

**Minutes**  
**WISCONSIN REHABILITATION COUNCIL**  
**February 8, 2024**  
**9:00 AM – 2:15 PM**

**WebEx Virtual Meeting**

<https://dwdwi.webex.com/dwdwi/j.php?MTID=m641c8e642b2445182764acf57703ed14>

To join by phone only, call 855-282-6330 access code HiAUjAKq259

**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.

**WRC Members Present:** Megan Bisonette, Jacci Borchardt, Jen Espinoza Forlenza, Ann Franz, Natalia Graf, Alan Kaltenberg, Lori Karcher, Liz Kennedy, Kyle Kleist, Lindsey Kreitzman, Debbie Lee, Norene Lueck, Kathy Meisner, Alicia Reinhard, Alexis Riggs, Dick Straub, Gadeen Taylor-Duke, Jolene Wanek, Alice Belcher

**WRC Members Absent:** Jenny Felty, Michael Jackson

**DVR Staff Present:** Meredith Dressel, Allison Gordon, Anna Eggebrecht, Tania Hanford, Sarah Kuehn, TJ Jerke, Tom Draghi, Craig Wehner

**Guests:** DWD Secretary Pechacek, Alaina Knief (DWD Comms), Jason Glozier (WCILC), Nik Kurutz (CAP), Danita Jackson (CAP)

**Roll Call and Introductions**

**Announcements**

- Announcement of new member Dr. Alice Belcher.
- Please bring agenda items to your committees for discussion

**Quorum Check – Met Quorum**

**Approval of Minutes – November 2023**

- Motion to approve the minutes – Kyle Kleist, second Liz Kennedy – Vote passed.

**Introduction of new DVR Administrator**

- Delora Newton retired at the end of Dec 2023.
- Meredith Dressel has been named as the new DVR Administrator. She has a lot of experience working for DVR starting as a vocational counselor for the last 27 years.

**Secretary Pechacek Remarks**

- Shared a power point and responded to questions.

## **Committee Updates and Committee Member Approvals:**

### **Council Engagement Committee**

- Jacci has been named the chair of the committee.
- Enhancing the onboarding and training of new Council members.
- Alice Belcher joined the Council and met with Jacci for an introduction and orientation to the Council.
- Review membership to ensure we are filling vacancies, reappointment, and continue to meet quorum for meetings.
- Governor's Appointments Office coordination for appointment of new members.
- Addressing attendance and Committee participation.
- Committee meeting bi-monthly.

### **Performance Measures and Quality Assurance Committee**

- Reviewed the old CSNA provider and consumer questions.
- Meredith provided an update on PreETS.
- Scheduling a meeting with the new CSNA vendor to review current provider and consumer survey questions at the end of February.
- Motion to appoint Jennifer Espinoza Forlenza to join this Committee – Kyle Kleist, second Liz Kennedy – Vote Passed.

### **Policy Review and Administration Committee**

- Did not meet due to lack of chair.
- Kathy Meisner has agreed to be the new chair of this Committee.
- Motion to appoint Jennifer Espinoza Forlenza to join this Committee – Liz Kennedy, second Jolene Wanek – Vote Passed.

### **Services to Business Committee**

- Patti Johnson presented on the work of the BSC's and how to build the bridge between BSC and consumers receiving services, service providers, and employers.
- Having issues with quorum at Committee meetings.
- Currently meeting monthly or bi-monthly based on agenda items.
- Next meeting, will be reviewing the outreach and strategic plans for BSC's.

### **Executive Committee**

- Meet monthly.
- Discussed issues around Committee quorum and chair assignment.
- Reviewed the 2023 Administrative Law Judge decisions and found them to be consistent and correctly addressed.
- Set the agenda for the full WRC meetings.

- Executive Committee is the only Committee that requires quorum to conduct their meetings. The reason is that other Committees do not make formal motions.

### **CAP Report** — *Nik Kurutz, Denita Jackson, and Jen Espinoza Forlenza, Disability Rights Wisconsin*

- Jen shared a brief overview of the CAP process in working with a consumer on a DVR Consumer Appeal and Due Process.
- Nik and Denita shared a presentation sharing an example of a case that could not be resolved at a lower lever and moved to an impartial hearing.
- Hearing decisions can be total or partial based on what was brought forward. The goal at the Hearing is to address a specific decision.
- It is important that the denial letters are specific and provide enough information for the consumer to understand the decision and for the Administrative Law Judge to decide based on facts.
- CAP meets with DVR leadership quarterly to discuss any issues and provide feedback to each other.
- Jen also attends DVR Policy Academy as a CAP representative to provide input on policy and procedure decisions.
- CAP is working on creating 2024 priorities. Jen asked for input on those priorities.
  - Kyle suggested that CAP reach out to the Independent Living Center (ILC) network to explain the CAP process with that audience as there are a lot of new staff. CAP provides the same services to the ILC consumers as they for DVR consumers. Jen shared that CAP has done some outreach in 2023 to the ILC's and will continue to do that in 2024. The appeal process is slightly different for ILC's as compared to DVR. Jen offered to share a presentation on the differences between the two processes. She also shared a case example when working with an ILC consumer.
- CAP provided services to 15 consumers (DVR and ILC) in the first quarter of the FFY 2024. This could include full services and information and referral. Jen can provide more specific data on services they provide at the next WRC meeting.

### **FFY 2023 DVR 722 Report on Hearing Appeals** - *Meredith Dressel, DVR Administrator*

- 4 decisions were made in FFY 2023. Meredith provided an overview of those 4 decisions.
  - 1 consumer had 2 cases, both petitions were dismissed,
  - 1 consumer withdrew their appeal and petition was dismissed.
  - 1 consumer farm case, CAP assisted the consumer in working through the process.

## **DVR Administrative Update** - *Meredith Dressel, DVR Administrator*

- Meredith reviewed the DVR Administrative Power Point.
- Discussion around why the PreETS expenditures vary from WDA to WDA.
- Expand Counselor by Race slide in the future.
- Kyle asked about the number of vehicle modifications. Anna said she could get that information for Kyle.
- Top 10 Things Happening slide – missed adding the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).
- Employee wellness initiatives were discussed.
- Youth Seeking Subminimum Wage interviews report link was shared as well as a link to the UW Whitewater webpage that includes more information on those interviews <https://www.uww.edu/orsp/research-centers-and-initiatives/citee/wioa> .
- Dick asked Meredith if she had any initiatives that were key to her in her new role as DVR Administrator. She shared that the Policy Re-organization efforts are at the top of her list.

## **Public Comment**

- No public comment received.

## **Update on Business Policy Revisions** - *Anna Eggebrecht, Deputy Bureau Director, Bureau of Consumer Services Sarah Kuehn, DVR Program and Policy Analyst*

- **Start Your Own Business Toolkit Scope of Changes**
  - Define a small business
  - Review and Revise Fee Schedule and Technical Specifications for providers who assist with Feasibility, Business Plans and possibly TA/mentorship for
  - Review the process used by the BAS pilot and determine if a change in policy, rating documentation and/or practice needs to be implemented.
  - Review the Employment Readiness Questionnaire (ERQ) to simplify the process.
  - Review the credit score requirement, does it need to be changed? Be clear a credit score is required?
  - Include language in the toolkit that indicates how to handle an independent contractor/ consultant.
  - Review and revise Self-Employment Fee Schedule Requirement for consumers to pursue outside funding for self-employment after Business Plan Review approval.
  - Business expansion will not be included in the toolkit.

Current Status: portions of recommendations have been shared with SLT. Workgroup continues to meet to draft language to share with SLT, Policy Academy, Directors and WRD Policy Review Committee. Training provided to DVR staff in July through SYNC Series.

- Noted that DVR has reviewed data and studies from other states and review their fee schedules as part of updating WI DVR's Starting Own Business toolkit.
- Question about credit score, does the group plan to add addendum with resources for improving credit?
  - Yes, this is something the group is working on.
- Inquired about services related to addressing debt to income ratio.
  - DVR is investigating service that could meet with and get additional information/training from fellow small business owner related to improving ones' debt to income ratio.
- Self-employment with benefits can be challenging. Wanted to make sure WIBS were included in Starting Own Business.
  - They are in the tool kit.
- Asked if current recommendations are going to be addressed with WRC policy committee for full review once completed.
  - DVR confirmed these final edits will be reviewed by Policy Academy and submitted for review to WRC Policy Committee.
- **Existing Business recommended edits to the current policy**
  - Business Walk Through revisions to note for farm cases the walk through can be done the same day as AT Assessment.
  - Validating the Job Goal revision to allow AT Assessment to happen in step #2 when applicable. Does not mean we purchase AT in step #2
  - Requiring use of a Balance Sheet Template for Debt/Asset calculation
  - Language clarification for funding modification portion of equipment

Current Status: Recommendations for edits have been shared with SLT, Policy Academy and Directors. Need to share updates with WRC Policy Review Committee once approved by SLT. Training provided to DVR Staff in March through SYNC Series.

- Asked about walk-through with other businesses beside farm, how does DVR do the AT assessment then.
  - DVR has other providers outside of Easter Seals for AT assessment.
- A farmer who has previously gone through the existing business process, discussed the walk-through step. It is an extensive process.
- Discussion that AT for non-farms may need to be completed by an individual that understand AT and the industry the consumer is working in.

- This is something DVR strives to address while discussing informed choice to choose an AT vender.
- Asked about small business that are not farm related, what is DVR doing for outreach.
  - DVR has BSC to help with outreach to all businesses. DVR noted community resources are often engaged with small businesses, this could be a place that helps with outreach. DVR is also connected with local SBDCs, WWBICs and local chambers. These assist with outreach. WRC asked if DVR has reached out to local rehab services supports as Small Business owners that have a change due to disability usually go to these supports, this is something DVR can investigate.

## **Independent Living Centers and Services Provided - Jason Glozier, Executive Director of WCILC**

- Jason Glozier introduced himself. Reviewed the definition of independent living centers (ILC).
  - They are a tool for disability rights and equity.
  - Goal is to help individuals with disabilities reach their goals.
  - They take direction from individuals in communities about what to focus.
  - They are currently going through a re-visioning.
    - Independent Living Counsel of Wisconsin was a leader in this.
    - Advocacy committees are a big part of this.
    - They also have best practice groups. These groups also interact as a DVR partner, along with the ILC state plan for independent living goals.
- 5 core pieces of the ILC:
  - Advocacy:
    - ILC centers can be a support during job development – this could be meetings with employers or in reference to equality in employment. This includes looping in disability networks and resources.
  - Peer Supports
    - They have Certified Peer Specialist to assist with targeted peer support for individuals with mental health or substance issues.
    - They also assist with workplace mentoring.
  - Transition (institution and post-secondary)
    - They now have a youth services best practice committee to help with IEP planning and assisting youth in other transition services.
    - Touched on early intervention being a 'key to success'.

- Planning for transition for youth to post-secondary systems.
- Independent skill development.
  - This could include soft skills and interview skills.
  - This is an additional support for individuals beyond DVR.
  - Noted ILC can often help with WIBS and AT supports.
- Information and referral
  - Connecting individuals to DVR services when appropriate.
  - Providing referrals to advanced IEP support.
  - Information for Employers.
- They are currently re-writing their statewide plan.
- Questions:
  - Jason asked what ILC could do to better help individuals with disabilities reaching their employment goals?
  - Inquired about Peer Support Categories. Noting that persistent mental illness is often supported at a county level. Inquired how ILC helping individuals with different disability types.
    - ILC flexibility is limited. They do operate with CCS (county programs) as a provider to help with individuals with chronic mental illness. They also work closely with ODHH (Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing) and OCTS (Office of Care and Treatment Services funding). They do have funding available for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing community. It is challenging to help individuals across all disability categories, but the ILC using partnership and collaboration networks to address this. They are continuing to work on information sharing of their resources.
  - Question about an earlier reference made to ILC providing job development and how that works while that consumer is working with DVR?
    - The advocacy support is within the job development process. This is advocacy to the individuals to communicate their wants and desires to their job developer or employer.
  - Discussion about encouraging individuals to get involved in advocacy groups or other organizations for individuals with disabilities. The ILC could help these individuals to navigate those systems to know how to be involved and be engaged.
    - Noted that it's helpful to know where to take issues in the system. He is talking about both state level and federal level advocacy, which is many systems to navigate.
    - He noted ILC's are looking on ways to get more involved with DPI.

- There is a DPI transition coordinator that is part of the WRC, will share contact information.
- Not sure the name of agency Lori Karcher indicated that FACETS has a curriculum of "Servicing on Groups that Make Decisions". They just started providing this in Spanish.

## **Review Action Items, Vote on Committee Membership Recommendations, and Identify Future Agenda Topics**

- Dick inquired if DVR's changes to their transportation policy has showing any data of improvement for consumer. DVR requested this be an action item on a future agenda to prepare data for this.
- Jen – CAP is on the Waisman Center Advisory Committed and they were recently sharing information with BPDD. WRC was looking to recruit individuals with lived experience. Asked for thoughts on how to share this need and increase recruit.
  - Noted that counsel engagement committee can help with this and that she should direct individuals to that committee. At next full counsel meeting, the Engagement Committee can give more information on the vacant spots on all the committees and where we need recruitments.
  - They have tried to recruit from ILC as well.
  - Dick addressed that individuals currently in term may want to think of good candidates to recruit from to fill their roles when their terms are up.
- Question about DVR marketing/outreach to bring on individuals as service providers, and consumers. DVR requested this be an action item on a future agenda.
- Explored if there were any members who would like to join another subcommittee that they are not currently on? Also, is there a place to post schedule of of meeting times for subcommittees. DVR noted to reach out to Kay (once she returns) and currently Sarah is covering this role, they have a committee schedule that could be released. Sarah sent the current one via email to committee.
- Inquired about Kay return date, this is scheduled for Feb 26<sup>th</sup>.
- Next meeting is May 9<sup>th</sup> in Stevens Point and it is an in-person meeting. Still finalizing location, Meredith noted she would not be at this meeting.
- Dick requested adding time into the WRC agendas to socially connect with the other counsel members to get to know each other better.

## **Adjourn**

- Motion to adjourn: Jacci Borchardt
- Second: Alan Kaltenberg
- Adjourned at 2:13pm.



\*Public comment is limited to the time listed on the agenda. Comments can be sent at any time to: [DVRWIRehabCouncil@dwd.wisconsin.gov](mailto:DVRWIRehabCouncil@dwd.wisconsin.gov).

\*Comments sent to that e-mail box will be read to the full council at the next meeting unless a specific subcommittee is listed. If a specific subcommittee is listed, comments will be sent directly to them and reviewed at their next committee meeting.