WSRC QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, November 3, 2021
9:00am to 11:39am

Members Present:
- Jen Chong-Jewell, Parent Advocate, Everett
- Peggy Frisk, Council Chair, Community Rehabilitation Provider, Lake Stevens
- Laurae MacClain, Tribal VR Representative, Nespelem
- Jayson Morris, Current or Former Recipient of Services, Seattle
- Tania May, OSPI Representative, Olympia
- Dion Graham, State Independent Living Council Representative, Union
- Erica Wollen, Workforce Training Representative, Olympia
- Terry Redmon, DVR Director, Ex-Officio, Lacey
- Ivanova Smith, Disability Advocacy Representative, Tacoma
- Michele Stelovich, Labor Representative, Bellingham
- Jennifer Bean, Client Assistance Program, Bellingham

Members Absent:
- Lesa Dunphy, DVR Counselor Representative, Colville
- Edward Nicholson, Business Representative, Vancouver

Council Staff:
- Shelby Satko, WSRC Executive Director, Lacey
- Jolie Ramsey, WSRC Executive Lead, Lacey

Visitors:
- Allesandria Goard, DVR Chief of Field Services, DVR State Office
- Alex Diseth
- Amy Lystad, DVR Regional Trainer, Tumwater Office
- Ann Martin, DVR Region 2 Administrator
- Angela Merritt, DVR Supervisor, Spokane Office
- Andrew Fickes, Communication Specialist, DVR State Office
- Brandi Monts, TA and Training Director, Wise
- Bonnie Pitchford, Office Assistant, DVR State Office
- Bonnie Vintin, DVR Rehab Tech
- CJ Mullins, DVR Counselor, Bellingham Office
- Catherine Herring, DVR Supervisor, Bellingham Office
- Cassi Villegas, DVR EDI Administrator
- Christine Magnuson, DDA Region 2
- Christopher Johnson, DVR Counselor, Bellingham Office
- Courtney Williams, Executive Director, Community Employment Alliance
- Debbie Maxwell, DVR Supervisor, Mount Vernon Office
- Deona Koberstein, DVR Regional Trainer, Seattle Central Office
- Gina Barrieau, DVR Counselor, Bellingham Office
- Justin DeFour, DVR Deputy Director, State Office
- Julia Smith, Work Opportunities
- Kristin Nguyen, Cascade Connections
- Kristina Zawisza, Performance Management Analyst, DVR State Office
- Lan Totten, Cascade Connections
Call to Order— Meeting called to order by Peggy Frisk, Chair

**DVR Director Update**: Terry Redmon

- **Budget Update**
  - DVR has fully matched the 2021 Basic Support Grant.
  - Received $1.68 million of Program Income in SFY22.
  - Expenditures increased from the past fiscal year
    - SFY 21: Average monthly expenditures were $4.71 million
    - SFY 22: Average monthly expenditures are $4.95 million

- **Pre-ETS Update**
  - New staff update: Two new Regional Transition Consultants, a Transition Benefits Specialist, and a Transition Admin Assistant
  - Pre-ETS budget:
  - RTCs have started year two of Motivational Enhancement Group Intervention (MEGI) Training
  - Washington State University Projects
    - Transition Self-Assessment Tool (TSAT) to be executed in January 2022. Expanded collection to include private schools, tribal schools, and juvenile rehab sites
    - Washington Demonstration Project: Four pilot school sites confirmed

- **Performance Measures, Pre- and Post-COVID**
  - Customers actively seeking jobs returned to pre-COVID levels. Numbers of cases In Plan and New Plans were similar to pre-COVID levels. In Plan-Employed well exceeded the monthly average pre-COVID.
  - Rehab rate rose from 46% for the quarter to 50% in September.
  - Closed rehab cases in September was 140; pre-COVID numbers was 151/month.
  - Applications and eligibility determinations remained low, at half their pre-COVID levels.
  - Average days to plan dropped to 103 days; lower than the pre-COVID average of 112 days.
  - Total Case Expenditures reached 94% of pre-COVID levels and In-Plan expenditures were nearly equivalent to pre-COVID levels.
  - **DVR Measures that Matter**
    - Staff introduced to key performance measures, with data presented by gender, race, and ethnicity.
- Goal is to build awareness, draw attention to persistent differences, and improve EDI in service to DVR customers.
- Reports will be updated monthly.

- Order of Selection Updates
  - 205 SD-P3 cases were released on 10/01/21.
  - 1,347 customers remained on the wait list as of 10/01/21.
  - To maintain manageable caseloads in offices impacted by releases, no cases will be released in November 2021. This decision was based on considerations of staff transitioning back to working in the office, and any impacts anticipated due to the COVID vaccine mandate.

- Director Vision for DVR
  - Customer Centered approach
  - Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion: How can we strategize and reach out to underserved communities and help them understand that VR can be a viable support.
  - Be a data driven organization

- Improving customer satisfaction
  - Working on improving communication with customers through staff transition.
  - RAs are working on a root analysis of the issue of why customer phone calls are not returned, connecting with customers on a regular basis, and the effects of staff turnover.

- Career Connect Washington (CCW) Taskforce
  - Shelby involved to ensure that tracking student participation from an equity lens as well as a formal recommendation to CCW taskforce to integrate universal design for learning into the program to support accessibility.

- Vaccine mandate for CEPs: It is up to their employers to verify their vaccine status. Will mandate through the contracts that there are declarations for the CRPs and the IL providers that they have made sure their staff who come in direct contact with DVR customers are vaccinated. And if they are not, then they must accommodate in a way so as not to endanger DVR customers.

- Hybrid Work Model
  - All DVR staff will work in a hybrid model unless they require an accommodation.
  - Safety is our #1 priority. Masking and social distancing protocols should be followed.
  - Consider business needs
  - Customers can return to offices as of 11/15. Face-to-face interactions with customers is important when it is possible to ensure safety.

- New Case Management System, WAVES: On schedule to roll out early summer 2022. Wants to ensure thorough training for staff to navigate

- WSU/DVR Transition Pilot Schools
  - Why were those schools selected?
    - Megan Grundbrecher: Pilot schools were selected in part via the T-SAT (a transition assessment tool) sent out to identify needs of schools in terms of resources and transitions how DVR could support. Based on that assessment, we asked the schools if they’re interested in being a pilot school. We reached out to ask if they are still interested. Some schools opted out, others said yes. The schools self-selected. Schools, DVR, and community came together to better work as a community.

- Workforce Board
  - Having regular conversations about pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships.
    - Some people need preparation for apprenticeship programs, so a pre-program can be helpful
    - Is there funding?
    - Some programs have dorm/individual housing
  - Counselors should utilize apprenticeship opportunities for customers when appropriate and when it is a desired goal.
  - Great way to get customers to a living wage

**Region 2 / Bellingham Unit Update:** Ann Martin, Megan Grundbrecher, Catherine Herring
- Ann Martin:
Discussed preparing and supporting staff when pandemic started. Setting everyone up with technology to do their jobs. Twenty new staff-members started their jobs during the pandemic. Retirements, promotions, etc. Figuring out how to train and support newly hired staff. Created processes to mentor new staff and train. Staff returning to the office.

Implementing a hybrid work model. Allowing staff time to adjust to return to the office before customers come back in the office to give them time to settle in so as not to project any stress on to the customers.

As identified in State Plan, we are focusing on training via Vocational Rehab Institute and by internal trainers. Statewide eligibility training is coming up. The new case management system will be rolled out next summer, and that will be the big training.

Recruitment for new staff. Raising up VRCs. Summer internships for students. Diversifying recruitment efforts. Reaching out to historically black colleges for new staff. Recognize turnover in rehab tech roles.

Started a new welcome process: connecting people to purpose. DVR Director sending out welcome letters to new staff to share DVR purpose, mission

Doing more to retain staff and focusing on job satisfaction. Utilizing long-time staff to mentor new staff

Megan Grundbrecher:

Pre-ETS:
- We have 5 regional training consultants (RTC): Joy, Francisca, Holly, Ashley, Nic Harris and Kramer.
- Outreach and coordination is a challenge. Partnering with schools to determine where their needs are in accessing services remotely. In-person services wanted in some areas; in others they still prefer virtual outreach. Asking whether they prefer DVR-direct services or contractors. This summer we did a lot of paid work-based learning experiences. Some of these turned into full-time paid employment opportunities. Working with Lummi schools, Whatcom, Snohomish. Trying to shore up and streamline policies and procedures for DVR and contractors.

Pilot Sites
- Sultan HS (ESD 189)
- Mercer Island HS (ESD 121)
- Chiawana HS (ESD 123)
- Goldendale HS (ESD 105)
- Colville HS (ESD 101)

They are getting in front of 504 students. They find that IEP students/caregivers know about DVR. Now they're trying to inform parents/teachers of 504 students to get referrals for services.

Catherine Herring:

- Significantly improved remote services
- Job Club/Career Connections is a great support to customers to share tips and skills with fellow customers. Once per month they have an “employer spotlight” a local business rep. to share job training tips, resume tips. This has been very productive. Gives employers opportunities to engage with PWD
- Local business engagement: Holding virtual mock interviews with customers and employers. Great time for customers to practice interviewing skills.
- WorkSource partner relationships and communication: Building WIOA partnerships. Hosted virtual DVR meet and greet.
- Training staff remotely: has required more effort. Different work experience. Missing out on ambient information sharing.
- Hired a counselor as ASL as first language: Christopher Johnson. Appropriately serves the deaf and HOH community. He is a certified rehab counselor.
- Paid internship across agencies: partnering to do so.

Public Comment:

Jayson Morris:
- We want to associate the word student as parents together.

Gina Barrieau:
I was onboarded during COVID. I am a VRC. Accessibility is important right now. Workplace development.

Meeting wrap-up:
- Tania May:
  - Build in protocol for sharing customer survey comments, such as sharing them on the slides.
- Jen Chong-Jewell:
  - Update forward facing information on websites. Need a better connection for community members and stakeholders to find information.

Topics for Next meeting:
- Michele Stelovich:
  - Learn more about Career Connect and WA Job Foundation and how these things connect. How they help students to progress and choose employment.
  - Further discussion about how we look at services in rural communities.
- Jen Bean:
  - Case transfers when there are multiple counselors. Is there a streamlined process? What is being done to minimize. Glitches with transferring cases in the case management system?
  - EDI dashboard: Ability to look at the rehab rates.
- Tania May:
  - Updates about the WSU/DVR Transition Pilot Schools

Meeting adjourned at 11:39am