

NEVADA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (N.S.R.C.)

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, September 12, 2023, at 9am

Rehabilitation Administration
751 Basque Way, Carson City, NV 89706
&
Vocational Rehabilitation
3016 West Charleston Blvd. Suite 200, Las Vegas, NV 89102

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Raquel O'Neill
Alex Goff
David Nuestro
Jack Mayes
David Fisher – Non-Voting
Austin Olson
Rebecca Rogers
Sandra Sinicrope
Judy Swain
Drazen Elez, VR Administrator – Non-Voting

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Robin Kincaid

GUESTS/PUBLIC:

Dawn Lyons, Executive Director, Nevada Statewide Independent Living Council / NV SILC
Stephen Cohen, member of the public
Rosa Jones – Nevada PEP
Candace Walsh, Market Decision Research
Julie Irish, DP Video Productions
Emire Stitt, DP Video Productions

STAFF:

Chricy Harris, Deputy Attorney General
Mechelle Merrill, VR Deputy Administrator of Programs
Brett Martinez, VR Deputy Administrator Operations
Sheena Childers, VR Bureau Chief
Faith Wilson, Quality Control Specialist
Mat Dorangricchia, VR Northern District Manager
Trina Bourke, VR Southern District Manager
Jenny Richter Livia, N.S.R.C. Liaison
Sertram Harris, VR Administrative Assistant
Regina Higley, Administrative Assistant

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1. **CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, AND VERIFY TIMELY POSTING OF AGENDA**
Raquel O'Neill, Chair called the meeting to order at 9:06 a.m. Jenny Richter Livia, NSRC Liaison called the roll.

Ms. Richter determined a quorum was present and verified that the posting was completed on time in accordance with Open Meeting Law.

2. **FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT**
Ms. O'Neill opened the floor to public comment.

Stephen Cohen voiced concerns over a possible clerical error on Agenda Item #7 that the Title and Description did not match.

3. **APPROVAL OF THE MAY 9, 2023, MEETING MINUTES**
Ms. O'Neill asked the council for any modifications, changes, corrections to the May 9, 2023, Meeting Minutes.

Jack Mayes made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Sandra Sinicrope seconded the motion. All In favor, none abstained, motion carried.

4. **APPROVAL OF JULY 11, 2023, STATE PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**
Ms. O'Neill asked Alex Goff, Vice-Chair to go over the July 11, 2023, NSRC State Plan Subcommittee Meeting. Mr. Goff mentioned the meeting was to go over the Goals, Strategies and Performance Measures of the next two fiscal years. The materials will be gone over in later in the agenda.

Ms. O'Neill asked the council for any modifications, changes, corrections to the July 11, 2023, Meeting Minutes.

Mr. Goff made a motion to approve the minutes as written. Rebecca Rogers seconded the motion. All In favor, none abstained, motion carried.

5. **CONSUMER SATISFACTION QUARTERLY RESULTS FROM MARKET DECISIONS RESEARCH (MDR)**
Ms. O'Neill asked for a brief presentation for the 1st quarter of the Client Satisfaction Survey. Candace Walsh with Market Decision Research provided a brief overview of the 1st and 2nd Trimesters. Data is collected from General Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) clients including, Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) and Youth in Transition (YIT), by region and length of time in service.

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Demographics – Trimester 1 and 2

Number of Consumers: 500/478

	T1	T2
General VR	427	377
Youth In Transition	55	79
Older Individuals who are Blind	18	22

Cases by Length of Time in Service

	T1	T2
In Service IPE to 6 months	191	169
In Service 6 to 12 months	81	56
In Service 18+ months	131	148
Closed	91	105

Data is collected once a year. Clients could be surveyed twice a year if cases opened and closed in the same year.

What are the VR Consumer Experience Core Metrics?

The core metrics are the broad measures of the VR consumer experience.

- Key measures of the consumer experience that can be compared across concept, across groups, and trended year to year.
- Allow comparison of results across VR agencies using similar metrics.
- Some are domains, which are calculated by combining several questions.
- Others are individual questions.
- Nevada has 11 core metrics.
- 6 Domains and 5 key questions.

Calculation of the VR Consumer Experience Core Metrics

The consumer experience core metrics all use a common 0 to 100 scale.

- The most positive results is bound to 100.
- The least positive is bound to 0.
- Each metric is the average of all scores.

The higher the score the more satisfied the consumer or the more positively they view their experience.

- A score of 100 would represent an extremely positive experience among VR consumers.
- A score of 0 would imply an extremely negative experience.

What are the VR Consumer Experience Core Metrics?

- **Overall Satisfaction and Expectations:** A global measure of the consumer experience with Nevada VR/OIB Program.
- **Experience with Services Provided by VR:** This measure focuses on the services provided by the VR or OIB program and the range of services available

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in each program.

- **Experience with Staff and Counselors:** Consumer's experience working and interacting with Nevada VR/OIB Program staff and their counselors.
- **Communications with VR staff:** This measure also looks at consumer's interactions with staff but is focused specifically on communications between the consumer and staff. That this is separate from other experiences with staff underscores the importance of communications in the way that consumers rate their experiences with Nevada VR/OIB Program.
- **Consumer Control and Involvement:** How consumers perceive their involvement in the process and control over the choices and goals.
- **Outcomes and Meeting Goals:** How well consumers perceive the services provided by Nevada VR/OIB Program help them meet their goals.

Summary of Domain Scores -Trending

Domain	2021 T2	2021 T3	2022 T1	2022 T2	2022 T3	2023 T1	2023 T2
Overall Satisfaction and Expectations	74	75	72	75	71	73	73
Experience with Services Provided by VR	75	75	73	75	72	73	73
Experience with Staff and Counselors	86	87	84	86	86	85	84
Communications with Staff	74	75	74	74	72	74	74
Customer control and Involvement	77	79	77	78	77	77	75
Outcomes and Meeting Goals	79	81	78	81	75	80	79
Ease of the application process for VR services	78	79	78	79	76	78	74
Accessibility of the VR office for someone with your type of disability	89	87	85	90	86	88	85
Satisfaction with current employment	79	76	80	73	82	79	72
Would you tell your friends with disabilities to go to the VR program for help? (% yes)	90%	92%	84%	89%	89%	89%	89%
Did you experience any problems with VR or the services they have provided to you? (% no)	77%	75%	71%	75%	68%	73%	70%

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Ms. Walsh mentioned these are the trending results for the last 2 years. The results have remained stable over time. This allows MDR to monitor changes and shifts in the Core Metrics during the trimesters. Satisfaction with employment as an example has been more variable since COVID Pandemic. It is not specific with Nevada as they have seen across multiple states they work with. Nevada did see a small decrease in several measures in the last few trimesters in 2022, but they are seeing it rebound in the 2023.

Summary of Domain Scores – Service Population

Domain	General VR T1	General VR T2	Youth in Transition T1	Youth in Transition T2	OIB T1	OIB T2
Overall Satisfaction and Expectations	74	72	75	74	54	71
Experience with Services Provided by VR	75	72	74	77	50	70
Experience with Staff and Counselors	86	84	86	85	74	84
Communications with Staff	75	74	71	76	56	70
Customer control and Involvement	76	75	77	78	63	72
Outcomes and Meeting Goals	80	78	87	83	70	82
Ease of the application process for VR services	80	75	72	77	61	62
Accessibility of the VR office for someone with your type of disability	88	86	85	87	73	70
Satisfaction with current employment	80	71	66*	78	-	-
Would you tell your friends with disabilities to go to the VR program for help? (% yes)	89%	89%	91%	86%	83%	87%
Did you experience any problems with VR or the services they have provided to you? (% no)	74%	64%	75%	72%	63%	74%

Ms. Walsh mentioned breaking down the data by Service Population they are able to see significant differences by group. Example YIT tend to have higher domain scores than the other groups and we see wider shifts in OIB population, since there a smaller population.

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Summary of Domain Scores – Trending

- Consumers of VR/OIB services continue to be positive about their experiences and are generally satisfied with the services provided to them.
- OIB consumers rated their experience lower across all core metrics when compared to VR and YIT consumers. Due to smaller population size.
- Positively trending metrics that increased 2+ points since 2022 T3 include:
 - Overall Satisfaction and Expectations
 - Communications with Staff
 - Outcomes and Meeting Goals
 - Ease of Application
- Satisfaction with Employment has been decreasing steadily since 2022 T2.
- The percentage of consumers who would recommend the VR program remains high (89%), continuing a positive trend on this score.

Consumer Feedback

	Overall*
Better communications need	33%
Easy to reach counselor with no problems	20%
Counselor did not return calls, emails or follow up	19%
Was not given information about choices	15%
Forms and paperwork were hard, complicated	14%
Staff did not return calls, emails or follow up	13%
Listen to customers, understand needs, wants, and abilities	13%
Needed help in filling out forms	11%
Get voicemail, never answer the phone	11%
Counselor was not helpful or supportive	11%

*Top 10 responses among consumers expressing a negative view at any point.

Summary Issues related to communication with counselors and staff made up the majority of feedback categories reported by consumers. Feedback was split with one-fifth (20%) said it was easy to reach their counselor.

Ms. Walsh mentioned clients are given the opportunity to give feedback after every question during the survey. Individuals are asked a follow up question if a negative response is given, to elaborate as to way response was given.

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Problems Experienced

	Overall*	
Counselor did not return calls, emails or follow up	15%	14%
Counselor broke promises or there was no follow through	12%	-
Better communication needed with staff	12%	11%
Time lags to get into the program after completing application	10%	11%
Counselor would not listen to customer or dismissed their concerns	8%	10%
Counselor was not helpful or supportive	7%	13%
There are delays in receiving services and accessing appointments	6%	-
Customer feels they did not receive any help through VR	5%	6%
Changing counselors, switching too much, causes problems for customer	5%	-
Listen to customer, understand their needs, wants, and abilities	5%	7%

*Top 10 responses among customers reporting they experienced a problem with VR or the services provided.

Summary 27% of consumers experienced a problem with VR/OIB or with provided services.

Problems surrounding communication; lack of follow-ups and calls, emails, or other correspondence, continues to be a top problem among customers experiencing problems in T1.

Other problems experienced include delays in receiving services, and customers feeling that their wants or concerns were dismissed.

In Summary

- Overall, VR consumers remain positive about their experience in the new year.
 - Most metrics are within 1-2 points o scores of the prior trimester.
- OIB consumers reported an uncharacteristically negative experience in trimester one that has continued into trimester two especially relating to services received, communications with staff, and the application process.
 - OIB consumers rating of their overall satisfaction and expectations and experience with services provided by VR was more positive in trimester two after a significant decrease in trimester one.
- YIT consumers are consistently positive in their ratings, indicating a successful program experience for many. Similar to OIB consumers, YIT saw dips in many core metrics in the trimester one of this year, but scores increased in trimester two with the exception of Outcomes and Meeting Goals and Experiences with Staff and Counselors.
- Consumer feedback and problems mentioned continue to highlight communication challenges with VR staff.

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- Consumers express a desire for counselors to be more attentive, taking the time to listen to and recognize their input.
- Implementing more regular and consistent follow-up communication could better serve and support consumers.
- Trend to watch: Consumers in service 6-12 months were more negative about their experience than other groups across all metrics.

Ms. Walsh thanked the Council and asked if the Council had any questions not gone over in the presentation.

6. SUGGESTIONS FROM THE COUNCIL FOR THE 2023 NSRC ANNUAL REPORT

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor to Emire Stitt and Julie Irish, DP Video Productions to go over the NSRC Annual Report. Ms. Stitt mentioned the Report is currently a general concept and direction the Report is going.

Ms. Irish mentioned the report looks a lot like last year with a revamped look. In the last year DP Video has done two photo shots and the report will show more client and staff photos throughout the Annual Report. The cover photo is of a successful VR client. On the Statistics pages they will be revamped with the current year stats updated. This year the Spotlight will be on the PRE-ETS Team with their information on a page dedicated to their services. Images and statics will be updated throughout the Report. There will be a page dedicated to the Outreach Events and Tours throughout the year. Client Success Stories has been revamped and will share 6 success stories of clients from the program on two pages. The client's image and their story on the left and the corresponding company on the right side on the same page showing the correlation of the two. Addition Collaborators with other companies will be on an addition page. Updates on Council Members and their stories have pages dedicated to them. New this year will be a Legislative Summary page featuring Troy Jordan and will have his image and summary. There will be additional room for an Employee Spotlight. The Service Map will be worked on to revamp with the help of Drazen Elez. The Tear Out sheet at the back of the book will be updated and revamped with the new statics for a quick overview of the program's statics.

Ms. Irish concluded with asking for concerns or questions of the preview of the new NSRC Annual Report.

Ms. O'Neill mentioned she liked the layout of the Client Success Stories, and the highlighting of the Employers.

Ms. Irish mentioned the follow of the Client Success Stories and the Employers will make more of a connection.

Ms. O'Neill asked the council for any modifications or changes to the NSRC Annual Draft.

Jack Mayes made a motion to approve the Draft of the Annual Report as submitted. Austin Olson seconded the motion. All In favor, none abstained, motion carried.

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7. **APPROVAL OF THE RECOMMENDATIONS FROM THE STATE PLAN SUBCOMMITTEE FOR PROGRAM YEAR FFY24 & FFY25 (OCTOBER 1, 2023, THROUGH SEPTEMBER 30, 2025).**

Ms. O’Neill opened the floor to Mr. Goff to go over the State Plan Goals, Strategies and Performance Measures. Mr. Goff mentioned the Five Goals the State Plan Subcommittee reviewed and developed in the July 11th Meeting. And specify as following:

Goal 1

Increase number of competitive Integrated employment outcomes.

Goal 2

Increase participation of Students with a Disability in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS).

Goal 3

Increase participation of Potentially Eligible Students with a Disability in VR Services.

Goal 4

Increase participation and competitive Integrated employment outcomes of Supported Employment (SE) consumers in VR.

Goal 5

Increase participation of targeted disability groups in VR.

Mr. Goff opened the floor to thoughts or comments from the Council members. Mr. Goff motioned to approve the Goals the committee worked on.

Drazen Elez, VR Administrator mentioned the goals are easier to read and able to understand by the general population. Will help to communicate to VR staff as where we are going as an agency. Therefore, simplifying the goals and all of the measures was getting challenging. Additionally, condensing down to a targeted and focused goal will make the communication between staff, legislators, and any outsider become easier to comprehend.

Mr. Goff mentioned this is his last meeting as a member of the council. He emphasizes that the Measures and Goals coming out of COVID pandemic are needed to be looked at. Mr. Goff thanked everyone on the subcommittee in developing the goals and strategies for their hard work and help.

Mr. Goff asked the council for any modifications or changes to the Goals as indicated.

Ms. O’Neill made a motion to approve the Goals and Strategies for FFY24 and FFY as submitted by the Subcommittee. Jack Mayes seconded the motion. All In favor, none abstained, motion carried.

8. **APPROVE PARTICIPANT SERVICES POLICY MANUAL CHANGES**

Ms. O’Neill opened the floor to Sheena Childers, VR Bureau Chief and Faith Wilson, Quality Control Specialist to present Participant Services Policy Manual Changes.

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Ms. Childers mentioned over the last year the agency has been fine tuning the Participant Services Policy Manual due to Legislative request and needed clarifications.

Ms. Wilson reviewed the outline of the Policy Changes according to the record and pages associated with the changes.

Section 06: Application and Intake

Application for Services explanation is to Clarify what is considered to have submitted an application for VR Services.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revision on pages 1 replaced less detailed explanation with:

An individual is considered to have submitted an application when the individual or the individual's representative, as appropriate:

- Completes one of the below actions:
 - Has completed and signed an agency application form:
 - Evidence of signature may be, as appropriate, a witnessing mark, audiotape, or a record from a Telephone Device for the Deaf (TTD), such as a Text Telephone (TTY).
 - Has completed a common intake application form in a one-stop center requesting vocational rehabilitation services: or
 - Has otherwise requested services form the agency; and
- Has provided the agency information necessary to initiate an assessment to determine eligibility: and
- Is available to complete the assessment process.

Online Application Process explanation is to Refine and streamline the online application process. Application now found on NV VR new website vs old DETR-Rehab.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revision page 2 to remove questionnaire from the application and updated location of application for VR services is located.

- Nevada has established an online process for application submission. Individuals interested in services are directed to watch the online orientation video and complete the applications through the online portal at Nevada Vocational Rehabilitation. After VR receives the completed application, the individual is scheduled and notified of their intake appointment and method with assigned counselor.

CAP & Fair Hearing explanation is to Refine and streamline on how CAP & Fair Hearing information is provided at the time of application. Note: This will be a letter in the application packet.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revision on page 3-4 to refine CAP and Fair Hearing information provided to applicants.

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Client Assistance Program and Fair Hearing:

- Applicants are provided information on the availability of the Client Assistance Program (CAP) and Fair Hearing Process at the time of application.

Pre-Intake and Intake explanations is to Increase application and VR engagement.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revision on pages 3-4 to include Pre-Intake process.

- **Pre-Intake and Intake:**
 - Pre-Intake is completed following an application for services. The Pre-Intake is an initial contact with the counseling team to prepare for the intake appointment including processing documents.
 - A participant's Intake is an interview utilizing concepts from person-centered planning and informed choice. The Intake is an important step in the VR process to review the program and discuss the applicant's needs and goals to obtain competitive integrated employment.

Section 10: Counseling and Guidance, Assessment of Vocational Rehabilitation Needs (AVRN) and Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)

IPE Annual Reviews explanation is for the Revision based on Legislative Council Bureau (LCB) Audit.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revision on page 5 to clarify annual review. Removed "from the date of the original IPE"

- **10. IPE Annual Reviews**
IPE Annual Reviews document the participant's progress toward achievement of the employment outcome. They occur as often as necessary, but no less than annually.

Section 12: Scope of VR Services Overview

Expectations to Service Restrictions explanation is Describe the process for participants to request an exception to service restrictions.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Addition on page 4 to describe an exception process to the services restrictions.

- Exceptions to the above restrictions may be granted with written request and approval when rigid adherence could seriously jeopardize the participant's opportunity to achieve the rehabilitation objective and an employment outcome. Requests for policy exceptions are considered on a case-by-case basis and must be submitted in writing to the Rehabilitation Counselor.

Subsection 12.1: Medical/Psychological/Dental/Hearing Loss/Blindness/Substance Use

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Services to Individuals with Deafness or Hearing Loss explanation is Change heading name from “Hearing Loss and Provision of Hearing Aids” to “Services to Individuals with Deafness or Hearing Loss” and update the overview to be in alignment with the part for “Services for Individuals with Blindness or Visual Impairments”.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revision on page 2 to update heading name and addition of overall services the agency provides within this part.

- **Services to Individuals with Deafness or Hearing Loss**
 - **Overview:** Participants with a non-progressive, congenital, or long-standing hearing loss or deafness may be determined eligible for VR services based on appropriate documentation of the hearing loss or deafness. The agency provides services for the diagnosis and treatment of hearing loss and deafness.

Provision of Hearing Aids Audiology Evaluation, ENT, Qualified Hearing Professional explanation is Addition and update for clarification and introduction for the provision of hearing aids. Note: ENT now only required if recommended vs other previous situations. To be better in alignment with updated 21 CFR 801.421NRS 637B.242

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revisions on pages 2-3 under Provision of Hearing Aids

- **Provision of Hearing Aids**
 - A recent audiology evaluation is not required if the individual does not require a new hearing aid(s) or other services directly related to alleviating the hearing loss, and if the participant and counselor determine this evaluation is unnecessary to meet the vocational and/or medical restoration needs of the individual.
 - For all other participants a current diagnostic statement within the past six (6) months from a qualified audiologist or other qualified hearing professional is required to provide hearing aids or other services directly related to alleviating the hearing loss. An ENT evaluation must be obtained if it is recommended by the audiologist or other qualified hearing professional.

Qualified Hearing Professional explanation is Information to indicate services the qualified hearing professional can provide and where to find acceptable licensure and requirements.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Addition on page 3 Qualified Hearing Professional

- **Qualified Hearing Professional**

Audiology and hearing aid evaluations and prescriptions, or an audiology consult must be provided by a certified audiologist. Hearing aid dispensing and other services can be provided by a qualified hearing professional. Acceptable licensure and certification types can be found on the State of Nevada Speech-Language Pathology, Audiology & Hearing Aid Dispensing Board.

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Hearing Aid Evaluation Recommendation Requirement explanation is Define when a hearing aid recommendation is required because VR may now assist with both prescriptive and OTC hearing aids.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revisions on page 3 under Hearing Aid Recommendation to update requirements.

- **Hearing Aid Recommendation**

A hearing aid recommendation is required for the purchase of prescribed hearing aids.

A hearing aid recommendation is not required for the purchase of over the counter (OTC) Hearing Aids.

Purchasing of Hearing Aid(s) – OTC – Prescriptive explanation Stipulate the different aspects and requirements for purchase between the OTC and prescriptive hearing aid(s).

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revision on pages 3-4 under the Purchasing of Hearing Aid(s)

- **Purchase of Hearing Aid(s)**

The agency can purchase over the counter (OTC) and prescriptive hearing aids.

The purchase of over the counter (OTC) hearing aids

- Requires three vendor quotes.
- VR does not guarantee that OTC hearing aids will fully meet the participant's functional and employment needs as they don't require a prescription or hearing evaluation.

- The purchase of prescriptive hearing aids requires the following to be completed by the audiologist within the last 6 months:

- Audiology Evaluation
- Hearing Aid Recommendation
- ENT evaluation, if recommended by the audiologist or other qualified hearing professional

- If the participant currently has hearing aid(s) and there is no change in hearing loss, the devices will be evaluated to determine if they are repairable. VR will not purchase a new hearing aid(s) either OTC or prescriptive for an individual within the last five years unless there is significant change in the hearing loss or functional requirements per an audiologist or other qualified hearing professional.

- The agency will not replace prescriptive or OTC hearing aids that are lost, damaged by accident, or neglect. It is recommended that the participant discuss manufacturer's warranty information with the provider/vendor of the hearing aids to understand the limits of the warranty. The participant may purchase additional coverage on their own.

Provision of Cochlear Implant Services – Cochlear Implant Services explanation is Inclusion and Stipulation for cochlear implant services.

Clarification or Change Summary:

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Addition on page 4 under the Provision of Cochlear Implant Services for include this service.

- **Provision of Cochlear Implant Services**

For employment needs, the agency will support the provision of cochlear implants, including implantation surgery, maintenance, repair, aural rehabilitation program (training), and necessary medical follow up appointments. Requests will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

To meet state and federal regulations and professional standards for the provision of cochlear implants, there must be a medical statement that, based on an examination, there is no medical contraindication to implantation or training; a prescription by an otologist or otolaryngologist; and a statement from an audiologist indicating that the participant cannot achieve functional hearing from a hearing aid or other means of amplification and supporting the use of the implant.

Services for Individuals with Blindness or Visual Impairments – Residential Training Programs explanation is Inclusion and Stipulation for residential training programs.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revision on page 5 under Services for Individuals with Blindness or Visual Impairments (begins on page 4) to include aspect for residential training programs.

- Participants found eligible for VR services based on legal blindness may be provided and audiology examination and evaluation of their hearing if it appears or it is reported there is also a hearing loss. For employment needs, the agency will fund disability related residential training programs. Request will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Section 25: Older Individuals Who Are Blind

Plan explanation is Change “Individualized Plan of Service (IPS)” to “Individualized Written Independent Living Plan (IWILP)” to be in alignment with agency case management system. And Change that the plan developed within 45 days from application to within 45 days from eligibility determination. Previously the plan was to be developed at the same time as eligibility, which generally is not feasible to complete appropriate assessments to assist with determining the needs for the plan.

Clarification or Change Summary:

Revision on page 2 to update the name of the plan and update timeframe for plan development for OIB cases.

- **Individualized Written Independent Living Plan (IWILP)**

For Individuals eligible for the OIB program, a written signed Individualized Written Independent Living Plan (IWILP) will be developed within forty-five (45) business days of eligibility determination. Services provided will be developed jointly by the designated staff person and the participant. Services provided must be included on the IPS and be pre-authorized.

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Ms. Childers noted the dedication and time it took from the staff for the process changes with Section 6 the Application and Intake Process including the clarification of language and the consistence of the Participant Services Policy Manual and the online Application matching in language. Using the feedback from the Consumer Satisfaction Survey the agency has made changes to the online application and has eliminated one step of the process due to the received feedback from clients being too long and cumbersome. We wanted the Policy to read exactly how we implement services. In addition to the revision of the Cochlear Implant and OTC Hearing Aid devices as a first for the agency. We used our Deaf and Hard of Hearing Counseling staff for their expertise in the implementation of the revisions.

Ms. O'Neill appreciated the work and effort going into the revisions.

Mr. Elez noted the commitment of the agency to continue to grow and improve the client's experience. Including the changes to the accessibility of documents making them easier to read and understand. Meeting current situations with our clients including the implementation of the OTC Hearing Aids, helping with removing unnecessary red tape for clients to receive services. Improving the online application process to one page for clients seeking services. Making internal changes with the use of DocuSign for clients to use to sign documents and the way clients and counselors communicate with each other. We are committed to the clients and improving the overall Consumer Satisfaction and the accessibility of the office locations.

Ms. O'Neill asked the council for any modifications, changes, corrections to Participant Services Policy Manual Changes.

Mr. Goff made a motion to approve the Policy Manual Changes. Rebecca Rogers seconded the motion. All In favor, none abstained, motion carried.

9. APPROVAL OF PROPOSED 2024 NSRC MEETING SCHEDULE

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor for the discussion of the prosed NSRC Meeting Dates for the 2024 Calendar Year.

Dates are as follows for the NSRC Full Council Meetings for 2024:

Tuesday, February 6, 2024, at 9:00 AM

Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at 9:00 AM

Tuesday, September 11, 2024, at 9:00 AM

Tuesday, November 12, 2024, at 9:00 AM

Ms. O'Neill asked the council for any modifications, changes, corrections to the Proposed 2024 NSRC Council Meeting schedule.

Sandra Sinicope made a motion to approve the 2024 NSRC Council Schedule. Mr. Olson seconded the motion. All In favor, none abstained, motion carried.

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10. MEMBERSHIP UPDATES

Mechelle Merrill, VR Deputy Administrator of Programs provided information on the council members. We have 16 positions on our council, 11 are currently filled with 2 members terming out at the end of the month. Vice-Chair Alexander Goff and David Fisher VR Representative term out at the end of the month. Currently, we are looking for a VR Representative to fill this position to represent the South as we like to rotate this seat. During the next NSRC Council Meeting the council will need to nominate a Vice-Chair to fill Mr. Goff's seat. There are 5 vacant chairs, 2 for Business Industry & Labor, 1 former VR client, 1 State Workforce Investment Development Board Representative and 1 Native American Indian, Section 121, VR Program Representative. Ms. Merrill will be reaching out to 2 individuals of the vacant spots to encourage them to apply for the council spots and asked for input from council members for suggestions.

Ms. O'Neill thanked Alex Goff for his time and service on the council and Mr. Fisher for his time as well.

Mr. Goff mentioned the interest of the council during the Pandemic and the changes made for it. Mr. Goff thanked and offered his appreciation to all he served with on the council.

11. OTHER REPORTS

Jack Mayes, Executive Director of the Nevada Disability Advocacy and Law Center (NDALC) will report on updates from the Client Assistance Program (CAP). Reported on two on-going issues from staff members in Reno office continues to receive calls about the Older Blind Program and the Application Process as to there to return the applications to from the Rural areas. Our agency is the only phone number listed on the applicant and the information to send to the VR agency gets separated when clients are filling out the application. This does tie back to the Survey Information from earlier with the Older Blind population. Second issue from Southern Nevada staff is Case Closure due to lack of contact. Individuals contact us due to cases being closed and we help get them reestablished. Would like to thank Vivian Turner with VR for all of her help in getting these individuals reestablished. We believe the issue may be with the Automated Phone system registering as an unknown number as the potentially problem for clients.

Mr. Elez mentioned VR would ensure to reach out to look into the issue present by Mr. Mayes with the addition that there is only 1 individual handling the intakes for the Older or Blind clients.

Dawn Lyons, Executive Director of the Nevada Statewide Independent Living Council (NSILC) reported on updates from their last meeting. NSILC is in the process of beginning their State Plan with Town Hall meeting in Elko, Pahrump, and Carson City. The workgroup is the next process for the NSILC plan with the first meeting on October 23rd. After the draft is complete, we will present them at Town Halls virtually and in person beginning in March 2024. We encourage any individuals to attend the NSILC meeting for input. Counselor members are attending multiple meetings and conferences until November 2023. SILC will be accepting applications for a few openings coming up and encouraging anyone to apply.

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12. DIVISION REPORT

Mr. Elez gave the floor to Ms. Childers and Ms. Merrill for the Division Report. Ms. Childers reported on the vacancy rate of the division as follows, VR is at 9.2% vacancy rate, District Managers in Southern and Northern Nevada have had this happen with recruitment efforts. Las Vegas has onboarded 6 new Rehab Counselors highly skilled and trained in the last few months. BSB is at 11% vacancies rate, actively recruiting for 2 vacant positions. No new NSRC quarterly static reports, we will have one in November. Current open cases statewide across all VR programs is 3,114. Average caseload size across programs is 71. Currently, no Fair Hearing to report on. VR Town Halls are coming up on November 6th and November 15th both will be presented in person and on Zoom. Town Halls meeting are for clients, partners, and the community to provide input to the agency and for them to reach out to us.

Ms. Merrill add the information gathered at the Town Halls will be used for our Strategic Planning in December for the next fiscal year. The VR Plan will be posted on the vrnevada.org website.

Mr. Elez mentioned that VR has had a few busy months. Rehabilitation Services Administration RSA has not provided a report as of their findings from their recent monitoring visit. We are hoping for results by being of 2024, for any correction plan we will need to work on from the RSA. We are working on the correction action plan from the findings of the Legislative Council Bureau (LCB) report. These audits in state government can last several months and are very meticulous looking through all aspects of the agency. Our PRE-ETS program is at its infancy and is a new program, we have to rebuild due to losing third party partnerships during the Pandemic. We would like to highlight the Town Halls which will be the first for the agency and to be encompassing information into the Strategic Plan in December as to the direction the agency should follow, from the clients, partners, and the staff. Mr. Elez mentioned and emphasizes that the agency is looking forward to continuing work with the Council to make the VR program the best in the Nation.

13. COMMENTS BY THE COUNCIL

Ms. O'Neill asked for any comments from the council or, future agenda items to be discussed.

Mr. Mayes complemented Mr. Elez and his staff on all of their hard work they have done and for the agency to be able to but the agency in an upward projection after the difficult times with staffing and Covid Pandemic restrictions. Mr. Mayes voiced his excited about the funding approved for the Benefits Planning website approved by the Legislature.

Ms. O'Neill voiced her complements with the Agency and the responds to the comments and concerns have been met and addressed, making the experiences better for both clients and staff members.

14. SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. O'Neill opened floor for a second public comment session.

Ms. Merrill shared that VR held its first Annual In-Service since, 2018 at the GSR in Reno. The In-Service was held as an opportunity are all VR programs and staff members form

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North and South to meet together as a training opportunity. Keynote speaker was Chief of Staff to Governor Lombardo Ben Kieckhefer. We had sessions on PRE-ETS, Employer perspectives of hiring employees with disabilities by Renown, Sephora and Ability Go. We had sessions with a speaker for LGBTQIA+ community from Truckee Community College. We had a presentation on physical disabilities, and mental health issues presented by Dr. Sarah Barr from Nevada Hopes. We had a session on best practices for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing presented by Jennifer Montoya with ASD. Dr. John McMahon from the Association for Education and Rehabilitation of the Blind and Visually Impaired spoke about their services. We had a session on Passion Fatigate by Dr. Esther Rodriguez Brown to help staff take care of themselves. Ethics training from Dr. Chaz Compton from San Diego State University. We heard from parent Cyndy Ortiz-Gustafson speak about the struggles of have a young adult with intellectual disabilities and her experiences with the program. Mindfulness and Self-Care session and an awards presentation for staff members. Deputy Director Troy Jordan and Director Christopher Sewell were in attendance for the presentations and spoke with staff. It was a wonderful opportunity for all staff to be together and learn from each and caught up on trainings missed during the Pandemic.

Mr. Elez mentioned the Agency has recognized the highest employers in the state who hire employees with disabilities. Awards were given to The State of Nevada presented to Jack Robb Director of Administration, through hiring from the 700 Hour Program and Sephora Distribution Center in Las Vegas.

Mr. Cohen public participant voiced concerns over quality control item of DocuSign as not being an available item for signature method. Second, I would like to work with staff on the Post Employment Policy and Case Extension Policy.

15. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. O'Neill asked the council for motion to Adjourn the meeting.

Ms. Sinicrope made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Rogers seconded the motion. All in favor, none abstained. Meeting adjourned at 10:43 a.m.

Minutes submitted by: Regina Higley.

Edited By:

Jenny Richter Livia

Jenny Richter Livia, N.S.R.C. Liaison

Approved By:

Raquel O'Neil

Raquel O'Neill, Chair