomed three new council members: Dion Graham, SILC Liaison; Jayson Morris, current or former recipient of services; and Jen Bean, Client Assistance Program. Providing remote onboarding orientation has been integral to increasing engagement for our newest council members. These roles are critical to maintaining a strong state representation on the Council. Once we are able to hold in-person meetings in 2022, our newest members will have an opportunity to meet their fellow council members and begin engaging with and strengthening relationships.

It is important to recognize the countless volunteer hours WSRC members complete throughout the year to achieve the Council's goals. Thank you to each member for your valued contributions!

We look forward to our ongoing partnership with the DSHS/Division of Vocational Rehabilitation in 2022!

Respectfully,

Justin Poole, Chair

# Purpose of the Council

The Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, requires states to establish a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). At the state level, Executive Order 04-04 establishes the Washington State Rehabilitation Council. As established in law and Executive Order, WSRC membership is comprised of a diverse group of volunteers representing relevant interests and perspectives from a cross section of industries. WSRC members include previous recipients of DVR services, their family members, and loved ones. They are service providers or advocates who work with DVR customers one-on-one to support their success. Members are employers, key agency representatives, and others committed to supporting the successful employment of people with disabilities.

Council members' primary function and role is advocating for customers with disabilities and ensuring customers feel included and considered in all aspects of DVR program development and service delivery. In addition to the constituencies they represent, Council members engage DVR customers and various partners and stakeholders to understand the collective needs, concerns and priorities related to DVR services. The Council uses this collective input to work with DVR and advise the agency on shaping programs, delivering effective services, and facilitating meaningful employment outcomes.

The WSRC works in partnership with DVR to review, analyze, and advise DVR regarding all aspects of service delivery and the outcomes achieved by DVR recipients. The WSRC also partners with DVR to develop, agree to, and review goals and priorities related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services documented in the DVR State Plan.

The WSRC conducts quarterly public meetings, each one focusing on different offices across the state. Throughout the year, the Council receives consumer feedback from the Customer Satisfaction Survey and Customer Listening sessions for purposes of improving program outcomes.

The Governor appoints Council members. Each member serves two consecutive, three-year terms. The exception being Client Assistance Program, and Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program representatives, which are Agency-appointed representatives.



# 2021

## Council Members

### Executive Committee

**Justin Poole – Chair\***

Current or Former Customer of DVR Representative

**Jerry Johnsen – Vice Chair\*\***

Client Assistance Program Representative

**Erica Wollen – Chair, Partnership Subcommittee**

Workforce Training Representative

**Peggy Frisk – Chair, CSPE Subcommittee**

Community Rehabilitation Provider Representative

**Michele Stelovich – Chair, Policy & Planning Subcommittee**

Labor Representative

### General Membership

**Jen Chong-Jewell**

Parent Training Representative

**Lesa Dunphy**

Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Representative  
(Ex-Officio)

**Dion Graham**

State Independent Living Council Liaison

**Laurae MacClain**

Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Representative

**Tania May**

State Educational Agency Representative

**Jayson Morris**

Current or Former Customer of DVR Representative

**Terry Redmon**

Director of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
(Ex-Officio)

**Laura (Ivanova) Smith**

Customer Advocacy Representative

**Erin Williams\***

Business Representative

### Staff

**Jolie Ramsey**

Executive Lead

**Shelby Satko**

Executive Director

\*Terms ended 9/30/21    \*\*Retired July 2021



# Honoring

## Jerry Johnsen

Jerry Johnsen, Director of the Client Assistance Program (CAP), retired July 2021. He started working at CAP in 1979 and became Director in the mid '80s. He served on the Washington State Rehabilitation Council for 23 years as the Client Assistance Program representative, serving in multiple leadership roles during his tenure.

Jerry was on the forefront of providing advocacy for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) customers. He is a passionate advocate for customers, but also for staff. Jerry believes the best rehabilitation and customer service happens when staff are trained and supported. Having spent 42 years in the field, Jerry is also a knowledgeable historian of both state and national rehabilitation.

His hard work and dedication helped shape Washington CAP into a unique model. The relationship-based model vs. litigative approaches used by other CAPs is respected and envied throughout the country. Jerry has always looked for ways to "Get to yes!" standing up for customers and the law. Whether working on individual cases or providing feedback on systemic issues, Jerry never backed down and would persevere, trying to find a solution that worked for everyone.

Jerry worked with many VR Directors and through many evolutions of VR laws. With this leadership, CAP survived the tough times and supported growth during good times. Jerry is well liked and appreciated by DVR staff. He exudes a colorful style and personality. Jerry enjoys mentoring staff and uses teachable moments to remind them of fundamentals and intent of the law.

One of the reasons WSRC developed a reputation of taking up challenging issues and leading substantive advocacy is because Jerry assisted members to grapple with nuance and appropriate skepticism in instances when VR may oversimplify factors contributing to complex realities.

During his service on the WSRC, he supported member colleagues to close the gap in their thinking between how the vocational rehabilitation process is represented on paper as opposed to how it works in practice. He did this by encouraging people to think of the process as something developed and implemented in the context of the ecosystem of the agency's culture. An example of this leadership was through an extensive revision of the Washington Administrative Code (WAC) updates to ensure compliance with the requirements of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).


He was always ready to serve on planning committees to honor occasions like the Americans with Disabilities Act anniversary and VR100 celebrations!

Jerry's true passion is in making sure ALL individuals with disabilities are getting access to services that they need to be successful, making sure a system meant for them did not create more obstacles to achieving their dreams. The disability community and VR professionals will miss his commitment to the Washington State Rehabilitation Council and the Client Assistance Program. However, his legacy will undoubtedly endure through the changes in the law and agency procedures he championed, as well as in the relationships and mentoring he forged and nurtured.



# 40th Anniversary

## Statewide Disability Legislative Reception



On Jan. 27, 2021, with the COVID-19 pandemic still ongoing, the annual Disability Legislative Reception was held virtually for the first time in its 40-year history. Approximately 250 participants attended, including people with disabilities, legislators, government officials, community members and advocates. This event is well known and well received at the highest levels of Washington state government.

Presenters highlighted key issues such as transportation, accessible and affordable housing, residential supports, employment, community access, behavioral health, and personal care. This year saw a diverse representation of presenters and participants from several disability communities, including the Intellectual/Developmental Disability, Blind, Deafblind, and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. The event closed with a Q&A session with several legislators.

Reflecting on the outcomes from the event, holding the reception virtually provided an opportunity for statewide participation, whereas attending in-person in Olympia may have been limiting based on transportation or accessibility barriers. In our post-event survey, attendees expressed appreciation of the online platform as an effective way to educate legislators and speak directly to important issues.

Event organizers formed a workgroup to collaborate on collective priorities and developed talking points to support individuals in communicating these priorities to their legislative representatives. This year WSRC staff led the workgroup. Workgroup members comprised:

- Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment (GCDE)
- State Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC)
- State Independent Living Council (SILC)
- The Arc of Washington State
- Self-Advocates in Leadership (SAIL)
- State Rehabilitation Council for the Blind
- Allies in Advocacy
- Community Employment Alliance (CEA)
- People First of Washington
- Office of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH)

# Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation Committee

One of the most enjoyable member activities the council participates in is hearing from customers about their DVR experience. They do this in a variety of ways: from phone calls, to surveys, to listening sessions. The Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation (CSPE) subcommittee administers the customer satisfaction survey and virtual listening sessions. CSPE members also evaluate the feedback and provide suggestions for DVR services and performance improvement. Their responsibilities include:

- Analyze DVR performance data as compared to Rehabilitation Services Administration measures and other indicators of program effectiveness and efficiency;
- Request and review fair hearing information for trends or areas of concern;
- Sponsor quarterly customer forums, compile feedback and analyze over time to identify areas that indicate potential problems;
- Request additional data from DVR to assess whether issues that emerge are a one-time issue or a broader concern that may need immediate attention;
- Collaborate with DVR to document the results of the customer needs assessment every three years;
- Survey DVR customers to assess service satisfaction; and
- Collaborate and assess emerging trends with DVR program evaluation staff.

## Customer Satisfaction Survey

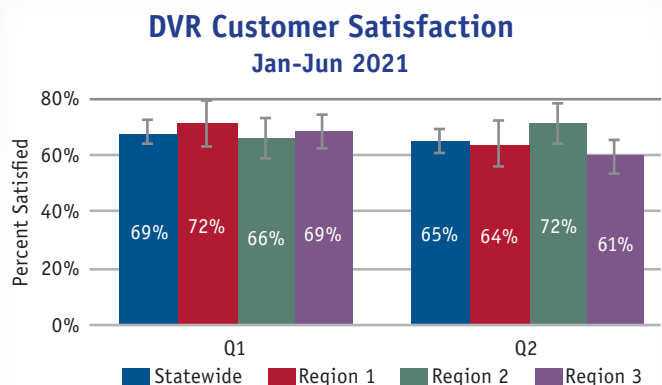
This year we achieved our goal of beginning an external contract with Washington State University – Social & Economic Sciences Research Center for purposes of expanding our Customer Satisfaction Survey reporting capabilities to include regional and statewide satisfaction rating by case status. We also now have the capability to receive customer comments reports separated by region and office location. This has allowed us opportunity to educate regional administrators and supervisors better on the trends in customer satisfaction. In addition, we will now be able to conduct supplemental surveys on an as-needed basis.

The survey asks customers the following questions, allowing them opportunity to rate their responses on a 5-point Likert scale:

1. My counselor does a good job keeping in touch with me.
2. My counselor understands what is important to me.
3. My counselor understands how my disability affects me.
4. My counselor cares about my input.
5. DVR moves quickly enough for me.
6. Overall, I am satisfied with DVR

Customers receive an invitation by mail and email to participate in the survey via a web portal as well as a phone-in option. Customers are surveyed in each of the four respective phases of the VR process: eligibility, plan, closed-employed, and closed-other.

Since we recently started this new contract, we have only two quarters of data to share at this time for Quarter 1 (October – December 2020) and Quarter 2 (January – March 2021). In the graph below, we have clustered results by quarter, showing state and region results side-by-side. The line on each bar graph demonstrates the Margin of Error, reflecting no statistical difference between 69% and 65%, since the Margin of Error is 4%.



Note: Survey is sent to a random sample of customers on a quarterly basis. Statewide and Region results do not differ statistically, based on margins of error:  
Statewide: +/-4 in Q1 and Q2  
Region 1: +/-8 in Q1 and Q2  
Region 2: +/-7 in Q1 and Q2  
Region 3: +/-6% in Q1; +/-7 in Q2



## Customer Listening Sessions

The WSRC hosted one customer listening session during the reporting year with eight customers served in the Wenatchee and Omak DVR offices. Because of the COVID pandemic conditions, each listening session took place in a virtual meeting format, which included a customer, 1-2 council members and WSRC staff. The listening sessions' primary intent was obtaining customer feedback about DVR's response to the COVID pandemic, timeliness of services, and overall satisfaction.

The listening sessions featured the following questions:

1. On a scale of 1-5, how would you rate DVR's shift to providing services remotely
  - Tell us why you chose that number
  - Is communication meeting your needs?
2. What services and supports that you received have changed since remote services were initiated?
3. What has DVR done well?
4. How do you feel about your case progress?
5. How would you describe your overall satisfaction with DVR?
6. Is there anything else you would like DVR to hear?

## Results:

Speaking with customers helps to know what areas of service delivery are effective and which need improvement. Some customers reported feeling that their DVR counselor was very helpful and knowledgeable, stayed in consistent communication, listened to them, and offered useful resources and timely referrals. Half of the customers interviewed reported their counselor steering them away from their desired job industry or not receiving support for additional education. A few customers reported that technology use has helped them stay in contact with their counselor and continue job searching during the pandemic, while multiple customers reported having technology needs that were denied or simply not acknowledged (i.e. new computer or phone). Customers who requested equipment reported there has been no follow-up from counselors related to these requests since DVR purchased bulk equipment in the fall of 2020 and began distributing technology to customers.

During the pandemic, customers reported communication has been limited to "check-in" level with no additional services offered. Only phone or mail offered when video conferencing is available for counselors to use. DVR staff are not responding to emails and voicemails in a timely manner; customers often do not hear from them for months at a time. Counselors were "very hard to get a hold of and doesn't call back." Customers were unsure of who to get a hold of when their counselor did not respond. Counselor turnover is significantly affecting case progress and customer confidence in services. Often customers learned they have a new counselor when they took the initiative to reach out to find out why they have not heard from their previous counselor. It would be ideal to have an easier way for customers to check who their counselor is at any time, such as a "DVR connect" database, website, or phone option.



Policy and Planning Subcommittee welcomed two new members this year and put forward a formal recommendation to DVR. With the COVID-19 pandemic significantly affecting DVR services and procedures, the members were busier than ever engaging in activities related to DVR policies and practices. They provided feedback on process improvement efforts and joined work groups to address state and federal program changes. They also worked closely with and advised DVR Policy staff.

- Provide input to DVR's internal policies and practices;
- Seek feedback from the Client Assistance Program related to proposed changes to internal policies and practices;
- Identify opportunities to engage in DVR internal workgroups;
- Provide input to DVR on policy changes affecting DVR customers including proposed changes to the Rehabilitation Act, Revised Code of Washington and Washington Administrative Code;
- Sponsor DVR's State Plan forums and contribute to DVR priorities;
- Write the WSRC portion (section 4.2c) of DVR's State Plan; and
- Participate in RSA-monitoring activities.

## **Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor (VRS) Approval of Certain Services Recommendation**

The Policy & Planning subcommittee made one formal recommendation this year in June 2021, to rescind the VRS Approval of Certain Services policy. This policy was implemented in January 2019, despite concerns of the WSRC, with the intent of limiting financial resources as a way to control case costs. The policy resulted in limiting customer informed choice, even though goals had been established in customers' Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), in addition to an unnecessary delay of services.

We are pleased the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation supported our request to rescind this policy, allowing for Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors make decisions with customers based on informed choice and professional judgement.

## **Eligibility Determination/ Priority of Service**

Throughout the year, we continued our support for DVR to move forward with staff training to build a more consistent statewide approach for eligibility determination and priority of service. The Council supports the Training Steering Committee's determination of strategic priorities for field services training to include eligibility determination in 2022.

# Partnership Committee

Building relationships and advocating for the disability community through partnership work are priorities for the WSRC. Though it looked different during a global pandemic, we focused considerable energy on identifying opportunities to strengthen partnerships with other disability advocacy organizations, especially the programs explicitly stated in 34 CFR 361.17 (h)(6). As directed under the Rehabilitation Act, the WSRC coordinates its activities with the following partners:

- State Independent Living Council (SILC)
- Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) and Special Education Advisory Committee (SEAC)
- State Developmental Disabilities Council (DDC)
- State Behavioral Health Advisory Committee (BHAC)
- State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTECB)
- Washington Assistive Technology Act Program (WATAP)
- Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Programs

These partnerships encourage transparent communication across the disability community, and help the Council support and advocate for DVR customers.

## Transition Collaborative

Two of years of work under the legislative proviso culminated in the Transition Collaborative Summative Report in late 2020. Partners in this work included: Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction; DSHS/ Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; DSHS/Developmental Disabilities Administration; Center for Change in Transition Services; Developmental Disabilities Council and Washington State Rehabilitation Council. The Transition Collaborative delivered four recommendations to ensure seamless transition for students with developmental disabilities from school to post-school life, as follows:

1. Funding for Statewide School-to-Work
2. Regional Interagency Transition Networks
3. Data Share Agreements
4. System Navigation Supports

In August 2021, the Collaborative met with stakeholders interested in advancing these priorities through legislation. Additional stakeholders included Arc of Washington State, Community Employment Alliance, Community Advocacy Coalition, and Developmental Disability County Coordinators.

