

Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council

Full Council Meeting Minutes

November 20, 2025
9:00 A.M. – 2:30 P.M.

DVR Office in Stevens Point

2801 Hoover Rd
Stevens Point, WI 54481

Microsoft Teams Meeting

[Meeting Link](#)

Meeting ID: 240 331 968 756 5 **Passcode:** xd69ax25

To join by phone only, call (608) 571-2209 **Phone Conference ID:** 461 903 400#

WRC Members Attending: Dick Straub, Alicia Reinhard, Gadeen Taylor-Duke, Meredith Dressel, Lindsey Kreitzman, Liz Kennedy, Natalia Graf, Kathy Meisner, Jolene Wanek, Lydia Hartlaub, Jacci Borchardt, Kyle Kleist, Rachael Fellers, Michael Jackson, Alan Kaltenberg, Jenny Felty, Markus Watts, Dr. Oyinkansola Owonifari

DVR Staff Attending: Allison Gordon, Deanna Krell, Kay Olson, Sarah Kuehn, Craig Wehner, Jennifer Hunn, Karla Opatz, Jennifer Bscherer, Jenna Fogarty, Alissa Braatz, Tania Hanford

Guests Attending: Heather Laakso (DWD Policy Analyst), Maria Weeks (public), Nelsinia Ramos (public), Monica Lopez (public), Ryan Horton (Public), Rachel Crites (Public), Sally Flaschberger (BPDD), Ramsey Lee (Public)

Roll Call and Introductions

Announcements

- Focus on strategic planning this morning and an abbreviated meeting this afternoon.

Quorum Check

- Quorum met.

Approval of Minutes

August 2025 meeting

- Motion to approve the August meeting minutes and OOS meeting – Liz, second Allan – passed.

2026 Meeting Dates

- Meeting dates for 2026 will remain on the third Thursday of the month. Kay will send out invites.
 - February 19
 - May 21
 - August 20
 - November 19

Strategic Planning - Heather Laakso, DWD Program & Policy Analyst

- Heather provided an overview of the strategic planning efforts to date.
- Reviewed WRC member survey results to identify areas to focus on for strategic planning themes:
 - 'Service Quality and Effectiveness' and 'Provider Capacity and Training' were identified as the top two areas of interest.
- Broke out into small groups to discuss capacity building of service providers (e.g., virtual services, expansion of existing providers, streamlining existing documentation, ensuring consistency in understanding technical specifications) and training service providers to effectively provide services to consumers.
 - Groups worked to collectively identify which of these areas should be the central areas of focus for the WRC strategic plan and how broad or narrow a focus should be taken.
- Break out groups shared their input and Heather recorded the feedback.
- Reviewed the Mission Statement of the WRC. Does the mission fit the WRC?
 - Members felt it does fit.
- Reviewed the Vision Statement of the WRC. Does the vision fit the WRC?
 - Members felt it does fit.
- Reviewed the Values Statement of the WRC. Do these guiding principles fit the WRC?
 - Need to be reshaped and re-worded as beliefs.
- Created two committees for further discussion and meeting planning for December. Goals:
 - Reframe the Value Statement and refine and define the words.
 - SWOT analysis / write strategic goals.
- Values committee report out:
 - Moving forward with revising values. Reducing length of them and making them less action oriented. Determine themes.
 - Include: collaboration and partnerships, trust and transparency, inclusion, self-determination, positive change.
- Strategic plan committee report out:
 - Evaluated the top priorities and narrowed down as a group, with strong focus on capacity building and understanding that training is a part of that. Considered what the council might have influence over. Expanding virtual services: explored what services might be able to be more virtual. There are other issues related to that as far as technology and internet. Spent a lot of time talking about consistency such as provider meetings (in each WDA), etc.

Working Lunch – New Member Engagement Activity

- Engagement activity.

Public Comment

- Ramsey Lee – previous DVR consumer – really concerned about waitlist, doesn't want wait list to affect services for people with disabilities. Encouraged DVR to work with the legislators to stop waitlist. Beg the Governor to give DVR the money, so there is not a wait list. DVR was helpful to him when he was in school. Conveyed the need for DVR to help people get jobs. Expressed gratitude "for all you do."
- Rachel Crites – prior DVR participant and currently supporting transition age youth who is receiving DVR services. Very concerned about there being a waitlist for services; did submit a letter. Request to read the letter; comprehensive and addresses family and other concerns about waitlist for services:
 - "I am writing to express my concern about the potential plan to institute wait lists for DVR services. My son is a DVR participant who has been receiving job development and coaching services through DVR for the last number of years. He is 22 years old, and his terminating high school transition goal has long been to move from school to work. With DVR's support, he has successfully maintained a summer job throughout his four years in high school; for the last 18 months he's maintained regular employment, approximately 12 hrs./week. He graduated from high school in September and has now expressed an interest in expanding his work hours. He is connected to the community through his employment. His SSI payments have been reduced as he has demonstrated increased ability to support himself, he is paying taxes and contributing to the economy in a position where he is needed and appreciated. Just three weeks ago, my son's DVR counselor told us that my son's work is now considered permanent employment and that he will need to transfer his job coaching services from DVR to long-term care. We were reassured by DVR that if there is a change of employment or my son identifies a new vocational goal that he may always reapply to DVR and request additional services. This is feedback we've been counting on, and which is now in question given the proposed wait lists. The prospect of wait lists has created a sense of uncertainty about my son's ability to successfully complete the final steps in his transition from school to work, and it has raised a sense of insecurity about his ability to maintain stable employment more generally. Given the nature of my son's disability, and his fluctuating health status, we anticipate that he will experience periods where he may need to step away from his job and then resume work as his health stabilizes. Although we have discussed this with his employers, he has been offered no guarantee that his positions can be held for him or that they will not otherwise change in his

absence. Under these circumstances, a return to work is likely to require a new job search, period of training and support while moving to another permanent position – a process that would require my son to reapply for DVR services. Extended time on a waitlist between jobs would likely set my son back years in his vocational training. It would undermine the investment that DVR has made to date in his vocational skills development. Given his disability-related risk of skills regression in the context of inconsistent availability of services, waitlists would increase the cost to DVR to retrain him at whatever point he were to eventually advance through a wait list and return to the program. In addition, none of this speaks to the ways instituting wait lists would undermine his ability to access integrated, competitive employment and his right to participate in the community. Ours is just one of thousands of stories of individuals who would be negatively impacted, left out or effectively removed from the workforce, by a move to institute waitlists. I understand that waitlists have been proposed in response to a funding shortfall and high demand for DVR services, but I implore you to identify a better way forward." Went on to address concerns with identifying which individuals should receive services and when, compared to who will end up on the waitlist. "We need a wide variety of people in the workforce. No matter which category they are in, they could still use services." Concerned when funding is restricted, how this narrows those in the disability community worthy of services and others who are not. Very concerned about waitlist and advocated pushing to come up with another plan.

- WRC response – encourage individuals to contact local legislators to encourage funding to avoid OOS, thanked Rachel for comment.
- Kate Kingree – Kay read written comment received via email.
 - "My name is Kate Kingree, and over the past 20 years, DVR has been an invaluable resource for me in securing and maintaining employment. I was one of those tier 3 or tier 2 individuals who would have been placed on an indefinite waiting list. I am a person who identifies as neurodivergent with dyslexia, ADHD, and auditory processing disorder. DVR was pivotal in my life, providing funding for all my assistive technology, paying for my reading remediation at WILDD, and covering the cost of my last year of graduate school (because I needed extra time). When I moved to Eau Claire and stopped working, DVR paid for helping me get funding for moving expenses to get back to Madison, and OT that was not covered by my insurance after a 3-year episode of clinical depression when I needed 6 months of intensive OT to help my executive functioning. If not for DVR, I would have given up several times, but they were the glue that stepped in to cover those expenses and services when I couldn't, as I was not someone with money or privilege, and likely would have ended up applying for SSDI several times. I can say now, because of the help from DVR, I worked for

six years as a benefits analyst helping those on SSDI get off with the support of the Ticket to Work because I was the Ticket to Work program manager for years at ERI, and now I have been seven years at the Dane County ADRC helping all those who need employment services. Because DVR did not push me aside because I was 'too functional,' they were the stopgap, not falling into homelessness, providing the much-needed funding, support, and retraining when I needed it. Because of DVR, I can help those who don't have a voice, stay working, engage, and be a tax-paying citizen. Thank you, DVR, for believing in me and knowing I could be successful even if I'm not the most disabled compared to others!"

DVR Administrative Update - Meredith Dressel, DVR Administrator

- Reviewed attached PowerPoint.
- Question asked for FFY 2025 if we have funds to cover this or if it's for next FFY. DVR stated that it is correct; there is a deficit for FFY 2026. Noted this is due to state match, not federal grant.
- WRC asked for clarification on amount of budget deficit. DVR noted it's hard to clarify the specific amount because there is federal fiscal year and state fiscal year. Noted projections are around 4.6 million dollars of a deficit. WRC voiced concern as DVR expenditures already seem close to budget allotment. DVR budget projects DVR will have funds to cover their current expenditures. WRC asked about the upward trend of DVR referrals increasing over the last number of years, if the OOS decreases the number of referrals for services, should we see the funds even out. DVR noted this depends a lot on ongoing state allotments.
- WRC asked if DVR is going to publish waitlist/OOS FAQ, understanding BPDD had put questions together. DVR – we are working on the FAQs right now. These resources will be posted on our website.
- DVR noted that the waitlist has been in place before.
- DVR addressed how their two-year State Plan is being modified per federal requirement, and an updated State Plan will be ready for review at the Dec. 18 WRC meeting.
- Technical specifications are currently updated for review. Hoping to roll them out in beginning of 2026.
- Touched on updated case management system; WRC asked when this would likely be released and implemented. DVR responded, likely three-plus years.
- Policy Academy, last meeting was Nov. 11 – budget and admin updates. Reviewed updates to Supported Self-Employment Tool Kit. FAQ tile discussion, addressed the current organization of the FAQs, updating them, and how we should publish them in the future for ease and use.

Committee Updates

It was first noted that if anyone wanted to change committees or join a committee, this requires an act by the council, so please bring it up today.

Council Engagement Committee

- Welcomed two new council members, Lydia and Marcus. Prior to first meeting, council engagement committee members met with new members to go over steps. Discussed with them options for exploring different subcommittee roles.
- Working on getting new members through the Governor's appointment process; learned there is a new person in the Governor's appointment office. Hoping to see these applications for appointments moving forward soon. Noted there are several appointments that need to be filled. Noted based on current information there may be an advocate rep position open. Advised council to think of individuals that may be good options for this position.
- In discussions with Governor's office for individuals who are elected for partial terms. Hoping that a person could do two terms, with a partial term not counting toward total number of terms they can do in a row. WRC noted they have had mixed success in getting members approved for the second full term after completing a partial term and one full term. Chair of committee will be next example of this, if he is not reappointed, there will be vacancy for Chair. This would be started July 1, 2026; if anyone is interested in this position, contact the engagement committee for more information.
- Creating an info sheet about the process of where to go on website to find resources and information about WRC. Hopefully this will cut down on some admin assistance DVR provides.
- Next meeting is in Dec.

Performance Measures and Quality Assurance Committee & Policy Review and Administration Committee (meeting together)

- Met and reviewed previous recommendations for WRC regarding the DVR state plan. This is what will be coming out at the Dec. 18 meeting.

Services to Business Committee

- Meeting regularly, mostly working with BSC section chief and how the BSCs communicate. How can there be clearer communication with BSC and vendors along with other partners?
- Some discussions of the State Plan.
- Next meeting may be Dec.

Executive Committee

- Meeting monthly for one hour; conduct reviews of subcommittee reports.
- Spent some time reviewing engagement committee work around partial terms.
- Also reviewed strategic planning and future meeting topics/agenda.
- Discussed the committee doing some advocate work around DVR gaining more funding to not have to implement a waitlist. DVR cannot advocate from themselves, but WRC can. Encourage members to help advocate for DVR with local legislature.

Review Action Items and Identify Future Agenda Topics

- Two strategic planning teams should schedule follow up meeting for Dec.

Adjourn

- Liz motioned to adjourn, and Alan seconded. Adjourned at 1:44 p.m.

A Statement of Mission

The Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council, working on behalf of Wisconsin residents with disabilities, will review, analyze, and advise the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) regarding the performance of its responsibilities in providing quality services to persons with disabilities.