

# Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council

## Full Council Meeting Minutes

November 14, 2024

9:00 A.M. – 2:30 P.M.

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### Microsoft Teams Meeting

#### [Meeting Link](#)

**Meeting ID:** 259 982 486 120 **Passcode:** MsVqZG

**To join by phone only,** call (608) 571-2209 **Phone Conference ID:** 320 381 752#

**WRC Council Member Attendees:** Dick Straub, Jolene Wanek, Alicia Reinhard, Jenny Felty, Natalia Graf, Liz Kennedy, Kathy Meisner, Lindsey Kreitzman, Kyle Kleist, Alan Kaltenberg, Dr. Debbie Lee, Jacci Borchardt, Gadeen Taylor-Duke, Meredith Dressel, Lori Karcher, Kevin Fortune, Rachael Fellers, Michael Jackson, Alexis Riggs, Alice Belcher

**DVR Staff:** Kay Schoone, Deanna Krell, Anna Eggebrecht, Tania Hanford, Jen Klein, Sarah Kuehn, Alissa Braatz, Nicole Greetan, Milo Luna, Christina Tierney

**Guests:** Hannah Balder (*DRW*), Mike Soukup (*DRW*), Carrie Witt (*DSAW*), Kristine Leonard (*Paragon Community Services*), Molly Murphy (*Waismen Center Autism Treatment Program*), Josh Lapin (*Community TIES Program*), Madeline Barger (*Waismen Center*)

**WRC Council Members Absent:** Alice Belcher, Megan Bisonette, Jen Espinoza Forlenza, Ann Franz

### Roll Call and Introductions

- Round robin introductions
- Kevin Fortune is a new advocate member.

**Announcements – 2025 Meeting Dates tentative** (lots of members have conflicts – Kay will send out a doodle poll)

- February 13th
- May 8<sup>th</sup> – In Person
- August 14th
- Nov 13th

### Quorum Check

- Met quorum

### Approval of Minutes – August 2024

- Alan motion to approve, seconded by Jenny F. – Passed.

### Committee Updates and Committee Member Approvals:

- **Council Engagement Committee**
  - Meet bi-monthly

- Using a new process to onboard members
- Continuing to address terms of members expiring.
- Current vacancy for business representative. Invite Patti Johnson's replacement to get more insight on how to bring in a business rep.
- Reached out to members that have had attendance issues to see what may be causing that.
- Goal is 50% of council membership have a disability or represent a person with a disability (ex. Parent/guardian).
- Reviewing renewal time frames bylaw language changes.
- If a member is going to miss a meeting, ask that members reach out to the chair to let them know.
- **Performance Measures and Quality Assurance Committee and Policy Review and Administration Committee**
  - Overview of PreETS and how WDA's are spending the 15% requirement.
  - 2025 the goal is to revise the bylaws to combine these 2 committees or have them continue to meet jointly with no bylaw change. Asking for committee members input on how to move forward.
- **Services to Business Committee**
  - Have not met due to low attendance. Planning to do a doodle poll to see if there is a better time to meet.
- **Executive Committee**
  - All committees can bring agenda items to the Executive Committee.
  - Addressed term limits and potentially fill the upcoming Executive Committee absence due to term limits.
  - By-law update review
  - Annual Report Workgroup has met a few times to review the contents of the Report. The meetings have been productive.
  - Dick and Kay attended the most recent SCSRC meeting. They had discussion about the positive aspects of in-person meetings. Dick would like to discuss 2 in-person meetings in 2025. Most Council members are in support of 2 in-person meetings.
    - **Meredith asked Kay to put together a budget for 2 in-person meetings to bring back information to the Council.** Meredith shared previous cost for 2024 was \$1588 and 2023 was \$1884
    - Concern for members that may have barriers to travel, need to consider a virtual option for in-person meetings. Employers may also have a travel barrier for meeting participation.
  - Dick and Kay also attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) meeting and shared that AI was a big part of the discussion.

**CAP Report** - Hannah Balder, Staff Attorney for Disability Rights Wisconsin.

- Hannah shared the CAP update attached as Jennifer is on vacation.
- DRW is seeking comments on proposed Protection & Advocacy goals and priorities for fiscal year 2025. Submit Comments by 12/19/24.
- Kevin let Hannah know that her presentation was not readable with his screen reader.

- Dick asked about funding resources for DRW. Hannah doesn't have that information and will get back to Dick.
  - Deanna shared CAP Federal Formula Grant FY2024 192,833.00. PAIR (Protection and Advocacy of Individual Rights) Federal Formula Grant FY2024 \$295,431.00.

**Employer Connection Successes** - Nicole Greetan, DVR Business Services Consultant for WDA 4 (Fox Valley Region), Milo Luna, DVR Business Services Consultant for WDA 11 (Southwest Region)

- Lori asked if the trainings listed were attended by all DVR team members? Yes, all were invited to attend together for joint understanding and information sharing.
- Dick asked if the approach would be different for small business vs. the SSM Health approach? Nicole indicated that in her experience small businesses a bit easier because they are less complex. BSC's have annual outreach plans that include how they connect with small, minority and contractor businesses to ensure the outreach is broad. BSC's use IRIS and LMI to connect DVR job seekers with local employers.
- Kyle asked if BSC's work most with small or large businesses? Milo and Nicole shared that it depends on what area of the State they are located. There are benefits and barriers in working with both small and large businesses.
- Deanna shared that BSC's track their outreach in JCW Business and could share how many small and large businesses they work with.
- Dick asked if BSC's work with consumers that want to start their own business? Yes, BSC's do work with self-employment consumers, but typically the consumer would work with their VRC and the Self-Employment Policy Analyst to follow the Self-Employment Toolkit V. 3.0.
- Kevin asked for Nicole and Milo's contact information via email. They will also include the BSC from Milwaukee.
- Kevin asked about how BSC's do outreach for skilled positions for DVR consumers? What BSC's have learned is that COVID created a market where employers were in high need of workers so are more willing to consider the DVR talent pool. We also have the Career Pathways Grant that is focused on skilled workers and offer enhanced funding for training consumers in those careers. BSC's also offer Windmills Training (disability awareness) for employers and have received positive feedback from employers that participate.
- Dick asked BSC's to assist WRC in filling a vacant business seat on the council. They agreed to assist.

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

- Meredith shared that the rate we are currently spending federal grant dollars, we may be short on State GPR. If we do have a shortage of State GPR, there are 2 options, we could ask the legislature for emergency funds, or we can put a waitlist in place. Waitlist is always the last option and will keep WRC informed on any decisions we make moving forward.
- Kyle asked if there are any advocacy efforts to the legislature that could be done to ask for an increase in State GPR? Meredith stated that members can choose to advocate for enhanced GPR to match our Federal Grant.

**Public Comment**

- No public comment

## **Service Provider Report Out** -Carrie Witt, Employment Services Manager for the Down Syndrome Association (DSA) of WI, Kristine (Kris) Leonard, Director of Transition Services for Paragon Community Services

- WRC committee was looking for an overview of working with DVR as a service provider.
- Carrie explored specific service provider questions while working with DVR:
  - Why PO are different from different DVR counselors or different financial specialists.
  - How informed choice works? They have noticed the number of referrals to DSA changes regularly and depending on the area.
  - Concerns with inconsistent communication with DVR staff. Some staff use email, others the IRIS Portal or IRIS Message, can be hard to manage all communication outlets. Also, expressed concerns with DVR staff timely replies to inquiries.
    - Meredith addressed DVR best practice is to return calls/email within 72 hours.
    - Meredith recommended if there are specific staff or area with issues, please follow up with the local supervision.
    - Regarding consistence of communication, DVR has left that more open. Staff use multiple forms of communication, **DVR can explore a more consistent message about how to communicate with providers.**
- Carrie addressed waitlist do happen with DSA, voiced concern that when waitlists are lifted they see a decrease in referrals.
  - Jolene addressed the above concerns are common among services provider. Address DVR staff are individuals who communicate different.
- Kris joined from Paragon. She noted, from a provider viewpoint:
  - It is helpful when DVR staff recommend consumer's call providers for an interview regarding their services.
  - Paragon is in 4 counties and, similar to DSA, has a lack of consistency from WDA to WDA as to how they process service delivery and communication. Would like more consistence on completion of reports, how they should be submitted and how the portal should be used.
  - Connecting with DVR staff have been happening more often. She feels this may be more prevalent with newer DVR staff. Overall, communication has been good for Paragon.
  - It's helpful to have DVR staff at the first meet and greet with a provider.
- Dick inquired about regular discord between DVR and providers.
  - Deanna noted centrally DVR have 2 statewide service provider meetings each year. Also, each WDA has be directed to have service provider meetings at least twice a year.
  - The invites to the statewide meetings are sent to main service provider contact, DVR does encourage additional provider staff to be invited, but that is an individual provider decision as to who attends these meetings.
  - There are around 200 statewide services providers, we also have a number of vendors that provide services that are not statewide services.
    - DVR's statewide services examples: Benefits Analysis, Job Development and Retention, Supported Employment, Job Coaching etc. DVR meets with these providers every two years. The providers sign a 2-year service provider agreement with DVR.
    - There are other vendors that provide services that are not statewide services. Examples: Assistive Technology Assessment and Supports, Hearing Aid Supports, etc.

- These are all efforts to increase consistency across the state. Also, DVR encourage local WDA's make choices regarding needs and compacity while working with providers.
- Additionally, There are a Provider Advocacy Group and a Service Provider Quality and Capacity Group, which provides feedback to DVR.
- WRC inquired about being invited to the statewide vendor meetings. DVR thought maybe a couple designees from the Council could be invited. **DVR will follow up on this.**
- Dick asked providers who are present, if they are getting enough referrals to keep their doors open?
  - DSA is currently under a staffing change. They have enough referrals at this point, when they are fully staffed, they could take on more referrals. Noted referrals ebb and follow is part of being a provider.
  - Paragon, 2 counties are good, however, they could take double the referrals in the 2 other counties they cover.
- Dick asked DVR, if they have all the service providers they need?
  - DVR noted they could use more Supported Employment providers and providers that offer Job Coaching supports. DVR does have concerns with DVR consumers waiting long periods of time to get the services they need. Most areas have at least one provider who has a waitlist, which statewide service has waitlist vary across the state.
  - DVR also sees variations from service provider to service provider as to how they function, communicate and process services with DVR. DVR encourage service providers to attend both statewide and local service provider meetings to help offer their feedback.
- Michael noted as a provider they had tried to expand to other WDAs, this is challenging as a number of consumers are not following through with services, when they start working with them. They also have had concern with lack of communication from DVR to consumers as to why they are working with a provider.
  - DVR addressed that counseling and guidance is an important part of consumers being engaged and understanding what consumer's expectations are. Also, DVR and providers needs to work with consumer's where they are at, some may not be as consistent or have good follow through. DVR does try to keep accurate contact information and make sure that is shared with providers when contact changes. DVR works to use consumer's preferred method of contact to make sure they are continued to be engaged.
- Carrie noted that if they have a consumer who is not engaged, they attempt multiple contact methods, multiple times. They will also pull in the DVR staff to assist with contact.
- Kris addressed that they have more communication break down with youth guardian/parents follow through then youth or adults. Noted DVR staff are good at helping to assist with this communication breakdowns. Inquired if guardians/parents are more concerns about loss of benefits? Kris addressed that most students don't seem to have benefit concerns, it's more about the number of steps included with transition.
- Gadeen noted that parents/guardians not following through is a challenge for DVR as well. Could be related to meeting during business hours and parents/guardians working. Could also be parents/guardian may have disabilities themselves. Rachel noted that the whole process can be overwhelming especially if there are multiple children with disabilities in the household and/or if the parents are managing their own disabilities.
- Kathy inquired if DVR feels the increase budget expectation for Pre-ETS spending is too high for what is a realistic ability to provide services to youth. DVR addressed the 'why' behind the Pre-ETS requirement are an important part of WIOA, still implementation can be challenging. Noted each

state does work on this Pre-ETS requirements differently. DVR does see a drop off of youth when they graduate.

- Kathy inquired if DVR Wisconsin regularly reviews the the Pre-ETS spending approach, and curious if other states have better approaches. DVR Wisconsin does interact with other states during things like CSAVR. DVR Wisconsin Pre-ETS spending is working better than a number of other states. DVR knows the more often students with disabilities participate in work prior to graduation, the more successful they are in employment later on.

## **Waisman Center Autism and Employment/Schooling Outcomes** -Molly Murphy, Program Director for Waisman Center Autism Treatment Programs, Josh Lapin, Director of the Community TIES Program

- Autism Treatment Program started in 2016. They serve a small number of kids in early childhood, and 38 families are enrolled yearly in the 5-26 year old program. They are working to establish a life span prospective as part of early intervention. Also, they work with UW Health and UW universities, partnership is a priority. They are continuing to work on improving their partnership with other agencies as well. They spend time investing in parents as well. They do not currently have formal contracts with schools regarding transition, however, they do provide services on an individualized basis. They are also insurance funded.
- They take a systematic approach when working with all their adults and families. They do individual session with parents and groups. They have a social skills model that is adult lead. They also support challenges surrounding employment and advocacies skills.
- Kyle inquired about peer mentoring opportunities. They noted in contents of groups they support finding mentors; however, they don't have a formal peer mentor program. They also try to connect their consumer to individuals in the community.
- Josh works in the Community Ties program. This is a behavioral program to assist individuals with navigating the community. They serve around 450 people, mainly in Dane county. There is not an age requirement and individuals do not age out of the program. They are connected with long term care agencies, local schools and work sites. Helpful with many life transitions. Also, they do a lot of training with a proactive approach model. This training can be to individuals on the work site as well as other community locations.
- Addressed diagnosis of autism doesn't mean just one thing. Everyone with this diagnosis is very different and have individualized needs. They work with individuals who are late diagnosed, and adult diagnosed as well.
- Kyle asked how many people they work with are not drivers, do they incorporate transportation supports into their program. They do support how to navigate transportation systems, but on an individual basis. Noted transportation can be a big trigger for a lot of people, and they use virtual options when they can.
- Question about if Community Ties has comparable programs in other places across the state. They don't believe there are other programs like Community Ties in other parts of the state. They do trainings for care givers supports across Wisconsin. Encourage people to reach out to them if they are looking for community supports or have ideas to expand the program.

## **Review Action Items and Identify Future Agenda Topics**

- Kay will reach out to WRC members to schedule future meetings as there are several conflicts with the suggested dates.
- Kay will look at the costs of holding in-person WRC meetings to see if DVR can fund two in-person meetings in 2025.
- Review items for future meeting:
  - Deep dive into Pre-ETS expenditures
  - Differences between case management and guidance and counseling
  - Further discussion of budget
    - Meredith addressed how DVR cannot lobby, but WRC may choose what they advocate for.
  - Determination for order of selection
  - Explore collaboration between DVR and colleges/technical colleges
  - Discussion of AI and providing services to individuals with disabilities.
  - Dick addressed number of counsels for individuals with disabilities within our state. Wondering how those counsels' communication or work with each other. Kyle noted most of those counsels are run through the office of independent living. Lindsey will follow up with Kyle on some individuals who could be contact regarding collaboration. Kyle noted concerns with DVR budget is a point a number of other counsels may be interested in discussing.
  - Discussion of how to solve the concerns with transportation supports to individuals with disabilities. Dick addressed about a year ago they made a change to support allowing service providers to assist with providing transportation supports. Still, this topic could be discussion further at future meetings.
  - Accessibility of websites and materials, even with state agencies, to individuals who use screen readers.

## Adjourn

- Liz motions to adjourn, Kevin seconds. Meeting adjourned at 2:20pm.

### **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.