

The Rehab Council Connection

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Our Members

Jeffry Abe-Gunter, Spokane; Andres Aguirre, Interim DVR Director, Ex-Officio, Olympia; Valerie Arnold, Elma; Don Brandon, Mountlake Terrace; Charity Marie Drummond; 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

WSRC Provides First Look at Survey Data (article runs from page 1 to the middle of page 3)

This month the Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) completed collecting data from customers of the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) for our 2011 survey. Going into the project the Council had three goals: first, to learn from customers for the purpose of making data driven recommendations about how service delivery could improve; second, to gather applicable information to aid in the development of the next State Plan; and third, to achieve our mandate under Title 1, Section 105(4)(B) of

the Rehabilitation Act, which tasks us with analyzing customer satisfaction with DVR services.

We invited a random sample of DVR customers to participate in the survey. The customer sample was comprised of four groups: those who achieved employment after being served by DVR; those whose cases were closed without a rehabilitation; and, two groups of customers currently implementing their Individual Plans for Employment (IPE) at contrasting paces. Of those in plan surveyed, half had IPEs open for between 61 and 420 days, the rest had an open IPE for between 961-1400 days.

Members of the WSRC's Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee lead the effort to bring the project to fruition. They focused the project on learning whether customers *felt* that their DVR services were provided with respect and courtesy; and, if the services they received addressed their barriers to employment. After that they drafted survey questions, and made a project proposal to the Senior Leadership Team (SLT) of DVR.

The Council assured that the SLT shared an interest in the focus we proposed for the survey. We worked as a team to analyze data about time in plan to which cases to include in the survey sample. This is how we identified specific timeframes to target. The Council also shared draft survey questions with the SLT for their input. The edits suggested by the SLT increased the clarity of survey

questions rather than changing substance. The SLT agreed to fund the survey.

Next the Council sought technical expertise. We do not possess the in house capacity to undertake the data collection for the survey. Fortunately, our colleagues at the Research and Data Analysis Unit of the Department of Social and Health Services (RDA) were available to help. We sought input from RDA staff about whether to conduct the survey on paper, on line, or by telephone. We concluded that a telephone survey (with accommodations for Deaf customers or others who spoke languages other than English) would likely yield a high response rate. The drawback of the decision to survey by telephone was that a smaller sample of customers, 455 in all, would be invited to participate in the survey. We provided a \$20 gift card for groceries as an incentive for customers in the hopes of boosting our response. Apparently something worked because we garnered a response rate of 88.4%

Our Initial Findings

Much of the data collected tells a good news story about the professionalism of DVR staff. We were struck that 90.2 percent of customers who did not achieve a rehabilitation, confirmed feeling treated with courtesy and respect by DVR staff. Those were the people one might have expected to be dissatisfied. Remarkably, 91.5 percent of those in plan felt that services are being delivered with courtesy and respect. Ninety-eight percent of those who

secured employment after working with DVR responded favorably to the same question.

DVR customers from all four parts of the survey sample expressed understanding more about services after attending orientation. The large majority of respondents also expressed understanding the role of the counselor as well as their own role in the vocational rehabilitation process.

In more good news, customer responses to questions about the way informed choice were largely positive. For example, of those currently in plan, greater than 90 percent confirmed choosing their employment goal. Of those who were rehabilitated after receiving DVR services 95.1 percent confirmed choosing their employment goal. It is less positive that of those who did not become employed at the end of the vocational rehabilitation process, a smaller 87.2 percent reported selecting their employment goal.

While most of the findings confirm DVR's strengths, the survey highlights the need to develop plans that more effectively address barriers to employment. Close to 37 percent of those who went to work after being served by DVR did not feel that their barriers to employment were addressed. Thirty-nine percent of those whose cases were closed without work, felt that their barriers to employment remained unaddressed. This finding reinforces what reviewers found during the most recent statewide case review.

Another area of concern raised by the survey is the number of hours DVR customers work after achieving a rehabilitation. More than 25 percent are not working as many hours as they would like; 36.7 percent are working 20 hours a week or fewer. Close to 48 percent are working between 20 and 40 hours each week. More than 15 percent are working more than full time each week.

We were saddened to discover that, of those who achieved a successful rehabilitation after participating in the vocational rehabilitation process, 28 percent were no longer employed at the time of the survey. We do not know why, nor do we know whether this rate of job loss is typical for customers of DVR. Some survey respondents who had become employed may have provided insight into job loss when they expressed feeling ill equipped to address challenges after their cases were closed. Although we found these comments interesting we cannot draw conclusions without further study.

Customers from across the state chose to participate in the survey. The majority of survey responses came from customers in King, Snohomish, Pierce, Spokane and Clark Counties.

Next Steps

The next phase of this project is to undertake a thorough analysis of the data. The full Council will mull over the

findings at our next quarterly meeting. We hope to work with RDA or another partner to learn what, if anything, we can about survey responses by area. We will craft recommendations from the Council to DVR based on our analysis.

The WSRC looks forward to sharing what we learned with the SLT, and DVR Supervisors. We intend to continue working collaboratively with DVR in the coming months to present our survey project including our recommendations with a broader audience.

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Save the Dates for 2012 WSRC Meetings
January 26-27, 2012
1101-4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98101

Customer Forum
January 26, 3:00p-5:00p
ASL Interpretation provided
April 19-20, 2012
Chelan County

July 19-20, 2012
Benton
Or Walla Walla County

October 18-19, 2012

Clark County

Meeting plans or locations may change based on availability of funds and approval of the Office of Financial Management.

Sandra Carr Concludes Service on the WSRC

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Sandra Carr, of Spokane, completed more than six years of service as the representative of the Washington State Independent Living Council to the WSRC last month. Carr, a mother and a grandmother, was once herself a customer of DVR. She now works for a Community Rehabilitation Program provider and specializes in vocational evaluation, with a particular focus on customers with Deafness. As a dedicated member of our Council, Carr, distinguished herself as a dedicated advocate who used passion, warmth, and humor to highlight a need for greater understanding of the needs of Deaf or hard of hearing customers. Although the experience of being Deaf motivated Carr to educate her colleagues, she also emphasized the importance of providing effective supports and services to people with psychiatric disabilities and their families.

Sandra Carr was one of the members the Governor appointed to rebuild the WSRC in late 2004. We

appreciate the gift of her time and recognize the sacrifice required to serve on two Councils for an extended period.

The members and staff of the WSRC thank Sandra Carr for her service.