



**WORKFORCE
SERVICES**
REHABILITATION

2022 Utah State **Rehabilitation Council Report**

JANUARY 2023



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UTAH STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
1595 WEST 500 SOUTH • SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84104
JANUARY 2022



MISSION

The mission of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), 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

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

- Brian Lahti, Consumer, Chair
- Selena Harris, Consumer, Vice Chair
- Rob Ferris, Business, Industry and Labor, Secretary
- Eliza Detherage, Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP), Past Chair
- Lavinia Gripentrog, Special Education Rep., Member-at-Large

MEMBERS:

- Alisha Byron, Business, Industry and Labor
- Mitch Moyers, DSDHH Representative
- Glenn Fitzpatrick, Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP)
- Bianca Gonzalez, Client Assistance Program
- Jennie Dopp, Utah Parent Center
- Velma Spencer, Title 121, Navajo Nation
- Jenni Thompson, BVI Representative
- Austin Oseguera, UCAT Representative
- Heather Mousley, Department of Workforce Services
- Cheri Lachenmeier, VR Counselor Representative
- Bryn Peterson, DSPD
- Julie Beckstead, USILC Representative



MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR



I CHERISH THE OPPORTUNITY to serve as chair of the State Rehabilitation Council this year. From being a client of Utah's vocational rehabilitation (VR) program to a member of the SRC, I was given a chance to experience both sides of the process. From this involvement, I have high regard for the work of the SCR, VR, and the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation.

Thank you to each member of the SRC for your thoughtful collaboration, persistence, and desire to continually improve the important services provided by USOR. Without your participation and guidance, I could not have fulfilled my role as SRC chair during the uncertain times of the past year. A sincere thank you also to Rehabilitation Services Director Aaron Thompson, SRC liaisons Gordon Swensen and Sylvia Gines, and USOR Division Director Sarah Brenna. Your willingness to foster an open and collaborative relationship with the SRC aids

both the SRC and USOR in fulfilling their responsibilities and missions.

I am confident that this will continue to the benefit of the citizens of Utah.

Respectfully,

Brian E. Lahti

Chair, State Rehabilitation Council 2021-2022



MESSAGE FROM THE USOR DIRECTOR



I TAKE GREAT PLEASURE in presenting to you the State Rehabilitation Council 2022 Annual Report. The continued services and dedicated hard work of our Utah State Office of Rehabilitation professional employees, our community rehabilitation providers, employers, and other SRC members to the clients we jointly serve is evident in the pages of this report.

As we start a new century of service to individuals with disabilities in Utah, (our 101st year now completed), we remember some of the notable accomplishments for our USOR programs and services:

- Following the workforce challenges presented by the pandemic, our VR counselors helped 2,042 clients achieve their individual goals and obtain competitive, integrated employment. This is a 12% increase from the previous year.
- The Business Relations and Choose to Work teams did a remarkable job in making connections and providing services to employers to support the ultimate goals of helping VR clients obtain employment. Their efforts resulted in a 60% increase in employer services.
- The UWIPS team helped to successfully launch the ABLE Utah tax-free savings account program for disability-related expenses. Over the last year the number of ABLE accounts in Utah increased by 158% with \$1.45 million in assets under management.
- We successfully removed all clients from the last category of the Order of Selection wait list. For six years USOR has maintained open services for all clients with the classification of “Individuals with the Most Significant Disabilities” and “Individuals with Significant Disabilities,” while clients classified as “Individuals with Disabilities,” were placed on a waitlist for service. As a result, all eligible clients are able to move forward in receiving services without delay.
- The Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DSBVI) continued providing its college readiness program. Eight grants totaling \$36,000 were awarded to three consumer groups to help serve the blind communities throughout the state and our low-vision team increased their focus on rural Utah and have collaborated with independent living centers statewide to serve the state’s aging population.
- **THE ROBERT G. SANDERSON COMMUNITY CENTER** of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2022. The building is named in honor of Robert G. Sanderson, Utah’s first state coordinator of services to people who are Deaf, DeafBlind or hard of hearing. Today, the Sanderson Center continues his legacy as the home of Utah’s Division of Services of the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. At the center, community members can access support in identifying services, help in finding a job, and access to resources, technology and classes. The center also manages the state’s certification of American Sign Language Interpreters.
- Our Disability Determination Services team processed over 21,000 claims this year.

Respectfully,

Sarah Brenna
USOR Director

Introduction



THE UTAH STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

The Utah State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a body of citizens appointed by the Executive Director of the Department of Workforce Services 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 who promote public awareness, support of the vocational rehabilitation program and advocate 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 in, specialized knowledge of and expertise with 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 VR program. Collectively, this group reviews, analyzes and advises the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation regarding the VR program.

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 SRC continues to be an active partner with the VR program to ensure the provision of quality services to eligible consumers. SRC members provide critical support to USOR and to individuals with disabilities served by the agency by communicating with legislators on both the state and national level. They promote legislation and funding requests that continue the specialized services provided by USOR.

Council members participate in various functions of the VR program. These include attending USOR statewide meetings, Golden Key employment recognition awards ceremonies, town meetings, focus groups and the Utah Rehabilitation Association annual conference.

The council has contributed to and continues to be involved in the development and implementation of USOR's strategic plan and the WIOA Unified State Plan. It has also identified areas of strength within USOR, acknowledged the best practices of the agency and recommended improvements to the VR program. Council members and USOR staff members agree that through appropriate communication and partnerships, vocational rehabilitation services for people with disabilities in Utah will continue to improve.



PURPOSE: ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the State Rehabilitation Council (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 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 USOR, develop, agree to and evaluate the effectiveness of the vocational rehabilitation program.
- Advise USOR regarding activities authorized to be carried out and assist in the preparation of the WIOA Unified State Plan, amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments and evaluations.
- Conduct a review and an analysis of the effectiveness of VR services and consumer satisfaction.
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Department of Workforce Services and the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) on the status of VR 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 VR 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 additional functions that the SRC determines are appropriate and comparable to other functions performed by the council.

The SRC, in partnership with the USOR VR 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 USOR to ensure that the activities of the VR program are carried out in a manner that is respectful of an individual's dignity and recognizes an individual's right to make informed choices.



2021-2022 YEAR IN REVIEW

DIVISION DIRECTOR UPDATES: The council received regular reports on state and national issues affecting USOR and the VR program. At the November 2021 meeting, Sarah Brenna, division director, announced the retirement of long-time council member, Sandy Terry. She also reported that there were currently 77 Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) accounts in Utah, and that more states were joining the cohort. At the February 2022 meeting, Brenna discussed the upcoming virtual open house sponsored by the Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DSBVI). She reported that ABLE accounts had increased to 141 (up 100 since September, 2021). Brenna reported an incident that took place in the Logan Workforce Services office involving a visitor filming part of the employment center. This caused concerns with potential client confidentiality and security. She also gave an update of the legislature, and issues specific to USOR and other divisions under DWS (including housing, homelessness, intergenerational poverty, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and cost of living (COLA) increases for staff. At the May meeting, Brenna provided the council an overview of the employee compensation package being developed, (including targeted market increases for most staff). She reported that the ABLE accounts were then at 218 total, managing \$1 million in assets.

SRC ANNUAL MEETING AND COUNCIL TRAINING: At the November, 2021 meeting, Council Secretary Rob Ferris provided the annual SRC training for new members. He discussed the SRC mission statement, vision and values; the federal and state structure for the council (e.g. Department of Education, OSERS, RSA, VR), and a brief overview of the WIOA. He also discussed SRC member roles and responsibilities (including to review, analyze and advise the USOR and VR program in Utah); Council membership makeup, terms, removals and resignations; conflicts of interest and meetings; as well as the SRC goals: 1) Assist and

advise the USOR to preserve and improve services to clients; 2) Review data and relevant information; and 3) Increase visibility and value of the SRC. At the meeting, outgoing chair, Eliza Detherage, was presented a plaque in recognition of her service to the council. Brian Lahti was unanimously selected as the new chair for the council, with Selena Harris as vice chair, Rob Ferris as secretary, and Lavinia Gripenotrop (member-at-large). Because of continued COVID-19 restrictions, the year's SRC meetings were held virtually, and included identified USOR staff.

VR PROGRAM UPDATES: Aaron Thompson, assistant director, provided the council monthly reports and information on a number of VR program-related topics. At the November 2021 meeting, Aaron discussed VR Common Performance measures, and provided a Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act update on WIOA State Plan goals and public comment posting in January 2022. Thompson invited SRC members to join virtual town hall meetings in January to discuss the updated WIOA Unified State Plan. He also shared upcoming lunch-and-learn opportunities and a Work Ability Intern program success story. At the January 2022 meeting, Thompson presented the WIOA State Plan update, which is completed every four years and outlines core partner collaboration to support the work and economic needs of Utah citizens. He defined the core and other partners involved, including the required two-year update reflecting any modifications or changes to the WIOA State Plan. Thompson reiterated the need for regular input from the SRC, the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (CSPD), and the evaluation process for the VR goals. Those WIOA State Plan goals included: Increased awareness, information availability and access to Transition and Pre-Employment Transition Services; expanded availability of Pre-Ets services; improving quality of services by Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs); improved access

to VR services for minority populations; improved client understanding of benefits and work incentives; expanding services to employers; increase VR counselor and client access to career assessment resources; increase VR counselor performance on WIOA accountability measures; and improve VR counselor and client access to financial literacy and life skills training. In addition, Thompson shared the goals for supported employment, the barriers for achieving these goals (e.g. the COVID-19 pandemic), and the common performance measure around Measurable Skills Gain (MSG). In February, Thompson talked about feedback from a survey sent to SRC members, and a virtual employer workshop in March. At the April 2022 meeting, Thompson reviewed the VR performance dashboard; discussed order of selection (no wait list, all categories open); an update on the submission of the WIOA State Plan; a Workability Internship program update (including 14 paid internships with USOR); an ABLE Utah update (up to 201 active accounts), and the availability of the Utah Work Incentive Planning (UWIP) team for technical assistance. Thompson concluded with an update on the Business Relations program, and upcoming a virtual Workability Job Fair; an Amazon employer session; and the Golden Key Award nominations and Walmart Golden Key Scholarship program. In May, Thompson gave a USOR performance update and the VR focus areas for the next few months, including community outreach and engagement; identification of counselor timesavers; and support of job ready and job searching clients. He discussed the summer youth initiatives involving the Pre-Ets instructors and VR counselors, and work-based learning. Thompson provided updates on Pre-Ets contracts; Pre-Ets “fee for service” (e.g. local education agency (LEA) partnership agreements), upcoming USOR events, and the Walmart and Golden Key Scholarship deadlines. At the June 2022 meeting, Thompson reviewed current agency performance measures; new VR positions being added (e.g. Pre-Ets Contract Specialist, Choose to Work and Staff Training Specialists); a CRP service update, new rate changes for CRPs, rural high-quality indicators; increases for work-based and temporary work experiences; and updates revisions to the client

satisfaction survey confidentiality statement. At the September 2022 meeting, Thompson provided updates on the VR performance dashboard, WIOA performance measures and outcomes, and comparison data (Utah vs. national) for program year (PY) 2022. Thompson discussed the fall VR focus areas (community connections; exceptional customer services; operational excellence; and employee success); reported on the current 362 active ABLE accounts; and the upcoming Workability Career Exploration and Job Fair. “On the horizon” issues would include 1) the VR Client Satisfaction Survey results for 2022; the comprehensive statewide needs assessment; and the disability career navigator initiative.

POLICY UPDATES: The council was provided policy updates throughout the year, including new regulations, practices, and processes. At the November 2021 meeting, Christine Anderson, USOR policy director, discussed subminimum wage and the impact of community integration and access to employment for individuals with disabilities, as well as enhanced career counseling, and informed choice in employment. She defined “competitive integrated employment”, the expansion of economic opportunities, equality, and integration into American society for clients, and the benefits of financial literacy training as part of employment preparation. In May 2022, Anderson provided an update on post-employment, short-term services, including possible assistive technology, job coaching, and tools; the changes in the definition of post-employment being provided on an ongoing basis, instead of following successful case closure; and the process for receiving services after case closure (including accelerated re-application for VR services, and the use of prior disability information and assessments). Anderson gave an overview of the new electronic case service manual (CSM) format (e.g. search features, links within chapters), and provided council members an online look at the manual, including the link (<https://jobs.utah.gov/usor/vr/about/policylaw.html>)

CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS:

At the November 2021 meeting, Nicole Fraedrich, USOR program evaluation coordinator, presented on

the ongoing consumer satisfaction survey process. She discussed the previous approach of mailing surveys, her research with other states on different feedback platforms, and the improved “readability” of the survey (based on SRC and Disability Law Center [DLC]) feedback.) The new survey had been piloted in both an urban and rural VR district utilizing Survey Monkey as the new approach. Fraedrich reports that the survey return rate went from 1.2% to 17.67%. The surveys are then forwarded to division director Aaron Thompson, who assigns the field service directors (FSDs) working with the impacted districts, to contact the clients requesting follow-up on the survey.

POST-HIGH SCHOOL OUTCOMES 2021 SURVEY RESULTS PRESENTATION:

At the January 2022 meeting, Lavinia Gripentrop, council member and Utah State Board of Education (USBE) transition specialist, presented on the Post-High School Outcomes 2021 Survey for youth with disabilities exiting high school with an IPE. Those 23 question surveys are conducted one year after high school or post-high. Survey questions are related to post-secondary education and training; competitive employment; adult living; agency involvement; barriers to employment/higher education; and overall experiences in high school. Over 4,800 students were surveyed and percentages of college attendance (18%); competitive employment (59%); minimum wage or above earnings (93%); and outcomes by race. Of particular interest were the survey respondents with autism, intellectual disabilities, unemployed youth, and those with VR and/or DWS connections. Gripentrop also included examples of positive and negative survey responses related to student IPEs and the VR experience.

PUBLIC MEETING RULES PRESENTATION:

At the January 2022 meeting, Kevin Bolander, DWS legal counsel, discussed open and public meeting rules, including Legislative intent that state and agency meetings be held openly (including deliberations), unless closed. He defined a Public Body, a Meeting, and the

required Public Notice of Meetings (including agenda, date, time, and place). Bolander provided information on emergency meetings; electronic meetings; closed meetings (including procedural processes for such); public access to minutes and minutes requirements; and violations of the Act (U.C.A. 52-4-101 et.seq.).

ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SUPERVISORS PRESENTATION:

At the February 2022 meeting, Geoff Huntsman, VR counselor supervisor, presented on the roles and responsibilities of counseling supervisors; the definitions of, and application of clinical, administrative, and professional development supervision; and the resolution of client complaints. Council members were able to ask follow-up and clarification questions regarding this supervisory position.

PRE-ETS PROGRAM EVALUATION PRESENTATION:

At the February 2022 meeting, Brian Phillips, assistant professor, Utah State University (USU), and Allison Fleming, associate professor, Penn State University, provided the council a presentation on Pre-Ets program evaluation and the assessment of USOR Pre-Ets outcomes. A background for the project was described (including the early collaboration with Utah State University. No other state (besides Utah), has implemented a Pre-Post assessment of Pre-Ets services, which requires concrete service knowledge, a commitment by all involved parties, and a willingness to see continuous improvement. The Transition Readiness Toolkit (TRT), developed as a collaborative project between USOR, CRP's, USU and Penn State University includes a battery of assessments to measure change across the five core Pre-Ets services. The progress of the project was described in detail, including provider training on the toolkit; technical assistance; data collection; addressing state VR leadership and provider concerns; initial positive findings; and reporting to the providers involved. Future possibilities for this assessment process include greater recognition of effectiveness, improved student outcomes, and customization of services.

DISABILITY DETERMINATION SERVICES (DDS) OVERVIEW PRESENTATION:

At the February 2022 meeting, Indira Zurapovic, Disability Determination Services (DDS) supervisor, provided an overview of the Social Security Administration (SSA) claims process, including 1) submission of the application to SSA; 2) verification of information by SSA; 3) assignment to a DDS case examiner; 4) the medical determination made by DDS; and approval/denial processes and procedures. Zurapovic discussed the federal Social Security process, as well as both the Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI), and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) eligibility requirements. The different application methods (e.g. online website, my SSA account; telephone, and in-person) were included; how long the application process takes; the final SSA determination decision; an overview of DDS; expedited determinations (based on specific requirements); the Trial Work process; Social Security myths; and the new SSA Claims Status Tracker.

ROLE OF A DISTRICT DIRECTOR PRESENTATION:

At the April 2022 meeting, Gwen Solum, DRS district director (Salt Lake district), presented the role of a district director. She discussed the 10 statewide VR districts; the responsibilities of a district director in terms of compliance assurance, staff development, employee training, leadership and community partnerships. District-wide training, the client appeal process, case transfers, community engagement and coordination, and disability awareness were covered topics. Solum then described the district leadership model for supervision; client services; problem-solving and needs identification; quality service plans, and agency collaboration/consistency across districts.

UTAH PARENT COUNCIL OVERVIEW: At the April 2022 meeting, Jennie Dopp, special projects coordinator for the Utah Parent Center, provided a historical timeline for the Parent Center and its focus on helping parents with disabilities since 1983. She described the parents-helping-parents concept; a caring staff; parent training and information; statewide

and district charters; Early Hearing Detection and Intervention (EDHI) services; corporate partnerships and strengthening families; and the importance of the children served through the program.

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (DSPD) PRESENTATION:

At the April 2022 meeting, Bryn Peterson, program administrator from the Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD), shared staff changes with the council, as well as a legislative update on current provider staffing, the client wait list, and caregiver compensation. Peterson discussed the DSPD Employment Pathway Tool, the Supported Employment Individual (SEI) code for customized employment, ACRE specialist certification, and workplace supports; Employment Preparation Services (EPR), including sheltered workshop, subminimum-wage work; and paid sponsor work activities to be implemented over the next few months.

THE ROLE OF A FIELD SERVICE DIRECTOR PRESENTATION:

At the May 2022 meeting, Gordon Swensen, field service director (FSD), discussed his role in the VR process, and a description of the current statewide regional assignments of the two (2) field service directors. Swensen shared responsibilities of an FSD, including 1) the provision of leadership and supervision to assigned districts; 2) compliance assurance with federal and state policies, regulations, procedures, and practices; and 3) oversight of the region in terms of performance measures and outcomes. A description of the compliance and performance standards: eligibility determination and IEP development; timely annual reviews; accurate disability classification; pre-authorization reviews, case closures, and client service recommendations; AWARE dashboard monitoring; assisting district directors with staffing, training, and corrective/disciplinary action needs; client satisfaction surveys; and ensuring the mission, vision and values of USOR are understood and followed. In addition, Swensen shared the client complaint resolution process (review, mediation, fair hearing). Other FSD responsibilities included performance plans and appraisals; participation on interview panels; District

Director (DD) succession planning; spending time in the districts; facilitation of quarterly leadership meetings; case service approvals; and representing the Division leadership and DWS executive director's office.

VR EVALUATION PROGRAM COORDINATOR

RECOMMENDATION: At the May 2022 meeting, Nicole Fraedrich, USOR program evaluation coordinator, provided a brief overview of the consumer satisfaction survey process, and her request to send every returned survey to the district directors so that they can review the responses. She shared that not sharing the information with field offices can be a disservice to the VR counselor. She also requested that the wording on the survey be changed in the opening email by removing the line "your responses are confidential." The council chair responded that these suggestions would be discussed further in the next SRC executive meeting and be brought to the council in June for a vote.

EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES CRP

UPDATE: At the May 2022 meeting, Jason Bennington, DRS employment support services specialist, gave a brief update on CRP protocols, 2021 program successes (e.g. 80 currently approved CRPs); Work Strategy Assessment (WSA) increases; average days to successful job placement; the increase in high quality indicators; completed customized employment placements, etc.

DIVISION OF SERVICES FOR THE BLIND AND VISUALLY IMPAIRED (DSBVI)

PRESENTATION: At the June 2022 meeting, Steve Winn, assistant director with the Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired, gave an overview presentation of the five DSBVI training programs:

1. Training Adjustment Services (TAS), and its six-to-nine month program including daily task learning; braille; computer classes; home management (e.g. cooking and cleaning); job readiness; a final project to assess independence with transportation and community accessibility. Wood shop and sewing classes are elective courses taught by individuals who are blind or visually impaired;

2. Low Vision Services (resources, devices and services to assist individuals with remaining vision);
3. Deaf Blind Services (advocacy, technology, the ICanConnect technology grant, and access);
4. Business Enterprise Services, for blind individuals with entrepreneurial interest in running a food service or vending business; and Field Services (statewide teachers of daily living activities, access, and independence for those losing their vision later in life).

PRE-ETS UPDATES: At the September 2022 meeting, DRS employment support services specialist Jason Bennington and Aimee Langone, DRS transition and supported employment coordinator, gave the council an update on the Disability Navigators Initiative and the Fair Labor and Standards Act (specifically section 14c and employer certification processes for hiring individuals with disabilities at a lower wage). 511 information and referral was discussed, including career guidance that Jason provides for those seeking competitive, integrated employment. The new Disability Career Navigator positions were reviewed, including career counseling and connections with students with disabilities to move toward competitive employment. Four regions of the state would have these navigators working with clients.

UTAH CENTER FOR ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY (UCAT) PRESENTATION:

At the September 2022 meeting, Jay Wheeler, assistive technology specialist, provided an overview of the UCAT programs and the Utah Assistive Technology Teams (UATT). He described the AT evaluation process and the AT loan library, as well as collaborative partnerships with VR, Independent Living, DSPD, the Utah Parent Center, hospitals/clinics, the University of Utah occupational therapy (OT) program and others. He discussed the various members of the UCAT team and their responsibilities/expertise, as well as the UATT teams located throughout the state. Information on the GoBaby Go Program, the hand control simulator, and the zero-gravity workstation was also presented.

VR COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT PRESENTATION:

At the September 2022 meeting, Brian Phillips, assistant professor at Utah State University, gave a brief overview of the VR Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment, a review of the federally-funded VR programs every three years. Utah State University is contracted to

provide that service to the USOR. Phillips reported reviewing needs assessments from across the country and discovered that key informant interviews were missing from those assessments. He recommends that there be a strategic focus in meeting with groups that need better representation. Focus groups and creating surveys for targeted groups were also suggestions.

ATTACHMENT 4.2 (C)

Attachment 4.2 (C): Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), 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 to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) portion of the WIOA Unified State Plan, and as required by section 101 (a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014.

The following is a summary of SRC recommendations made from October 2021 to September 2022, and USOR's responses and actions taken regarding these recommendations:

SRC RECOMMENDATION 1:

At the November 2021 meeting, Assistant Director Aaron Thompson gave an update on the WIOA State Plan, recommended goals and strategies for improving VR services, including an expansion of service to employers, and the improvement of VR counselor and

client access to financial literacy and life skills training. The SRC members would be sent invitations to attend virtual town hall meetings the second week of January 2022. The council requested that Aaron Thompson provide a full update on the WIOA State Plan and the outcomes of the town hall events at the January 2022 Council meeting.

USOR RESPONSE 1:

At the January 2022 meeting, Assistant Director Aaron Thompson provided a comprehensive report on the WIOA State Plan for the council (see Year in Review section of this report). Following questions from the SRC, a vote was requested and taken to approve the WIOA State Plan, including the goals and strategies that were developed with input from the council. That motion passed unanimously and the Plan would be submitted for federal review and approval in March 2022.

SRC RECOMMENDATION 2:

Following the February 2022 meeting, members of the council Executive Committee met virtually with

the USOR Administration and liaisons to the council regarding possible meeting schedule changes to the council calendar. The council requested approval to change the yearly meetings from ten (10) to no more than six (6). The virtual format for the meetings was also recommended to continue for convenience of, and to increase Council participation. The Administration was supportive of this concept and recommended that a vote be taken at the April 2022 SRC meeting

USOR RESPONSE 2:

At the April meeting, the SRC discussed changing the council by-laws, shortening the yearly meetings from ten (10) to six (6). The meetings would be held in the months of January, March, May, June, September, and November. The motion was made by SRC Secretary Rob Ferris and the council voted unanimously in the affirmative.

SRC RECOMMENDATION 3:

At the May 2022 meeting, VR Program Evaluation Coordinator, Nicole Fraedrich discussed the Consumer Satisfaction Survey process, which included client responses being sent to the Assistant Director and the Field Service Directors (FSDs). She requested Council approval to share that information as well with the District Directors (DDs) so that the feedback could be reviewed and discussed at the local district level.

Fraedrich also asked that there be a wording change in the opening email: “Your responses are confidential” to allow this broader review. The council chair asked that this be further discussed at the SRC executive meeting with Administration and then be brought for further discussion to the council at the June 2022 meeting.

USOR RESPONSE 3:

The recommendations were discussed at the executive meeting and the decision was made to leave the process with the field service director review of the client satisfaction survey requests for contact. That contact information would then be shared by the FSDs with the respective district directors. This was discussed at the June 2022 meeting with the council. The council, however, did vote to unanimously approve the confidentiality wording change in the current client satisfaction surveys (as requested).



COMMITTEES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SRC committees included the Nominating and Interviewing Committee. A summary report for this 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. Several vacancies were filled with required members as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act. The 121 Native American program for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe SRC member position remained vacant. The representative for the Navajo Nation continued to attend the council meetings by phone. The RSA regulations require membership of at least one Tribal VR program in Utah.

A nominating and interviewing committee was formed to solicit nominations, review the qualifications of nominees, conduct interviews and present the names of the individuals to the council for consideration. Names were submitted to the executive director of DWS for approval in accordance with internal policies. Highly qualified and committed individuals were appointed to the council. They bring commitment and unique expertise to the SRC.

COUNCIL OF STATE ADMINISTRATORS OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION MEETINGS

Due to the global COVID-19 pandemic, the past several Council of State Administrator's in VR (CSAVR) meetings have been held virtually. Council members were provided information to participate in the free virtual training provided at the conference.



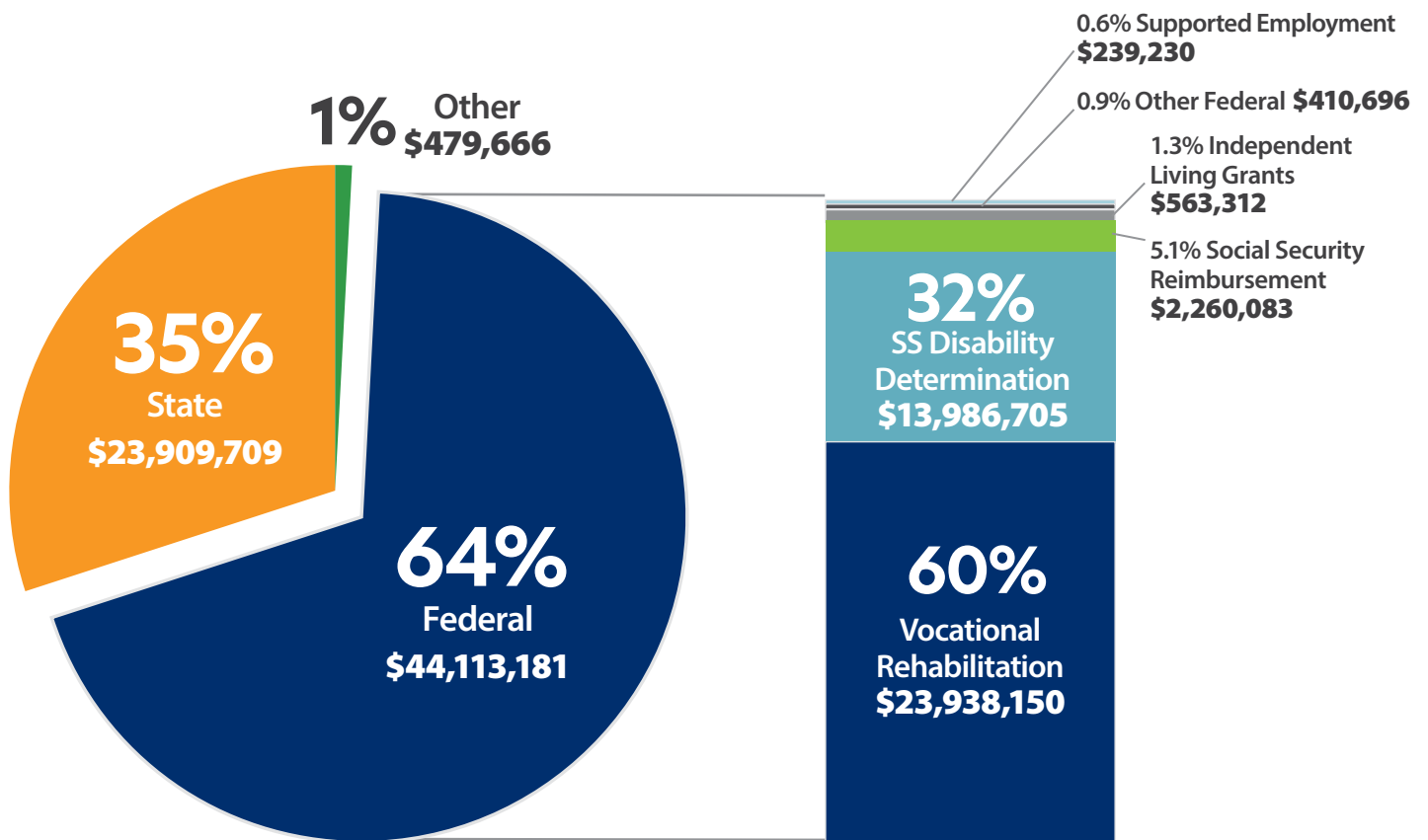
USOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION 2022 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS

The following information reflects the individual and program successes of the vocational rehabilitation program during the past year.

- **2,068** individuals with disabilities were successfully employed
- **15,876** individuals with disabilities received services
- **568** public assistance recipients successfully gained employment
- **453** Social Security Disability recipients successfully gained employment
- **228** individuals successfully gained employment through Supported Employment Services
- **4,880** students with disabilities received Pre-Employment Transition Services.
- **52%** of clients in educational training programs obtained a measurable skill gain
- **30** days on average to complete an eligibility determination for services
- **64** days on average to develop an individualized plan for employment
- **490** benefits summaries and analysis were presented to social security recipients by the Utah Work Incentives Planning Services team
- **534** individual services were provided by the Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT)
- **682** employers accessed training, resources and hiring support from Business Relations



USOR SFY 2022 EXPENDITURES



SUCCESS STORIES



Andrew Poulton



OCCUPATION:
Clinical Laboratory Technologist

VR COUNSELOR:
Sallie Muir and Anne Gilbert (WDD)

VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Individualized plan for employment
- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Disability treatment coordination
- Coordinated support with the Workforce Development Division
- Education assistance
- Transportation assistance

Andrew Poulton's story is one of teamwork and collaboration of services. Andrew first applied at the St. George office in the Spring of 2019, seeking training through the Career and Education program. At that time he was working in a local fast food restaurant and looking for a career change. His employment counselor, Anne Gilbert, provided him career counseling and assistance, including a program pathway that aligned with his goals, skills and aptitudes. During their initial assessment, Anne realized that a referral to vocational rehabilitation (VR) was in order due to his potential eligibility for the VR program.

The referral was made and VR Counselor Sallie Muir began working with Anne and Andrew to support the goals from both his WDD employment plan and his VR Individualized

Plan for Employment (IPE). Those employment plans were developed in tandem with communication occurring throughout the case. Sallie and Anne worked in collaboration with Andrew to help him obtain and access the support and resources he needed to be successful. This also included additional career exploration to find the job that would not exacerbate Andrew's disability.

In June 2022, Andrew finished a bachelor's degree in medical laboratory science. Additionally, Andrew was offered a job working in this field of study with Intermountain Healthcare's St. George Regional Hospital. His new career is one that is "in demand," and it is unlikely that he could have finished this program without the assistance of both WDD and VR's case management and teamwork.



Marley Passey



OCCUPATION:
Cutting Machine Setter and Operator

VR COUNSELOR:
Tim Daynes (Salt Lake VR District)

VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Individualized plan for employment
- Vocational counseling and guidance
- Counseling on self-advocacy
- Pre-Employment Transition Services
- Disability treatment assistance
- Vocational training assistance
- Rehabilitation technology

Marley Passey has Leber's Congenital Amaurosis, a rare inherited blindness from birth. The vocational impediments caused by this condition presented both challenges and opportunities. With her counselor, Tim Daynes, she had to learn blind skills including cane travel, activities of daily living, the use of assistive technology, and work skills (e.g. woodshop training) in preparation for employment. Marley completed the Utah Work Introduction Network, a transition to independence program created by Utah Industries for the Blind to learn independent living skills.

Marley didn't want to do the typical job that a blind person does. She said, "I want to open up doors to new industries that normally don't hire the Blind." She wanted to create and manufacture products. With guidance from her VR counselor, she agreed to a computer aided design certificate program with the

Davis Technical College. The director of the program made his machines "blind accessible." This was the first of many doors that opened in Marley's journey. Not only did she graduate and receive the certification but she received a scholarship for advanced courses.

Marley also received assistance from the Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired's Employment Specialist, Chaner Conely, to provide her with interview and job searching skills. Ultimately Marley obtained a job working full-time for the Seattle Lighthouse for the Blind, earning \$24 an hour with bonuses, as a textile cutting machine operator. The company paid for Marley's expenses to relocate from Utah to Washington. Marley achieved her goals and continues to be a trailblazer for individuals who are blind or have low vision. Marley adds, "Now I'm reaching new heights, and the only direction I can go is up! Thank you, Voc Rehab, for giving me my wings."



Tyler Hacking



OCCUPATION:
Compost Specialist, UVU

VR COUNSELOR:
Claudia Knight , Nate Nielsen, Amanda Brown

VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Individualized plan for employment
- Vocational counseling & guidance
- Educational assistance
- Disability treatment assistance
- Assistive technology
- Clothing for school and employment

Tyler Hacking dreamed of earning a bachelor's degree to become a botanist. He had previously attempted this over 10 years prior but wasn't able to complete school because he didn't have the needed support. Tyler came to Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) to realize his dream. Throughout this experience, Tyler received support and guidance from his team of VR counselors, who connected him with career coaching, medication management, and educational financial support.

Tyler was extremely successful in school. He is co-authoring three articles in scientific publications on research he assisted with over the past four years. Tyler was a teaching assistant for undergraduate environmental science classes and completed work study as a student researcher. He was president of several student science associations, conducted research on fungi and hydrologic watershed, and

presented at 16 botany events. For his work, Tyler was featured in Utah Valley University newspaper, UVU magazine, and the Daily Herald newspaper. Following graduation in August 2022, Tyler was offered employment with UVU as a compost specialist where he has secured research funding for further study in biochemistry and biotechnology. Tyler is applying to PhD programs to further his research and to contribute to a greener planet.

Tyler states, "My experience with vocational rehabilitation was a dream come true. Without VR help, I would have never made it through my bachelor's degree. I was supported in learning a variety of skills which have made me a highly competitive candidate for further professional study. I am currently continuing my research, growing my own small business, and applying to PhD programs. Thanks VR!"

FY 2022-2023 MEETING SCHEDULE



LAST WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH

October 26, 2022 (canceled)

November 16, 2022

December (No Meeting)

January 25, 2023

February (No Meeting)

March 29, 2023

April (No Meeting)

May 31, 2023

June 28, 2023

July (No Meeting)

August (No Meeting)

September 27, 2023

Note: All times subject to change due to meeting in-person or on Zoom.

Meeting location:

Judy Ann Buffmire Rehabilitation Service Center Conference Room
1595 West 500 South, Salt Lake City, UT 84104

For more information:

801-887-9505 or 866-435-7414 (toll-free)

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A Division of the Department of Workforce Services
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