Dear Acting Commissioner Dobak and Governor Inslee,

On behalf of the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC), we are pleased to present the 2022 WSRC Annual Report.

Two thousand and twenty-two required all of us to continue to be creative and flexible as the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic continued. The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) and WSRC continued to operate in a hybrid format that allowed us to conduct daily business operations. We commend DVR staff for continuing to meet customers’ needs remotely as offices transitioned back to providing services in-person. WSRC met in-person for the first time since January 2020 for our quarterly meeting in August 2022, offering a hybrid option to allow for both in-person and remote access. It was great to see everyone and be able to interact personally with fellow council members, DVR staff, and public participants.

The council continued to host “listening sessions” with customers virtually to learn about their experiences with DVR services. These sessions allowed one or two council members to meet with one customer at a time and ask for their feedback on services. We heard from DVR customers who received services at the Bellingham office as well as youth engaged in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). In the last year, one of the critical services DVR offered was to assist customers by offering equipment for them so that they could continue to receive services from their DVR counselors and Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRP). DVR staff ordered equipment, but there were challenges in ensuring that customers received it on time. We advocated on behalf of DVR customers with a letter of support to help DVR to resolve this issue quickly to ensure that customers who benefited from using this equipment received it.

WSRC continues to support Community Rehabilitation Providers by co-hosting CRP quarterly meetings with DVR to maintain open communication between all parties about systemic issues affecting service delivery and providing program updates. In addition, WSRC staff and our CRP representative continued serving on the 2023-2025 CRP-Independent Living (CRP-IL) workgroup to discuss changes and services that will be included in the next contract. We also leveraged support for customers and CRP’s by advocating for previously discussed contract changes to be implemented in the upcoming contract cycle.

Also, Shelby Satko, the Executive Director, represented the council in pre-monitoring meetings, on-site monitoring activities, and an RSA preliminary results meetings with DVR when the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) selected DVR for on-site monitoring. As the WSRC chair, I also provided direct feedback to the RSA on behalf of the council.

Last, but not least, we also welcomed new members, said goodbye to others and continue to seek new members who can amplify the voices of DVR customers. Each council member offers invaluable expertise, as volunteers, to help DVR provide the best services they can to customers.

Respectfully,
Peggy Frisk, Chair
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 (WSRC). WSRC membership is comprised of a diverse group of representatives who have relevant interests and perspectives from a cross section of industries. The Governor appoints Council members. Each member serves two consecutive, three-year terms. The exception being the DVR Director, Client Assistance Program, and Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program representatives, which are all Agency-appointed representatives.

WSRC members include current or former recipient of services, as well as service providers and advocates who work with DVR customers individually to support their successes. Members are also employers, key agency representatives, and other individuals who are committed to supporting people with disabilities in their successes of securing and maintaining successful employment as outlined in Executive Order 04-04.

The Council members’ primary function and role is to advocate for customers who have disabilities and ensure that they feel included and considered in all aspects of DVR services including program development and service delivery. In addition to the constituencies Council members represent, they also collaborate with DVR customers, various partners and stakeholders to understand the collective needs, concerns and priorities related to DVR services. We use this collective input to work with DVR and advise the agency on program development, 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 outcomes achieved by DVR customers. We also partner with DVR to develop, review and agree to goals and priorities related to the delivery of Vocational Rehabilitation services as documented in the DVR State Plan.

In addition to that, the Council conducts quarterly public meetings throughout the year that focuses on different offices statewide at each meeting. We also receive customer feedback from both the Customer Satisfaction Survey and Customer Listening Sessions for the purpose of improving DVR program outcomes.
Executive Committee

Peggy Frisk – Chair
Community Rehabilitation Provider Representative

Jennifer Bean – Vice Chair
Client Assistance Program Representative

Michele Stelovich, Chair of Policy & Planning Subcommittee
Labor Representative

Erica Wollen, Chair of Partnership Subcommittee
Workforce Training 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

Jayson Morris
Current or Former Customer of DVR Representative

Matt Newton
Business Representative

Edward Nicholson
Business Representative

Laura (Ivanova) Smith
Disability Advocacy Representative

Alexandra Toney
OSPI State Educational Agency Representative

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

Staff

Shelby Satko
Executive Director

Jolie Ramsey
Executive Lead
Washington State Rehabilitation Council members and Division of Vocational Rehabilitation staff toured Chemi-Con Corp, North America’s largest manufacturer and supplier of aluminum electrolytic capacitors based out of Moses Lake, Washington, in advance of WSRC’s August quarterly meeting on August 10, 2022. Both Council members and DVR staff learned about Chemi-Con’s partnership with the Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee (AJAC) that provided an Advanced Manufacturing Apprenticeship to their employees.

Stela Heuschkel, Chemi-Con’s HR Manager, guided everyone on a tour and explained each step of the process of manufacturing aluminum electrolytic capacitors. Council members and DVR staff saw firsthand how each phase of product development worked as well as learned about Chemi-Con’s enthusiasm for employee engagement, and how talent recruitment is a priority. Heather Collins, the Manager of Business Engagement and Regional Services with the Aerospace Joint Apprenticeship Committee (AJAC), shared how the partnership with Chemi-Con developed to launch the Industrial Maintenance Apprenticeship program in Fall 2022.

Apprenticeship participants will be able to complete the program while maintaining full-time employment status and receive mentorship and tutoring support throughout the duration of the four-year program. Upon completion of the program, all graduates will be certified as an Industrial Maintenance Technician, receive their journeyman’s card, and receive the opportunity to mentor incoming apprentices. Apprenticeship programs can be a valuable experience, therefore, it may be a good fit for DVR customers whose career ambitions include jobs in the manufacturing and engineering industries.
The Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation (CSPE) subcommittee administers the customer satisfaction survey and virtual listening sessions to obtain customer feedback about the services they received at DVR. CSPE members evaluate feedback received and provide suggestions to DVR about services and performance improvement. Their responsibilities include the following:

- Analyze DVR performance data as compared to Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) 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

We continued our external partnership for the second year with Washington State University – Social & Economic Sciences Research Center to conduct our customer satisfaction survey.

This year, we refined our survey capabilities by adding an open-ended comment box for customers who expressed dissatisfaction with DVR. In addition, we implemented a comment code analysis that provides us with summaries of both primary and subthemes that enhances our analysis of comments provided to us by customers.

Our survey asks customers the following seven questions, allowing them the opportunity to rate their responses on a five-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
   a. Open end comment for dissatisfied customers.
7. Comment box with option to share additional comments with DVR.

DVR customers receive an invitation by mail and e-mail to participate in our survey via a web portal or a phone-in option. Customers are surveyed in each of the three phases of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) process: plan, closed-employed, and closed-other.

In the graph below, we have clustered results for four quarters; the line indicates statewide satisfaction rating, while also seeing regional results breakdown in the bar graphs.

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 FFY21 Q3 - FFY22 Q2
- Region 1: +/-8 in FFY21 Q3 - FFY22 Q2
- Region 2: +/-7 in FFY21 Q3 - FFY22 Q2
- Region 3: +/-7% in FFY21 Q3 - FFY22 Q2

WSRC Annual Report 2022 • Page 5
**Customer Listening Sessions**

The WSRC hosted two listening sessions this past year for customers served in the Bellingham office as well as youth participating in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). We continued to offer sessions virtually due to continued impacts of the pandemic which included the customer, one or two council members and WSRC staff.

**Bellingham DVR Office**

The Fall 2021 focus group session focused on the Bellingham office with seven customers in the following case statuses: one in eligibility and six in plan.

The following questions were asked of the DVR Customers:

1. On a scale of one to five, how would you rate DVR’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic and providing services remotely?
2. Are there any barriers you have to receiving services during COVID-19 and throughout your DVR experience?
3. DVR has phases of service: eligibility, plan and closed. What phase are you currently in?
4. Have you been referred to a Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP)?
5. What has DVR done well?
6. How would you describe your overall satisfaction with DVR?
7. Is there anything else you would like DVR to hear?

**General Themes**

Overall, Bellingham office customers are pleased with the quality of services they received. Faced with how the pandemic altered the way of conducting business in-person, customers noted how much they appreciated DVR’s willingness to adjust and adapt to new ways of helping them. For example, DVR was able to accommodate the customer’s preference of communicating via email, virtually on video conferencing platforms, or by meeting in-person. Communication with customers is timely and consistent, and counselors try to use communication methods that are best for each customer. Customers also reported that counselors and rehabilitation technicians do a good job of explaining how the vocational rehabilitation process to customers.

As for virtual meeting preferences, the overall feedback we received was varied. Some customers preferred not having meetings via Zoom while others found it to be more convenient. There are pros and cons to both meeting in-person and virtually. Providing virtual options to customers helps alleviate transportation issues, reduce gas expenses and overall drive time. Others prefer in-person appointments and expressed how submitting paperwork in-person is quicker and easier for them.

**Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Customers**

In Spring 2022, the WSRC, in collaboration with the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC), held customer listening sessions with Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) youth participants. The Pre-ETS youth we interviewed were served across the state of Washington and have diverse backgrounds and educational experiences.

The following questions were asked of the youth:

1. How did you learn about Pre-Employment Transition Services?
2. Was the service in person or virtual?
3. What is the name of the service in which you participated?
4. What type of activities did you do during the service?
5. How do you feel the service helped you prepare for and/or explore future employment?
6. Is there anything you wish the service would have done differently or added?
7. On a scale of one to five, how would you rate your experience in the service?
8. Is there anything else you would like us to know about these services?

**General Themes**

All youth participants shared that their high school teachers introduced them to Pre-ETS services, which indicates good collaboration between schools and DVR in various communities across the state. Students participated in three main categories of Pre-ETS services: Work Readiness, Work-Based Learning, and Self-Advocacy. In addition to learning about Pre-ETS, a resounding message shared by youth is that their Pre-ETS activities provided them with experiences that improved their self-esteem, confidence, and sense of pride in workmanship. They also reported learning how to be punctual, accountable, and more independent. One youth participant stated, “I feel like a contributing member of society! It felt so good to receive my own paycheck.” They also shared how services were provided both in-person and virtually. As the COVID-19 pandemic wanes, Pre-ETS classes have mostly returned to in-person sessions.
WSRC’s Policy and Planning Subcommittee provided feedback on current process improvement efforts and joined work groups to address state and federal program changes. They also worked closely with and advised DVR Policy staff. This year, the subcommittee put forward a formal recommendation to DVR in regards to best practices for counselor reassignment.

Their responsibilities include:

- 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.

**Work Skills Functional Loss Definition Update**

In October 2021, subcommittee members had an opportunity to provide input to update the “Work Skills functional loss” definition. They laid the groundwork for this change back in 2019 when DVR engaged with the WSRC and field staff in a “Lean Value Stream Mapping” process to review the efficiency of the eligibility determination process. While DVR was developing Waves, the new and upcoming case management system, an opportunity to formally update the definition arose. When Waves gets implemented summer 2023, the Work Skills definition will be as follows:

- Unable to perform manual tasks due to loss of strength or manual dexterity / coordination that impedes tasks that require control, precision, or speed. Examples include: pushing, pulling, grasping, gripping, writing with a pen / pencil, using a keyboard.
- Consistently requires specialized coaching, repetitions, reinforcements, prompts, or job modifications including adaptive technology to perform specific work tasks.
- Needs significantly more support or supervision to perform job tasks than normally required of persons of equivalent age, education, training, or experience.
- Experience poor work habits resulting in a history of job loss (problems with attendance, timeliness, following instructions, etc.) due to a disability.
- Other if not described.

**Counselor Reassignment Best Practices Recommendation**

Before proceeding into WSRC’s recommendation, we would like to outline the distinction between “Case Transfers” and “Counselor Reassignment.” Case Transfers occur when a customer initiates a change of counselors, which could happen for a variety of reasons, and currently has a standard operating procedure (SOP) in place. Counselor reassignment is when a customer experiences a change in counselors, often involuntarily, due to a counselor leaving their position or a caseload transfer. The current Case Transfer SOP does not address steps to take when there is a counselor reassignment.

Customers experience significant impacts to the continuity of their services when there is a counselor reassignment. The Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation subcommittee received a significant level of feedback over the years thanks to our Customer Satisfaction Surveys,
Focus Groups, and Listening Sessions about this issue. Stakeholder groups providing services to DVR customers are also affected (i.e. CRP, Tribal VR programs, employers, etc.). WSRC wrote a formal recommendation in July 2018 that was later developed into a 2020-2023 State Plan goal listed as follows:

**Goal One: Customer Service and Outcomes are DVR’s Highest Priority –**

Goal one reflects DSHS/DVR focus on providing high-quality services that result in high-quality employment outcomes. Based on Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) findings and stakeholders’ input, this goal prioritizes the importance of supporting customers in high-quality employment which offers the pay and benefits that support financial security and stability.

- **Goal One, Priority One:**
  Customers experience timely, continuous progress throughout the VR process.

- **Goal One, Priority One, Strategy 1:**
  Identify and address barriers to timely services and continuous progress for customers throughout the VR process.

- **Goal One, Priority One, Strategy 2:**
  Establish an approach for reducing the impact to customers’ case progress when staff transitions and vacancies occur.

In support of achieving this goal as a partner of DVR, the Policy & Planning subcommittee developed a “Counselor Reassignment Best Practice checklist” for field staff to utilize when customers experience counselor changes. Our primary objective is to ensure customers are informed when their case is reassigned and to ensure that there is continuous case progress. As advocates for DVR customers, we believe implementation of a statewide consistent practice will assist in addressing the State Plan goal as well as increase customer satisfaction.

**State Plan Progress Updates & Public Forum**

WSRC worked in partnership with DVR to develop the State Plan progress updates submitted as part of the Washington State Combined State Plan in March 2022. As part of the process, the Council hosted a public forum during our quarterly meeting held on February 10, 2022 where we received stakeholder feedback on the State Plan regarding goals and priorities.

**Subcommittee Future Priorities**

In September 2022, we determined our priorities for the upcoming year to include:

- **Rapid Engagement:**
  Review the use of presumptive eligibility and support the application of Lean practices to identify areas that increase the efficiency of eligibility process.

- **Post-Secondary Education:**
  How can DVR reduce process barriers to customers attaining post-secondary education?

- **Pre-ETS Policy Development:**
  What are the specific steps that DVR will take in the upcoming year to improve services to youth and develop policy to support?
This year saw a much-anticipated return to in-person meetings and gatherings with our disability advocacy partners. WSRC has a renewed resolve to strengthen existing partnerships and form new ones. As directed under the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, we coordinate activities with the following partners:

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

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

**Council member invitation to join the Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) team**

In March 2022, Governor Inslee issued Executive Order 22-04: Implementing the Washington State Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Plan & Playbook. The DSHS direct service programs are related to all of the State of Washington 15 determinants of equity, which include: economic justice, state and local practices, jobs and job training, justice systems and laws, health and human services, food systems, environment and natural resources, community and public service, transportation and mobility, community and economic development, and housing and home ownership, early childhood development, education and digital access and literacy.

To support the implementation of the PEAR Strategic Plan from Governor Inslee’s Executive Order, each state agency is to form teams of leaders, staff and members of the communities to develop, implement and measure the effectiveness of their pro-equity, racial justice, access, and belonging strategic objectives. DSHS wants to invite you to participate in the statewide effort designed to bridge opportunity gaps and reduce disparities to ensure everyone in Washington thrives and has the opportunity to achieve their full potential.

DVR identified WSRC council member Jen Chong-Jewell to represent the division, as she is connected to the work we do and the individuals and families we serve.
Transition Collaborative
Our work continues with the Transition Collaborative that includes the following partners:

- The Office of Superintendent for Public Instruction;
- The Department of Social and Health Services, Division of Vocational Rehabilitation and Developmental Disabilities Administration;
- Center for Change in Transition Services;
- Developmental Disabilities Council and
- Washington State Rehabilitation Council.

This year we took the four recommendations delivered in “2020 Summative Report” to the Legislature via SSB5790 with the support of a partnership with the Community Employment Alliance, the Arc of Washington State, Community Advocacy Coalition, and Association of County Human Services. The bill passed successfully!

The Transition Collaborative will lead implementation of the following:

1. Establishment of a Statewide School-to-Work Program
2. Establishment of a Statewide Transition Council
3. Development and support of Regional Interagency Transition Networks
4. Data Share Agreements between OSPI and DSHS that would include DDA and DVR.
5. System Navigation Supports

Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC)
We collaborated with members of the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) in Spring 2022 to conduct listening sessions with youth participating in Pre-ETS Services. A summary of the listening sessions can be found within the Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation subcommittee section of this report.

Behavioral Health Advisory Council (BHAC)
After two years of meeting virtually, the BHAC convened its first in-person hybrid meeting in July 2022. During the pandemic, the Council experienced high turnover, which brought many new members representing numerous sectors of behavioral health service to join our meetings.