



**2015 UTAH STATE**  
**REHABILITATION COUNCIL REPORT**







2015 Utah State Rehabilitation  
COUNCIL REPORT

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS

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*Page*

- 6** The Mission of the State Rehabilitation Council
- 7** Rehabilitation Council Members
- 8** Message From the Council Chair
- 10** Message From the USOR Executive Director
- 11** Introduction
- 12** Purpose—Roles and Responsibilities
- 14** 2014–2015 Year in Review
- 19** Attachment 4.2(C)
- 23** Committees and Accomplishments
- 25** USOR SFY 2015 Funding
- 26** Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) 2015 Program Highlights
- 27** Success Stories: Shellie Anderson
- 28** Success Stories: Alex Neumeier
- 29** Success Stories: Nathan Van Dyke
- 30** FY 2015–16 Meeting Schedule

# MISSION

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**THE MISSION OF THE STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL**, in partnership with the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation and in collaboration with disability groups, is to ensure quality vocational rehabilitation services for eligible individuals as they make informed choices to achieve employment.

We accomplish this mission by reviewing programs, analyzing service delivery processes, and advising on policies and procedures.



# REHABILITATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

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## Executive Committee

- SHARON BRAND**, Business, Industry and Labor, Chair
- KENT McGREGOR**, Consumer, Vice Chair
- RON CAMPBELL**, Community Rehabilitation Provider, Past Chair
- KEN GOURDIN**, Consumer, Secretary
- RYLEE WILLIAMS**, VR Counselor, Member at Large

## Members

- KELLY BOEHMER**, Division of Services to the Deaf and Hard of Hearing
- JAN QUINN CARTER**, Community Rehabilitation Provider
- MELISSA FREIGANG**, Business, Industry and Labor
- JAMES HARVEY**, Business, Industry and Labor
- SUSAN LOVING**, Special Education
- KARIM MARDANLOU**, Business, Industry and Labor
- MARK MARROTT**, Business, Industry and Labor
- EVELYN OWEN**, Client Assistance Program
- MERINA POPE**, Consumer
- HELEN POST**, Utah Parent Center
- AMY POWELL**, Business, Industry and Labor
- DEJA POWELL**, Division of Service for the Blind and Visually Impaired
- LESTER RUESCH**, Utah Statewide Independent Living Council
- MELISSA SCHINDLER**, Ute Mountain Ute Section 121
- PAULA SEANEZ**, Navajo Section 121
- AMBERLEY SNYDER**, Consumer
- JAMES STERZER**, Business, Industry and Labor
- SANDY TERRY**, Department of Workforce Services
- TAMMY WOOD**, Consumer



# MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR

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December 2015

Dear Friends:



**Sharon Brand**  
*SRC Chair*

During my time serving on the State Rehabilitation Council, I have come to appreciate what this Council does and the mission that drives it. I am especially pleased with the working relationship the State Rehabilitation Council has with the state Vocational Rehabilitation section. During my tenure as Chair, I have had the opportunity to travel and meet with other State Rehabilitation Councils, and have participated in two national Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) meetings. Through these discussions and interactions with a number of SRC chairs and VR staff members from other states, I have been able to see how efficiently both USOR and SRC collaborate here in Utah. We have set an example throughout the country of excellence that other states are trying to emulate. We can be proud of the work that these entities are involved in, and their goal of finding meaningful employment for individuals with disabilities.

The State Rehabilitation Council accomplishes our mission by reviewing programs, analyzing service delivery processes, and advising on policies and procedures to ensure quality vocational rehabilitation programs in Utah and provide positive results for individuals with disabilities as they make informed choices to achieve their employment goals. Employment not only gives individuals with disabilities independence and dignity; it also provides **significant returns for Utah's economy.**

The annual 2015 kick-off meeting featured Lisa Stern as our keynote speaker. Lisa has over 25 years of experience in career and workforce development and disability initiatives. She has extensive grassroots experience developing, implementing, and evaluating employment programs for injured service members and veterans entering the civilian workforce, as well as work with youth with disabilities transitioning from



school to work and adults with disabilities in the public workforce system. Lisa's presentation provided an excellent frame for the State Rehabilitation Council 2015 theme: **"It Just Takes One...One Client...One Employer... One Success."**

Using this message as our compass, the Council met ten times throughout the year to keep apprised of VR's efforts toward improving services and exploring innovative programs to better assist clients, and provided valuable reports from VR staff and agencies serving clients with disabilities. These reports provided Council members with input and data to better understand the service delivery system. Each month, the Executive Director/ Interim Executive Director and staff provided updates regarding issues at the state and national levels that could have an impact on VR. Legislative session summaries, national meetings, and conferences attended by USOR staff were highlighted throughout the year. The relationship between the SRC and the USOR administration is truly a partnership that, in collaboration with disability groups, ensures quality vocational rehabilitation services. The Council relies on the information provided by VR, and in turn VR relies on the Council to review programs, analyze service delivery processes and advise on policies and procedures. This uniquely positive relationship has received national recognition, including feedback from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

While we had challenges in 2015 with agency fiscal issues and structural imbalance, interim Executive Directors, a nationwide search for a new Executive Director, implementation of Order of Selection, and appointment of new executive leadership, it has been my privilege and pleasure to serve as the SRC Chair for the

past year. Fellow Council members not only engaged in providing thoughtful feedback, but also asked and addressed tough questions throughout the year. I am encouraged by the administrative changes within the USOR that occurred with the advent of the new Executive Director, Darin Brush. Darin has organized a new Executive Leadership Team which includes USOR Deputy Director Stacey Cummings, and Aaron Thompson as Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). A new USOR Finance Director, Jennifer Roth, and USOR Compliance Officer, Shane Young, will support efficient and comprehensive services and provide organizational structure to continue to provide effective customer service for VR clients in Utah.

While challenges will continue to warrant our time and attention as we move forward, I have no doubt that the SRC and the USOR will continue to stay close to our values and collectively work together to reach the best outcome for clients with disabilities in Utah. We can learn from each other, absorb new perspectives, and collectively make better decisions as we forge ahead under the leadership of our new Council Chair, **Kent McGregor**. It is with great pride that I applaud Council members and USOR employees for devoting their time and energy to finding better solutions to achieve positive employment results for Utah clients with disabilities—**remembering always that it just takes one...one client, one employer...one success.**

Sincerely,

*Sharon Brand*  
Council Chair 2015

# MESSAGE FROM THE USOR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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**Darin Brush**  
*USOR Executive Director*

Immediately upon my arrival at the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) in July, I was introduced to the State Rehabilitation Council. Since then, I have quickly come to learn of its members' commitment to the integrity of our Vocational Rehabilitation program and to the clients we serve. In many ways, it has been a difficult year at the USOR; but with the guidance and help of the Council, combined with a new management team and an agency improvement plan, we are emerging as a stronger, better agency that serves Utahns with disabilities.

As a result of enrolling more eligible clients with disabilities for Vocational Rehabilitation services than the budget could sustain in prior years, the USOR implemented an Order of Selection in February. This federally sanctioned waiting list, by which individuals with the most significant disabilities are served first, remains in effect. However, with the help of the Council, the USOR developed and tested a case service expenditure rate model that led the agency to open one of the three client categories of the Order of Selection and begin serving 1,500 people from the waiting list in November. The result is a more manageable and sustainable system that properly balances program resources with demand. The Council will continue to closely monitor the Order of Selection and its waiting lists to ensure clients' wait times are as short as possible.

Naturally, there is more work to be done as we focus on implementation of the federal Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), a new emphasis on pre-employment transition services to youth, further implementation of the new case management system (AWARE), and continuous improvement initiatives for the Vocational Rehabilitation program. To succeed, we will depend on the Council for advice, leadership, and support.

I am optimistic for the future, and know that together we will do much good for the Utahns with disabilities we serve. Congratulations on an effective year and on this annual report. And thank you for your willingness to serve the people of Utah with disabilities.

## THE UTAH STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

# INTRODUCTION

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The Utah State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a body of citizens appointed by the Utah State Board of Education, under the authority of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended. The Council is composed of consumers, professionals, employers, labor representatives, family and parent advocates, and service providers promoting public awareness and support of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program and advocating for individuals with disabilities. The majority of Council membership consists of individuals with disabilities, many of whom have been involved as participants in the vocational rehabilitation process. Members of the SRC have been chosen for their interest, specialized knowledge, and expertise serving the disabled community. The term of office for selected SRC members is three years.

The Council provides direct communication from consumers, rehabilitation professionals, business, industry, labor, service providers, and other individuals interested in improving the services provided by the state agency. Collectively, this group reviews, analyzes, and advises the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) regarding the Vocational Rehabilitation program in the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS).

Over the years, the SRC has established strong community relationships among people with disabilities, local businesses, private and public agencies, service providers, community organizations, and advocacy groups to promote the objectives of the organization. The Council continues to be an active partner with the Vocational Rehabilitation program to ensure the provision of quality services to eligible consumers of the VR agency. Council members provide critical support to the USOR and to individuals with disabilities served by the agency by communicating with legislators on a state and national level. They promote legislation and funding requests that continue the specialized services provided by the agency.

Council members participate in various functions of the VR agency. These include attending USOR Statewide Administrators Meetings (SAM), the annual USOR agency meeting, Golden Key employment recognition awards ceremonies, town meetings, focus groups, and the Utah Rehabilitation Association annual conference. The SRC has contributed to and continues to be involved in the development and implementation of the USOR's Strategic Plan and the State Plan. The Council has identified areas of strength within the USOR, acknowledged the best practices of the agency, and recommended improvements to the VR program. Members of the State Rehabilitation Council and staff of the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation agree that through appropriate communication and partnerships, vocational rehabilitation services for people with disabilities in Utah will continue to improve.

## STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

# PURPOSE—ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

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The responsibilities of the SRC are outlined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 1998, and include the following:

**Review, analyze, and advise the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR)** regarding the performance of its responsibilities, particularly those related to eligibility (including order of selection); the extent, scope, and effectiveness of services provided; and the functions of the state rehabilitation agency that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes.

**In partnership with the USOR** develop, agree to, and evaluate the effectiveness of the Vocational Rehabilitation program.

**Advise the USOR** regarding activities authorized to be carried out, and assist in the preparation of the State Plan, amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations.

**Conduct a review and an analysis** of the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services and consumer satisfaction.

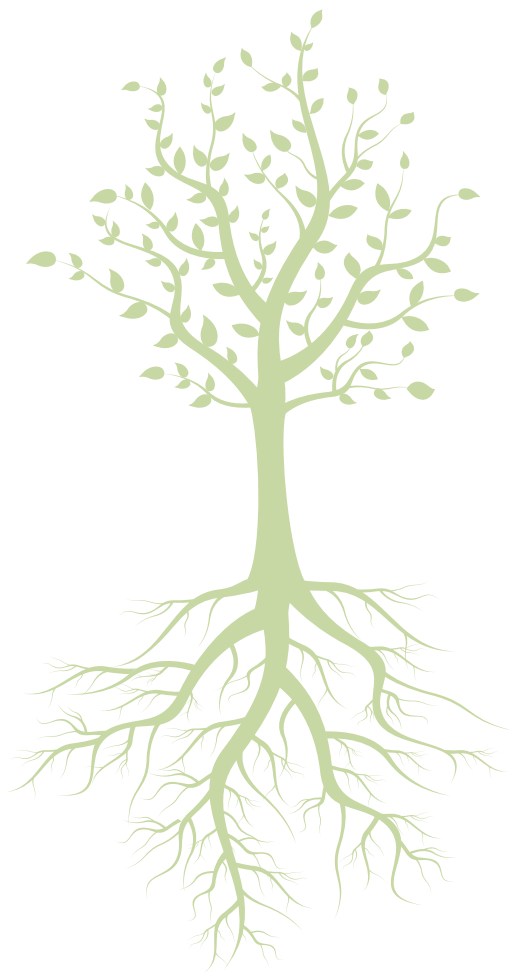
**Prepare and submit an annual report** to the Utah State Board of Education and the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) on the status of vocational rehabilitation in the state, and make the report available to the public.

**Coordinate the work of the Council** with the activities of other disability-related Councils within the State.

**Establish working relationships** between the Vocational Rehabilitation program, the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Special Education Advisory Panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the State Developmental Disabilities Council, and the State Workforce Services Council.

**Perform other functions** that the SRC determines are appropriate and comparable to other functions performed by the Council.

The SRC, in partnership with the USOR Vocational Rehabilitation program, is committed to helping the people of Utah who qualify for services to obtain better jobs—with a living wage, health care benefits, and better career opportunities—and to become as independent as possible. The Council believes that individuals with disabilities should be full and active partners in the VR process. Members of the SRC seek to work cooperatively with the state VR agency to ensure that the activities of the VR program are carried out in a manner that is respectful of each individual’s dignity and recognizes each individual’s right to make informed choices.



## STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (SRC)

# 2014–15 YEAR IN REVIEW

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**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATES:** The Council was provided with regular reports on state and national issues affecting the USOR. Agency change led to the transition of Executive Director leadership (including two Interim Executive Directors). Russ Thelin left his position, and Scott Jones and Stacey Cummings functioned as Interim Executive Directors while a nationwide search was conducted for a new Executive Director of the USOR. Darin Brush, former Executive Director of the Community Development Corporation of Utah and former Deputy Director of Workforce Development for the Department of Workforce Services (DWS), was selected for the Executive Director position in June 2015.

**PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING SERVICES (PETS):** A presentation was provided to the Council by then-Client Service Director Aaron Thompson about the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) and requirements for pre-employment transition services (PETS) for transition-aged youth with disabilities. He reported that 50% of supported employment funds would be required under WIOA for youth with the most significant disabilities (MSD) to increase opportunities for employment.

**AGENCY FISCAL ISSUES AND STRUCTURAL IMBALANCE:** The Council was provided with monthly reports on the USOR's budget shortfall and the requested \$6.3 million in additional allocations from the Utah State Legislature. The structural imbalance had been developing over several years for a number of reasons, and the USOR Executive Team provided a PowerPoint on the fiscal situation, as well as plans for implementation of an Order of Selection by the end of February 2015. Then-Fiscal Analyst and Program Evaluator Jennifer Roth provided a "USOR Possible Budget Scenarios" document to Council members listing potential impacts on administrative costs and client services expenditures. Others who were involved in Council discussions on these issues included State Superintendent Brad Smith, State Board of Education Member Leslie Castle, and Legislative Fiscal Analyst Steve Jardine. The \$6.3 million request was later approved by the legislature.

**ORDER OF SELECTION (OOS) IMPLEMENTATION:** The USOR implemented an Order of Selection (OOS) because of a structural imbalance resulting in insufficient staff and/or financial resources available to serve all eligible individuals with disabilities. The Council was provided with information on the

priority categories approved by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) in late February 2015 (i.e., Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities, Individuals with Significant Disabilities, and Individuals with Disabilities, in that order). There was also discussion of the resulting waiting lists of eligible clients based on their categorization. Following the SRC Council and public comment, the OOS implementation was provided to the Utah State Board of Education for approval. The OOS has been in place since March 2015, and the Category 1 (Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities) waiting list was opened in November.

**CLIENT BASE SIZE REDUCTION AND CONTROL PROJECT:** The Council was provided with a report on another structural imbalance, the ratio of clients to staff, and the Client Base Size Reduction and Control Project funded through a grant with the University of Massachusetts—Boston. The Project Work Plan and the Four-Phase Activities following the Governor’s Office of Management and Budget SUCCESS model were discussed with Council members, including target goals, the analysis period, and proposed elements for implementation statewide.

**THE AWARE SYSTEM:** The agency’s data management system (IRIS) was replaced with the state-of-the-art AWARE system, currently used in over 30 state/federal rehabilitation agencies nationwide. The Council was provided with regular updates on the development and rollout of the AWARE system.

**USOR EXECUTIVE TEAM:** Administrative changes within the USOR occurred with the advent of a new Executive Director, Darin Brush. Darin organized a new Executive Leadership Team with promotions of Stacey Cummings to USOR Deputy Director and Aaron Thompson to Director of the Division of Rehabilitation Services (DRS). Jennifer Roth was hired as the USOR Finance Director, and Shane Young was named USOR Compliance Officer. The Council was introduced to the new leadership team and their responsibilities.

**NATIONAL COALITION OF STATE REHABILITATION COUNCILS (NCSRC) CONFERENCE:** USOR Staff Liaison Gordon Swensen represented the SRC and new Chairman Kent McGregor at the annual NCSRC conference in Seattle, Washington (November 2015). Kent had broken an ankle and was not able to participate in this informative two-day training on SRC roles and responsibilities. Gordon provided a report to the entire Council upon his return.

**PARTNERSHIP PLUS AND TICKET TO WORK (TTW):** Ticket to Work Specialist Noreen Roeca and Director of Strategic Alliances and Initiatives Gordon Swensen presented to the Council on the Social Security Ticket to Work program, and specifically the Partnership Plus Model. Employment Networks (ENs) are organizations in Utah that have been approved by the Social Security



Administration to receive cost reimbursement for successful client/beneficiary closures. A successful two-day event sponsored by contractor Maximus was held to improve partnerships between outside ENs and the USOR.

**SELF-EMPLOYMENT POLICY:** Field Service Directors Eric Roux and Emily Stirling provided the Council with an orientation to the revised USOR self-employment policy. The shorter, more concise policy was the product of the 2014 USOR Horizon's task force, in partnership with the University of Montana. An updated chapter was later added to the Client Service Manual (following Council approval), including guidance for counselors in the form of a two-tier model based on the self-employment being developed.

**EMPLOYMENT FIRST:** Transition and Supported Employment Coordinator Rachel Anderson presented to the Council on the Employment First legislation and the one-year technical assistance grant Utah received to provide employment supports to persons with disabilities. School transition, service provider transformation, and community rehabilitation group homes have now been a focus of the Employment First model, and Council members were provided with information on the school-to-work process for Utah.

**POLICY ADVICE:** The Council reviewed a number of draft policies and provided advice on implementation as covered in Attachment 4.2(c).

**UTAH STATE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (USILC):** In May 2015, the Utah State Independent Living Council (USILC) joined the SRC for a combined training. A presentation was made by the USILC to the SRC on services provided statewide, and on the movement of Independent Living from the RSA to the Department of Health and Human Services. The makeup of the USILC and its goals and activities were discussed with the SRC, which voiced support for this important collaboration.

**USOR AND UTAH JUSTICE REINVESTMENT PLAN:** The Council was provided with a presentation by USOR Staff Liaison Gordon Swensen on the Governor's Justice Reinvestment Plan for Utah and efforts currently underway to address offender reentry and recidivism issues affecting the state's correctional system. An overview of the Utah Defendant Offender Workforce Development (UDOWD) task force and the Transition Model Initiative (TMI) in Utah was discussed in terms of partnerships and processes to successfully transition ex-offenders back into the community and employment, including the high percentage of those with disabilities.

**UTAH CENTER FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (UCAT):** New UCAT Director Mike Wollenzien made a presentation to the Council on the history of the UCAT program, as well as the multi-agency collaboration and services provided by the facility. He introduced the various UCAT staff members and

discussed the CReATE program, which involves wheelchair restoration and distribution in partnership with Utah State University.

**LEGISLATIVE AUDIT AND SRC INPUT:** Members of the SRC leadership group were interviewed by representatives for the Legislative Auditor's office on the structural imbalance, Order of Selection, and proposed USOR placement into another parent agency. Council members Sharon Brand, Ron Campbell, Kent McGregor, and Ken Gourdin were given the opportunity to speak for the USOR and the Council's concerns that will be raised during the upcoming legislative session.

**TRANSITION REPORT AND JOB READINESS WORKSHOP PILOT:** Transition and Supported Employment Coordinator Rachel Anderson presented to the Council on the Job Readiness Workshop pilot program that ended in June 2015. Information from the study and report is included on the USOR's transition website, and the Council was later provided with copies of the Job Readiness Workshop Manuals for participants, VR counselors, and special education teachers involved in this new and innovative program.

**ASPIRE UPDATE:** The Council received an update on the ASPIRE program from director Carol Ruddell, including ongoing partnerships with North Dakota, South Dakota, Colorado, Montana, and Arizona. Utah was reported to be close to meeting its expected student program enrollment, and Carol discussed the expected outcomes of both increased education and increased household income for families dependent on public assistance. Since the September 2015 update, the ASPIRE program has successfully met the enrollment objectives of the grant.

**FUNCTIONAL LIMITATIONS AND CLASSIFICATION CATEGORIES:** As per a request by the Council, USOR Training Coordinators Jennifer Smart and Janet Autrey presented to the Council on the priority categories under the Order of Selection (OOS) process. Each classification was defined and a comprehensive discussion of the seven (7) functional limitations categories included. Council members were able to express concerns regarding counselor eligibility determinations, have questions answered, and understand more clearly the waiting list process under the Order of Selection.

**SRC ANNUAL MEETING:** The theme for the September 2015 annual meeting of the SRC was "Eyes on the Prize: Persevering with Continued Quality Rehabilitation Services through Challenging Times." The meeting focused on the orientation of new members and the renewed commitment of the SRC. SRC and USOR staff members provided training to assist Council members with their roles, duties, and active commitment to fulfilling the mission of the SRC.

**UNIFIED STATE PLAN:** DRS Division Director Aaron Thompson presented to the Council in November 2015 on the Unified State Plan under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA), currently being developed by the core programs (DWS, Adult Education, and VR) to provide strategies to increase educational, training, and employment opportunities for individuals with employment barriers. Aaron discussed specific program requirements, including an analysis of performance standards and common measures under the core partner programs to incorporate into strategic goals required by the WIOA. Aaron also provided a comprehensive review of the four-year goals under the USOR State Plan (to be incorporated into the Unified State Plan), including goals and activities to increase employment opportunities and independence for persons with disabilities. The Council (SRC) approved the proposed USOR State Plan goals as presented. The Unified State Plan will be completed in early 2016.

# ATTACHMENT 4.2(C)

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## **ATTACHMENT 4.2(c):** *Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council, Response of the Designated State Unit, and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations.*

In addition to the review, analysis, and recommendations covered above, the SRC made recommendations covered in the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) portion of the Unified State Plan, and as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1983, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014. The following is a summary of the SRC's recommendations made from November 2014–October, 2015 and the USOR's response and actions taken with regard to those recommendations.

### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 1:**

In November 2014, the SRC had a presentation from then-Executive Director Russ Thelin about the USOR's budget concerns and the twelve cost-cutting decisions made to control the budget, resources, and client services. This included a hiring freeze for DRS, DSBVI, and Administrative Services positions; a realignment of 20 staff members; the elimination of positions associated with the realignment; a training and travel freeze; and an approved plan from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) to implement an Order of Selection (OOS). The Council recommended a monthly report from the Executive Director on budget and client service concerns.

### **USOR RESPONSE 1:**

The USOR has provided monthly Executive Director reports to the SRC as recommended, and will continue to update the Council on continued program improvements.

### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 2:**

Executive Director Russ Thelin presented to the Council on the necessity of implementing an Order of Selection (OOS) by early February 2015. As required by federal regulations, the SRC was given a full description of the OOS and service categories affected. Concerns of SRC members about overall client service provision were discussed with the Executive Director. Recommendations were made by the Council to make it a priority of the USOR to communicate to partners, vendors, and disability groups about the OOS and the affected number of

clients. The Council also recommended a summary of Council input following review of the USOR OOS implementation plan.

**USOR RESPONSE 2:**

The USOR provided the requested information on the Order of Selection, and Council member input was included in the OOS documentation. Council members also had an opportunity in February 2015 to address OOS concerns with representatives from the Legislative Auditor's office.

**SRC RECOMMENDATION 3:**

In January 2015, Executive Director Russ Thelin gave a presentation entitled "How Did We Really Get Here?" on continued budget concerns, including a supplemental request for additional monies from the legislature to fund needed client services, and the need for implementation of the Order of Selection (OOS). The presentation also included a report by Jennifer Roth, then-Fiscal Analyst and Program Evaluator, on "Possible Budget Scenarios." Then-Client Services Director Aaron Thompson led a discussion on the OOS, including the USOR's original proposal for categorization of services to RSA, and plan revisions needed for the OOS. The Council recommended continued updates from senior administrative staff on the budget and OOS.

**USOR RESPONSE 3:**

The USOR continues to provide monthly and/or periodic reports on recommendations by the Council, and is open to feedback and transparency in the process.

**SRC RECOMMENDATION 4:**

In February 2015, the SRC requested that a question be inserted in the USOR Customer Satisfaction Survey regarding the impact of the OOS on client services. This followed the Executive Director's report on the agency's structural imbalance and a one-time supplemental funding request of \$6.3 million from the legislature.

**USOR RESPONSE 4:**

The USOR Quality Assurance position has been vacant, and was refilled by an auditor position as part of the realignment process. The USOR is continuing to get feedback from consumers on the waiting list through "checkpoints."

**SRC RECOMMENDATION 5:**

In the March 2015 meeting, SRC vice Chair Kent McGregor recommended that the Legislative Analyst provide the Social Services Appropriations Subcommittee report and recommendations on the USOR structural imbalance in braille.

**USOR RESPONSE 5:**

The braille copy was prepared by the Legislative Analyst's office and distributed

to members of the Council with visual impairments.

#### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 6:**

A recommendation was made by a Council member to replicate the 2010 return on investment study conducted for the USOR by the University of Utah. At that time there was a \$5.74 dollar return on investment for every dollar spent by VR.

#### **USOR RESPONSE 6:**

The USOR decided not to replicate the study; although the agency provided an explanation of preliminary numbers and a consideration of the economic recession, the study wouldn't be cost-effective because of the small number of changes to the data. The USOR, however, would consider a possible return on investment study in the future.

#### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 7:**

The Council requested copies of the new self-employment policy following a presentation by USOR staff members in order to give input and provide recommendations to the agency. A date was set for that feedback from Council members before implementation of the policy.

#### **USOR RESPONSE 7:**

The USOR considered all feedback and/or suggested changes/improvements by the Council, the Self-Employment Policy was implemented by the USOR, and staff members statewide were provided appropriate training on the policy.

#### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 8:**

At the May 2015 SRC meeting, the Council recommended the opportunity to review new WIOA regulations, and specifically the role of the SRC.

#### **USOR RESPONSE 8:**

Proposed rules notices regarding the role of the SRC under WIOA regulations were provided to the Council as requested.

#### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 9:**

The SRC recommended that Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT) reports be provided to the Council more frequently, as a mandated subcommittee that meets quarterly.

#### **USOR RESPONSE 9:**

The USOR will provide quarterly UCAT meeting minutes to Council members and resolve any concerns and/or questions from the SRC regarding the services of UCAT.

#### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 10:**

At the August 2015 meeting, the SRC asked to review the new Executive Team's management structure to ensure that it was of appropriate size and not "overhead-heavy."

#### **USOR RESPONSE 10:**

The organizational structure draft was presented at the following meeting by new Executive Director Darin Brush, and questions were answered by the USOR to the Council's satisfaction.

#### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 11:**

A recommendation was made by the Council to receive monthly reports from the USOR management team detailing clients served, clients on the waiting list, status of funding, and a quarterly financial report.

#### **USOR RESPONSE 11:**

The requested monthly reports have been provided by the USOR, and concerns, input, and/or recommendations from the SRC are under consideration by the USOR Executive Team.

#### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 12:**

The Council discussed the upcoming Consortium of Administrators in Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) conference in Salt Lake City and requested SRC and/or USOR staff involvement as presenters.

#### **USOR RESPONSE 12:**

The USOR had two staff members (a VR Counselor and a former Program Evaluation Specialist) and the Director of Strategic Alliances and Initiatives provide breakout sessions on Native American youth gangs and program evaluation to conference participants. In addition, an SRC Council member (education representative) presented on transition issues.



# COMMITTEES & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

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Committees included the Nominating Committee and the Interviewing Committee, as well as the UCAT Standing Committee. A summary report for each committee follows.

## **NOMINATING AND INTERVIEWING COMMITTEES:**

Resignations and the expiration of terms for a few members created openings on the Council. A few members chose to be nominated to serve a second term. There were few vacancies that needed to be filled with required members as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act. These committees were formed to solicit nominations, review the qualifications of nominees, conduct interviews, and present the names of the individuals for consideration. Names were submitted to the State Board of Education in accordance with specified timelines. Highly qualified and committed individuals were appointed to the Council. They bring commitment and unique expertise to the SRC.

## **UCAT COMMITTEE:**

The UCAT Advisory Committee was established, including Ken Gourdin of the SRC. Additional members included Kevin John (and later Kent Remund) of the Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT); Crystal Thomas, Jan Bigelow, and Jessica Bowman of the Utah State Office of Education (USOE); Alma Burgess of the Utah Assistive Technology Program; and Helen Post, Executive Director of the Utah Parent Center. Marv Fifield served as an ex-officio member. The committee members met quarterly. Recommendations were made and implemented regarding UCAT services, budget, reports, and outreach.

## **CSAVR MEETINGS:**

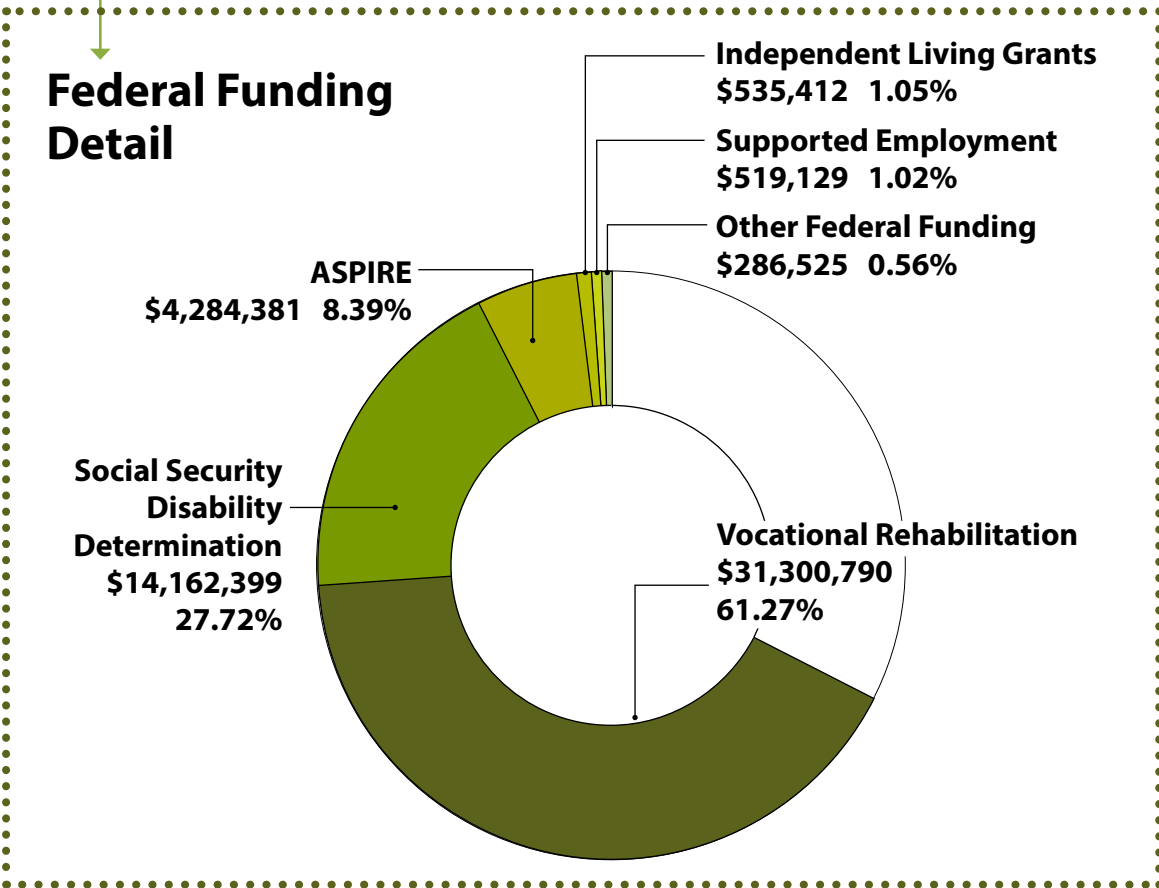
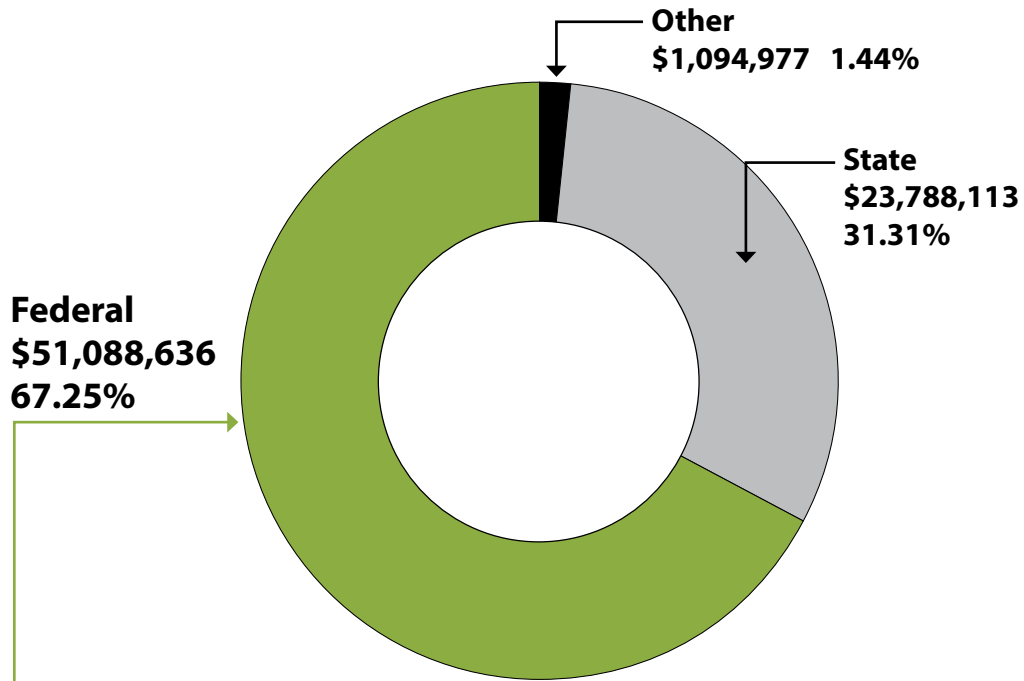
Sharon Brand, SRC Chair, attended the CSAVR meetings with Aaron Thompson, DRS Director, and Scott Jones, then-USOR Interim Executive Director. They reported updates on national VR and disability issues. These included VR services for transition students, the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) updates, and WIOA reauthorization. Sharon joined Aaron and Scott in visits with Utah's congressional delegation. At the November NCSRC meeting, USOR Staff Liaison Gordon Swensen attended (representing SRC Chair Kent McGregor due to a medical restriction).

### **SRC STRATEGIC PLANNING:**

The Executive Committee considered needs and strategies to be implemented during the coming year. This process was determined to be necessary to help the SRC identify priorities and focus its efforts on accomplishing its mission and fulfilling responsibilities outlined in the federal regulations and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended in 1998. The outcomes covered in this report are a direct result of SRC strategic planning and an effective Executive Committee.



# USOR SFY2015 FUNDING



## UTAH STATE OFFICE OF REHABILITATION (USOR)

# Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) FY2015 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

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The following information reflects the individual and program successes of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program during the past year.

- ▶ **3,502** individuals with disabilities were successfully employed.
- ▶ **83%** of those employed were significantly disabled.
- ▶ **687** public assistance recipients successfully gained employment.
- ▶ **769** Social Security Disability recipients successfully gained employment.
- ▶ **61** individuals successfully gained employment through Supported Employment Services.
- ▶ **456%** was the increase in weekly earnings of the 3,502 individuals successfully employed.
- ▶ **26%** of individuals served were transition-age youth with disabilities.
- ▶ **84** trainings for 2,154 individuals were provided by the Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT).
- ▶ **777** new clients were served, and 710 benefits summaries presented, by the Work Incentive and Planning Services (UWIPS) unit.

## SUCCESS STORIES

# SHELLIE ANDERSON

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Shellie Anderson was found eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) with a diagnosis of major depressive disorder. She also had a history of poly-substance addiction disorder, and had been in several treatment centers while dealing with anxiety and depression for most of her life. She came to VR hoping to receive help with stabilizing her disabilities, and she wanted assistance with education and training to obtain a successful job helping others overcome their personal challenges.

Shellie actively participated in counseling, was able to stabilize her disabilities, and became actively engaged in education/training. She participated in assessments at Uintah Basin Applied Technology College, completed the Licensed Substance Abuse Counseling (LSAC) program at Utah Valley University, and obtained a bachelor's degree in family, consumer and human development at Utah State University. She is now successfully working as an LSAC at Red Pine Treatment Center and is continuing her education on her own, seeking a master's degree in marriage and family therapy.

VR assisted Shellie with counseling and guidance; mental health therapy; tuition, books and fees at UVU and USU; and licensing and testing fees for her professional license. She is working in the field, overcoming past personal struggles and using what she learned to help others to overcome their addictions and find success in life. She is thankful for all the support she received from VR, and reported that VR was her biggest "cheerleader." She felt she could always stop by and talk with the executive secretary or her counselor for support and positive reinforcement. She loves what she does, and is looking forward to working as a Marriage and Family Therapist (MFT) after she completes her master's program.

## SUCCESS STORIES

# ALEX NEUMEIER

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Alex began services with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in October 2013 while living on the Wasatch Front. He was found to be eligible for services due to depression and anxiety. Shortly after, he moved to Southern Utah to help take care of his mother and siblings due to his father unexpectedly passing away. Alex met with his counselor, and they began working on an Individualized Plan for Employment. Alex was very motivated, and had a sense of urgency and a desire to begin work as soon as possible. His family was quickly falling behind on bills, as they had little to no income after his father passed. Alex did not know what he was going to do, and was under a lot of stress. His counselor assured him that Vocational Rehabilitation could provide the necessary supports which would lead to successful employment.

The services VR provided to Alex included vocational rehabilitation counseling and guidance to help him establish a viable job goal. Emotional support was also provided to help Alex deal with the death of his father and with taking on the responsibility of caring for his mother and siblings. VR identified the need for mental health therapy, which provided Alex with support for his ongoing depression and anxiety. VR partnered with a Choose-To-Work Specialist, who met with Alex right away to help him prepare and look for a job.

Through several direct and coordinated services, VR was able to help Alex become stable, allowing him to find successful employment at Walmart. Alex continues to gain self-confidence in his job, and is doing very well. He is now able to support his family, and is grateful for the assistance and support given to him by the VR program.

## SUCCESS STORIES

# NATHAN VAN DYKE

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Nathan applied for services with Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) in July of 2011. He was a recovering alcoholic with six months of sobriety. He had lost much in his life—relationships, jobs, and his sense of self-worth— through alcoholic-dependent behaviors. His first desire was finding a job so he could lead a normal life. He continued to work on maintaining sobriety and became active in his 12-step group meetings. He worked closely with his VR counselor, and followed through with the expectations of the VR program. Once he believed he could maintain sobriety over an extended period of time, he wanted to help others. He understood the disability caused by alcohol dependence and knew there was a way out. He believed that his experience could help others with the downward spiral of alcohol abuse and/or dependency in their lives.

Nathan had little college education before becoming a VR client, and wanted to complete the University of Utah's Substance Use Disorder Certification Program. He was excited to have his application accepted, and his diligence and hard work paid off. VR provided the financial support he needed to complete the program, which is not eligible for Pell Grant funding. While attending school, Nathan made contacts through his 12-step program and community involvement. Through this networking, he successfully secured a job in his chosen field. Nathan continues to be active in promoting a sober lifestyle for others, and is using his education to make a living doing something he loves.



# FY 2015–16 MEETING SCHEDULE

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Full Council Meetings are held in the  
Utah State Office of Education  
Board Room  
250 East 500 South  
Salt Lake City, UT 84111



from 9:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.  
on the last Wednesday of each month.

October 27, 2015

November 25, 2015

No meeting in December

January 27, 2016

February 24, 2016

March 30, 2016

April 27, 2016

May 25, 2016

June 29, 2016

No meeting in July

August 31, 2016

September 27–28, 2016

*Annual and final 2016 meeting*

Individual committees may meet following  
the full Council meeting.

For further information:

Phone (801) 538-7530 or 1-800-473-7530.

<http://www.usor.utah.gov/councils/src>

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