

The Rehab Council Connection

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Our Members

Jeffrey Abe-Gunter, Spokane; Andres Aguirre, Interim DVR Director, Ex-Officio, Olympia; Valerie Arnold, Elma; Don Brandon, Mountlake Terrace; Sandra Carr, Spokane; Vickie Foster, Seattle; Jana Finkbonner, Bellingham; Rudy Hernandez, Burien; Michael Hudson, Bellingham; Jerry Johnsen, Seattle; Susan Kautzman, Grandview; Jim Larson, Olympia; Vanessa Lewis, Tacoma; Martin McCallum, Olympia; Leandro Razo, Grandview

DVR Not Soon Likely to Re-Enter Order of Selection

DVR is not soon likely to re-enter Order of Selection (OOS). Rumors to the contrary have been circulating within DVR and among partners. The WSRC and representatives of DVR's Senior Leadership Team sat down for a data driven discussion on factors fueling concern about the return of OOS.

If you had a stake in DVR between November 2000 and February 2008, you are familiar with OOS. It is the technical term in the Rehabilitation Act for instances when a vocational rehabilitation program has fewer resources

than needed to serve all eligible customers. In such cases the law requires the program to prioritize services for those with the “most significant disabilities.” The rest wait. Vocational rehabilitation programs that enter OOS have inadequate case services dollars, staffing levels or both.

Currently DVR has the means to fund services that eligible customers need to overcome barriers to employment. Last federal fiscal year DVR allocated \$24 million for case services. This year that allocation was increased by \$6 million, a record high. DVR has also seen a 9 percent decline in applications for services from this time last year. DVR attributes the decline in applications to the use of a more effective referral tool it developed for partners in the Economic Services Administration. DVR will not need to consider entering OOS because of fiscal factors at this time.

Unlike many other component organizations within DSHS, DVR receives 78.7 percent of its funding from the federal government. The 21.3 percent of the budget that comes from state general funds is essential to assuring that DVR meets maintenance of effort (which means providing a required amount of state funds to be eligible for full federal funding without penalty.) States that meet maintenance of effort can carry over unspent federal funds. Because DVR has taken a conservative approach to spending, there is carry over to spend. DVR anticipates that will be the case until Federal Fiscal Year 2013.

DVR has been operating with historically low staffing levels for two years. In some offices the short staffing has been acute and extended. As of the first week in July, the total number of DVR employees was 281. The State Legislature established a limit or cap of 320 on the number of full-time positions that are allotted to DVR. For those working in offices with skeleton crews, OOS may feel necessary but it is not. DSHS granted DVR approval to hire twelve positions in the field (approval for 7 in July and 5 in August). The approved positions are: a Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor in the Seattle Mercer Office; a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC), in Kent, a Regional Counselor for Deaf customers in Tumwater, a non permanent VRC in Mount Vernon; a VRC in Aberdeen, Puyallup, and in Tumwater; a VRC in training for Vancouver; a Rehabilitation Technician (RT) in Walla Walla and Everett, and an Assistive Technology Assessment Practitioner in Yakima. DVR is in the process of hiring for these positions. While this may not alleviate pressure in every office, it dispels the need to consider re-entering OOS.

DVR's Senior Leadership Team and the WSRC continue to track progress on filling essential vacancies in the field. We are confident that a return to OOS is unlikely at this time. DVR is not presently seeking approval to hire for vacant administrative positions.

Registration Deadline August 22
NORTHWEST TRAINING FORUM ON BUILDING
BRIDGES TO SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT
FOR PEOPLE WHO ARE DEAF, DEAF-BLIND, HARD OF
HEARING & LATE DEAFENED

September 13-15th

Sheraton Portland Airport
Portland, OR

Registration Fee \$125

For more information:

[http://www.ccer.org/upcoming-event-
details?eventDetailId=52](http://www.ccer.org/upcoming-event-details?eventDetailId=52)

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SPOTLIGHT: WSRC to Survey DVR Customers

According to the Rehabilitation Act, a key function of the WSRC is to, “conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of, and consumer satisfaction with the functions performed by the designated State agency” (Title 1, Section 105 (c) 4.) We accomplish this mandate in three ways: by sponsoring quarterly customer forums; by reviewing feedback DVR collects from surveying customers with closed cases; and by conducting our own survey of DVR customers.

The Council completed our last customer survey in April of 2007. We are gearing up for our next surveying effort which is being led by the Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation Committee. In consultation with DVR the committee will be surveying a sample of customers who have had an Individual Plan for Employment (IPE) for between three months to a year. We will also be surveying a sample of customers who have had an IPE for between three and a half and five years. Surveys will also go to samples of customers who achieved a successful rehabilitation, and those with cases closed for other reasons.

The Council is interested in learning two things: Do customers generally feel that services were delivered in a respectful manner, and do they feel that the services they received addressed their barriers to employment. Committee members developed four draft survey instruments, (one for each sample of customers) which it presented to DVR's Senior Leadership Team for review and discussion in May. All instruments were revised based on that feedback. The Senior Leadership Team also pulled data to identify which customers with an IPE would make the most sense to survey.

On August 15, Martin McCallum, the Customer Satisfaction & Program Evaluation Committee Chair will be meeting with staff from the Research and Data Analysis Division of DSHS to review whether the survey instruments are technically sound or if they should be

revised. We look forward to sharing more information about the surveying effort in coming issues.

DID YOU KNOW?

Roughly 66 percent of Washington State DVR's current customers experience disabilities that affect their mental health.

Some of these customers have solely psychiatric disabilities. Others have multiple disabilities, including those that are psychiatric.

In addition, people with acquired disabilities frequently experience depression while adjusting to their new experience.

Reduced availability of services and supports for Washingtonians with psychiatric disabilities disproportionately hurts customers of DVR and affects their ability to make progress towards employment.

Next WSRC Meeting
October 20-21
Oxford Inn Downtown Spokane
115 W. North River Dr.
Spokane, WA 99201

****ASL Provided****

Please contact JoAnne Lang for reasonable accommodation or information at: langjk@dshs.wa.gov

(Meeting location subject to OFM approval)

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Customer Feedback from Tacoma

The WSRC sent the 1227 customers with open cases in Pierce County an invitation to attend our July 21 Customer Forum. Sixteen joined us and shared their observations about being served by DVR. Three came to express satisfaction and appreciation with their services. Three expressed frustration in working with both DVR and local providers of Community Rehabilitation Services. One family touched on the complexity of working with both DVR and the Division of Developmental Disabilities. One customer articulated concern over a lack of communication with his counselor. We noted that some who provided comment were veterans with disabilities, and two people shared the challenges associated with having conviction histories and disabilities.

Splinters from the Chair

By: Mike Hudson

Who Is Costing Who?

When we left John, he was frustrated. Although he was a talented writer who had found a market for his skill, quadriplegia left him with exorbitant costs for personal care. He faced a decision no one should: To limit his earnings and the realization of his potential as a writer to maintain eligibility for a federal benefit to cover the cost of his personal care; or to risk losing necessary coverage to pursue the full measure of his talent and the lifestyle he wanted. Many Americans with disabilities face the same Faustian bargain but few do what John did.

He became so frustrated that he decided to do something *crazy*. He sold most of his belongings, boxed up the rest, quit Medicaid and the other government programs. John got into his van and drove just shy of 3,000 miles to Mazatlan, Mexico.

As a writer John could work from anywhere. With the help of assistive technology the quadriplegia was no barrier to employment and the care he needed cost less in Mexico. In a few months John was making so much money so fast that PayPal shutdown his account under suspicion of fraudulent activity. Today he is making more than enough money to take care of himself. He shared the wealth saying, "I got to feeling uppity and bought my father a new

car.” John found a solution he could live with. But should Americans with disabilities have to consider becoming expatriots to live up to their potential?

According to the National Disabilities Institute (NDI) sixty-five percent of those who live in long-term poverty in the US are people with disabilities. Michael Morris, NDI Executive Director said; “Due to lack of policy alignment, people with disabilities are forced to stay poor to keep receiving public benefits.” When we estimate the cost of disabilities in term of cost to the public for providing benefits, we never consider the cost to the person with the disability – in terms of real dollars, dignity, self-reliance and lost opportunity. In doing so, we get what we pay for; a restless, dissatisfied person who is a negative draw on the economy, instead of the contributor he is motivated to be. We cannot afford to pay that price.

Alveshere Named Idaho VR Administrator

Congratulations to Donald Alveshere. The former DVR staffer and Assistant Director of the Dept. of Services for the Blind was named Administrator of Idaho DVR.

The WSRC is seeking a service-minded business person to join our team. Interested? Contact brounjm@dshs.wa.gov by August 31.