



**WORKFORCE  
SERVICES**  
REHABILITATION

# 2024 Utah State **Rehabilitation Council Report**

JANUARY 2025



[usor.utah.gov](http://usor.utah.gov)

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>3</b>	The Mission of the State Rehabilitation Council
<b>4</b>	Rehabilitation Council Members
<b>5</b>	Message from the Council Chair
<b>6</b>	Message from the USOR Division Director
<b>7</b>	Introduction
<b>8</b>	Purpose: Roles and Responsibilities
<b>9</b>	2023-24 Year in Review
<b>13</b>	Attachment 4.2 (C)
<b>15</b>	VR Program Success and Challenges
<b>16</b>	USOR SFY 2024 Funding
<b>17</b>	USOR Vocational Rehabilitation Performance Dashboard 2024
<b>18</b>	Client Satisfaction Survey Result Presented to SRC During PY23
<b>19</b>	Success Stories
<b>22</b>	FY 2024-25 Meeting Schedule



**usor.utah.gov**

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



## 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:

- Lavinia Gripentrog, Special Education, Representative, Chair
- Jenny Dopp, Disability Group Representative, Vice Chair
- Rob Ferris, Business, Industry and Labor, Secretary
- Selena Harris, Consumer, Past Chair
- Bianca Gonzalez, CAP, Member-at-Large

## MEMBERS:

- Esperanza Reyes, Utah Parent Center
- Summer Sylvester, Beautiful Ability (CRP)
- Velma Spencer, Navajo Nation Vocational Rehabilitation
- Jenni Thompson, Blind and Low Vision Community Representative
- Austin Oseguera, Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT), Dept. of Workforce Services
- Heather Mousley, Department of Workforce Services
- Julie Beckstead, Utah State Independent Living Council
- Matthew Huskinson, Consumer
- Brian Lahti, Consumer
- Dani Williams, Business, Industry and Labor
- Steven Phelps, VR Counselor, Dept. of Workforce Services
- Linda Lartigue, Business, Industry and Labor
- Shane Roy, Business, Industry and Labor
- Jasi Sefcik, Deaf and Hard of Hearing Community Representative
- Lisa Wade, Division of Service for People with Disabilities
- Christine Anderson, University of Utah
- Sarah Brenna, Utah State Office of Rehabilitation, Dept. of Workforce Services



## MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR



I'D LIKE TO EXPRESS my profound honor and appreciation for the opportunity to serve as the chair of the Utah State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) during the 2023-24 year. It has been a privilege to lead such a dedicated and passionate group of individuals who are committed to improving the lives of those we serve.

I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the SRC members for their invaluable contributions. Your insights, dedication and collaborative spirit have been instrumental in driving the SRC's mission. Each of you has brought unique perspectives and expertise to the table and together, we have made significant strides in serving individuals with disabilities.

I also want to acknowledge the unwavering support of the USOR administrative staff. Your assistance and dedication have been crucial in supporting the SRC's efforts.

As an advocate and special educator, I have thoroughly enjoyed the experience of leading this wonderful council.

I look forward to continuing our work together and achieving even greater success in the future.

Warm regards,

Lavinia Gripenotrog



# MESSAGE FROM THE USOR DIRECTOR



I AM PLEASED TO SHARE the highlights and achievements of the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) during the past year. Our dedicated team has worked tirelessly to empower individuals with disabilities, enabling them to achieve their employment goals, increase their independence and enhance their overall quality of life.

## Key Achievements

- **Vocational Rehabilitation Program:** Our vocational rehabilitation program had a 27.7% increase in applicants seeking services last year. This increase reflects the success of our team's outreach and awareness efforts. This increase ensures that more people with disabilities can access the support they need.
- **Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS):** We have made significant strides in expanding Pre-ETS for students with disabilities. By offering career exploration, life skills training and work-based learning experiences, we are equipping students for a seamless transition to adulthood. We have seen an increase in the number of students served, demonstrating the positive impact of our targeted outreach and strategic partnerships with school districts.
- **The Utah Interpreter Program (UIP):** We have updated UIP's policies and procedures to make them clearer and more accessible for individuals who want to become working ASL interpreters.
- **Support Service Providers (SSP):** The SSP program continued to train and connect trained individuals to adults who are DeafBlind and in need of support to gain unrestricted access to their environment. SSPs relay visual and environmental information and may serve as a guide and assist with reading, errands, transportation, etc.

While we celebrate our successes, we also acknowledge the challenges we face. One such challenge is the full utilization of reserve funding for Pre-ETS. To address this, we have developed a strategic action plan that includes intensified outreach efforts and the allocation of additional resources to support students in educational, community and workforce settings.

We remain committed to our mission of empowering individuals with disabilities and will continue to adapt and innovate to meet their evolving needs. We appreciate the ongoing support of our stakeholders and partners in this critical endeavor.

Thank you for your dedication and collaboration.

Sincerely,

Sarah Brenna  
Director, USOR

# 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 comprises 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 members consist 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 (USOR) 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 organization's objectives. The SRC continues to be an active partner with the VR program to ensure 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 levels. They promote legislation and funding requests that continue the specialized services provided by USOR.

The council has contributed, to and continues to be involved in, the development and implementation of USOR's strategic plan and the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined 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 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 preparing 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 council's work 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 Development Board.
- 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 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.





# 2023-2024 YEAR IN REVIEW

**DIVISION DIRECTOR UPDATES:** The council received updates on key state and national issues affecting USOR and the VR program. Division Director Sarah Brenna discussed compliance with Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act (WIOA) requirements for reserving 15% of federal funding for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Due to underspending during the pandemic, USOR submitted a corrective action plan and outlined efforts to increase outreach, expand contracted services and adjust budgets to improve spending.

Along with an update on the compensation package passed by the legislature, Brenna provided an update the department's performance-based pay initiative. She also addressed changes to VR counselor licensure, emphasizing employee retention through updated job descriptions, advancement opportunities and the importance of effective training as required by federal regulations. Brenna also provided legislative updates, including the removal of several boards and commissions from state statute, such as the Utah Governor's Committee on People with Disabilities. She reported that the SRC was not impacted by these changes and that the Governor's Committee will continue its work under a new name as part of the State Workforce Development Board.

Brenna reported on the Department of Justice's findings regarding disability services in Utah. While addressing inaccuracies in the report, Brenna affirmed USOR's commitment to collaborating with the Utah State Board of Education and the Division of Services for People with Disabilities to ensure access to quality services for individuals with developmental and intellectual disabilities.

**VR PROGRAM UPDATES:** Assistant Division Director Aaron Thompson provided regular updates on VR performance, covering metrics such as new

applicants, closed cases and counselor caseloads. He discussed WIOA performance measures, Pre-ETS initiatives, website updates and VR's alignment with Workforce Services' goals. He reviewed the WIOA State Plan with required partner involvement and outlined a public comment period. Thompson reported performance improvements, new Pre-ETS instructors and increased applicants, along with VR's strategy to expand access to employment and training. He provided updates on training services, employment outcomes and enhancements to youth and Pre-ETS services.

Thompson discussed Senate Bill 26, which removed the state licensure requirements for VR counselors. With this change, he provided an overview of the agency's plan to no longer require national certification or a master's degree for VR counselors. Thompson emphasized the agency's commitment to ensuring the provision of quality services to clients while developing a new training system for VR counselors. Thompson continued to report on VR performance, training services, recruitment efforts and community based activities to support clients, such as job fairs and youth mentoring events.

**POLICY UPDATES:** The council received policy updates throughout the year, including new procedures, practices and processes. Policy and Training Coordinator Rylee Williams provided an update on her team's members and specific training areas, including the VR Training Academy for all new staff, case management, ethics, program overview training and onboarding for supervisors and district directors. Williams also discussed the upcoming VR Essentials training in June and gave a policy update on the case service manual (CSM), clarifying psychologist travel payments for evaluations. She also covered updates to CSM Chapters 19 and 20 regarding out-of-state and online training and introduced an upcoming Supported Employment Milestone Pilot.

## **CONSUMER SATISFACTION SURVEYS:**

USOR Systems and Quality Assurance Manager Nicole Fraedrich presented on the consumer satisfaction survey process, highlighting recent improvements. She discussed updates to the survey process that began in July 2022, such as forwarding survey results to district directors and using the feedback as a training tool for VR counselors. Fraedrich noted the adoption of the Qualtrics platform in March 2023, and has led to an increased survey return rate of 14.92% – 18.1%. She shared overall survey findings, including an 83% positive response to “VR staff treated me with respect,” feedback on VR’s employment focus, reasons for program exits (e.g., relocation, employment, etc. ) and suggestions for program enhancements. Fraedrich also reported positive outcomes, such as improved upfront information about VR and better communication and responsiveness.

## **PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRANSITION SERVICES**

**OVERVIEW:** Pre-ETS Program Specialist Elise Harward provided an update to the council on several key developments. She highlighted the addition of 11 new CRP contracts and shared details of a recent parents’ conference at the School for the Deaf and Blind. Harward also discussed her meetings with school counselors from the Utah State Board of Education (USBE) and Primary Children’s Hospital and ongoing collaboration with USBE and career and technical education (CTE) students for work-based learning opportunities. She described the four work-based learning contracts in the state and paid work experiences with local employers.

Harward outlined the five Pre-ETS services: 1) Job Exploration Counseling, 2) Work-Based Learning Experiences, 3) Counseling on Post-Secondary Education, 4) Workplace Readiness and 5) Instruction in Self-Advocacy. She explained the eligibility process for students based on IDEA and/or Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act, as well as participation requirements for those enrolled in secondary or post-secondary educational programs. She concluded by explaining who provides Pre-ETS services, including VR counselors, Pre-ETS instructors, and contractors and emphasized how USOR is expanding access to services for students statewide.

Transition and Supported Employment Coordinator Aimee Langone presented data on Pre-ETS services and outcomes. Langone reported that USOR now has 21 contracts with 18 vendors statewide, as well as 18 Pre-ETS Instructors, including a self-advocacy specialist housed with Utah Work Incentive Planning Services (UWIPS) and a Work-Based Learning Experience (WBLE) specialist with the business relations program. She discussed increased fees for both the WBLE and TWE milestones, the addition of supported education opportunities and agreements with local education agencies, such as the Ogden, Davis and Tooele school districts. Langone also provided an overview of the Transition Readiness Toolkit.

## **WIOA STATE PLAN PROPOSED VR GOALS AND STRATEGIES PRESENTATION:**

In November 2023, Assistant Division Director Aaron Thompson presented the proposed WIOA State Plan goals and associated strategies. He explained that the goals were developed in collaboration with the council, incorporating their input and feedback, as well as the council’s review of the Statewide Needs Assessment. Thompson discussed the key priorities for the VR section of the plan, including how progress reports will be provided and how goal amendments will be made during the plan period. He highlighted the required focus areas, such as support, innovation and expansion activities; overcoming barriers to accessing VR and supported employment services; improving and expanding services for students; and improving the performance of VR and supported employment programs to help individuals with disabilities achieve quality employment outcomes.

## **COMMUNITY PARTNER PRESENTATIONS:**

In 2023–2024, community partners presented on various programs supporting individuals with disabilities. The goal of these presentations was to raise awareness of available resources and services for VR clients and to foster greater collaboration among community partners. Lindsay Cropper from the Workforce Development Division (WDD) highlighted career coaching, job search support, tutoring and community resource connections for eligible individuals aged 14-25 or those who have

been laid off. Christine Anderson from the University of Utah's Center for Disability and Access (CDA) discussed the center's commitment to providing students with disabilities equal access and accommodations, including note-taking, exams and adaptive technology. She also introduced the UReach peer mentoring program and its expansion. Esperanza Reyes of the Utah Parent Center emphasized their mission to support parents of children with disabilities by offering personalized services, workshops and guidance on topics such as IEPs, guardianship and community services. Finally, Stephanie Patton from USBE Adult Education outlined services in Adult Basic Education, Secondary Completion, English Language Acquisition and Family Literacy, focusing on the impact of these programs in helping individuals achieve sustainable employment and personal success.

### **POST HIGH SURVEY RESULTS 2023**

**PRESENTATION:** At the January 2024 meeting, USBE Transition Specialist Lavinia Gripentrog presented the 2023 USBE Post High Survey results. Indicator 14, a 23-question survey, covers post-secondary education, employment, adult living, agency involvement and barriers to employment. Gripentrog reported a 54% response rate, with 18% attending college, 48% employed competitively and 95% earning minimum wage or higher. Among youth with autism, 17% were in higher education, 36% in competitive employment, 10% in other employment and 26% unengaged. Additional data included insights on youth with intellectual disabilities, unemployed youth and positive high school experiences like work-based learning. Survey feedback also highlighted opportunities for VR to enhance collaboration, including addressing issues related to job coaching, referrals and turnover that impact service delivery.

**PRE-ETS PROVIDER SPOTLIGHTS:** Throughout the year, the council received presentations and updates from Pre-ETS contract providers, learning about their work in helping students with disabilities gain the skills and experiences needed for a successful transition from high school to adulthood. This included Meta Mindful Connections and Community Options. Meta Mindful

Connections focuses on fostering balance through academic consulting, career exploration, tutoring and self-reflection. Their approach emphasizes aligning thoughts with intentions and setting goals. Community Options, a national nonprofit, job readiness and work-based learning experiences, life skills and financial literacy to promote self-determination. They also offer WBLE opportunities and Summer Pre-ETS classes across multiple counties, with notable successes such as a student's first WBLE experience at a local barber shop.

### **COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM (CRP) PERFORMANCE REPORT:**

At the June 2024 meeting, Aimee Langone, USOR transition and supported employment coordinator and Jason Bennington, USOR employment support services specialist, presented a performance report on community rehabilitation programs (CRPs). They provided background on collecting measurable data within the USOR client management system (AWARE) and through a contract with Utah State University, which tracks CRP progress and performance. Langone and Bennington reviewed CRP assessment data, including Work Strategy Assessments for clients suited for Supported Job-Based Training (SJBT) or Supported Employment (SE) and Discovery Assessments for those pursuing a Customized Employment (CE) pathway. While all CRPs offer SJBT or SE services, only a few provide Customized Employment. Placement data, CRP capacity, training and individual performance data were also shared with SRC members.

**VR CLIENT SUCCESS PRESENTATION:** At the June meeting, John Pimentel, a USOR Workability intern and his VR counselor, Janet Autrey, shared John's successful internship experience at the Provo District office. As a result of the internship, John applied for and secured an office specialist position with the district, where he continues to develop his skills while assisting clients of the VR program. John expressed his gratitude for the internship, highlighting how it helped him build the skills needed for permanent employment with USOR as an office specialist.

**ABLE UTAH UPDATES:** In May 2024 Jolene Wyler, UWIPS director, updated the council on the ABLE Utah savings program, which allows individuals to save without affecting their eligibility for means-tested benefits. Launched in September 2021 by the Utah Department of Workforce Services, the program offers financial independence, tax benefits and personal ownership. Wyler explained eligibility, enrollment and funding options, with annual contribution limits of up to \$18,000 for unemployed individuals and \$32,580 for employed individuals. She also discussed how ABLE accounts interact with SSI, Special Needs Trusts and Medicaid.

At the September 2024 meeting, Wyler also highlighted the ENABLE Act (SB4539), which seeks to expand ABLE tax benefits before they expire in 2025. This legislation would increase contribution limits, allow tax-free rollovers and make ABLE contributions eligible for the Saver's Credit. Wyler emphasized that the ENABLE Act would support the financial security of individuals with disabilities by allowing them to save and invest while maintaining access to critical healthcare and income supports.

**REQUIRED COUNCIL TRAININGS:** In 2024, two key trainings were presented to council members. In September, Robert Andreasen, an attorney from the Adjudication Division of Workforce Services, provided an overview of the Utah Open and Public Meetings Act, emphasizing the importance of conducting public business in an open forum. He covered meeting rules, including quorum requirements, notice procedures, participation, electronic meetings and enforcement provisions for non-compliance.

In March, Rob Ferris, SRC secretary, led a training on the roles and responsibilities of SRC members. He explained USOR's mission, structure and accountability to federal and state agencies, highlighting the distinctions between VR General, VR Blind and VR Combined programs. Ferris also covered SRC membership terms, conflict of interest policies and parliamentary procedures, including a summary of Robert's Rules of Order. The updated SRC goals were discussed in May 2024, with a follow-up session for new members in September.

# ATTACHMENT 4.2 (C)

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 to the vocational rehabilitation (VR) portion of the 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 2023 to September 2024 and USOR's response and actions taken regarding these recommendations:

## **Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Accounts**

### **SRC INPUT**

Council members were enthusiastic about the use of ABLE accounts and had questions about what happens to an ABLE account following the death of an account holder and funeral expenses; qualifying for ABLE benefits if off of Social Security; and potential processes for providers to train individuals on ABLE benefits.

### **USOR RESPONSE**

Aaron Thompson, Assistant Division Director, discussed the existing contracts with CRP providers who could incorporate Financial Literacy and ABLE account usage into their services with clients. Jolene Wyler, UWIPS director, reinforced the work of the benefits specialists with the ABLE process.

## **Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA):**

### **SRC INPUT:**

The council endorsed the recommendation for Utah State University to coordinate the Triennial Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA). The SRC engaged in an overview of the assessment and concurred with the designated focus areas. Additionally, the council agreed to select members to take part in key informant interviews and requested regular updates from the principal researcher. The SRC responded to the findings in the initial data results during an SRC meeting and then reviewed/responded to the draft report.

### **USOR RESPONSE**

USOR values the effort SRC members dedicated to reviewing the draft CSNA. The insights, feedback from interviews and recommendations shared by the SRC were carefully considered and integrated into the final report.

## **Combined Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) State Plan Update**

### **SRC INPUT**

Through the needs assessment review and council meetings, the SRC contributed valuable input and recommendations regarding goals and priority areas for the state plan. This encompassed a sustained emphasis on pre-employment transition services, including the optimal utilization of the 15% reserve funding, bolstering support for students with disabilities and addressing the needs of potentially underserved student demographics. Recommendations were also made to improve service



accessibility for individuals residing in rural areas; along with ongoing enhancements to the quality for CRP services. Furthermore, council members participated in the review and feedback process for the 2024 VR Portion of the WIOA State Plan. They were furnished with the complete draft plan and engaged in a dedicated meeting to examine the plan, discuss goals and priorities and provide collective input. Council members were also invited to attend virtual WIOA town hall meetings.

## **USOR RESPONSE**

USOR accepted the council's input and recommendations for the State Plan, incorporating VR goals and priorities. The goals are tailored to emphasize pre-employment transition services, address underserved populations, leverage technology for enhanced services and elevate the quality of CRP services.

### **State Rehabilitation Council Goal Updates**

#### **SRC INPUT**

The council recommended a review of the goals and objectives of the SRC, aligning with its mission. This initiative will be spearheaded by the SRC Executive Committee.

#### **USOR RESPONSE**

USOR supported the recommendation and will work with the council to update its goal and objective statements.

### **Comprehensive System of Personnel Development Updates**

#### **SRC INPUT**

With the change in state statutes eliminating the state licensure requirement for vocational rehabilitation counselors, the SRC supported USOR's proposed

changes to the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (CSPD) requirements, including removing the national certification and master's degree prerequisites. The SRC recommended that USOR develop a training plan to ensure counselors have the necessary knowledge and skills to provide quality services. The council also requested updates on the outcome of the new training program.

## **USOR RESPONSE**

USOR accepted the council's input and outlined strategies to address the licensing changes, including support for counselors currently in approved master's degree programs, reimbursement through Workforce Services' tuition assistance, incentives for passing the CRC exam; along with providing in-house and external training for VR counselors. USOR agreed to provide an overview of the finalized CPSD plan.

### **Supported Education Milestone Project**

#### **SRC INPUT**

Following a USOR presentation in May 2024, the council strongly supported the new Supported Education Milestone project and requested that it include all VR clients, including those with intellectual disabilities.

#### **USOR RESPONSE**

USOR accepted the council's input and discussed a pilot program resulting from the comprehensive system review aimed at incentivizing clients from all backgrounds and disability types to pursue higher education. USOR also agreed to provide updates on the Supported Employment Service Milestone.



# VR PROGRAM SUCCESSES AND CHALLENGES

## ACHIEVEMENTS

- USOR's Vocational Rehabilitation program has seen significant success from its outreach and awareness efforts, resulting in more individuals with disabilities accessing educational and employment support services. During the past year, the program saw a 27.7% increase in applicants.
- USOR has made great strides in expanding pre-employment transition services for students with disabilities. These services are designed to help students successfully transition to adulthood by offering career exploration, life skills training and hands-on workplace experiences. Through targeted outreach, strategic partnerships with school districts and the implementation of new service pathways, USOR has reached more students and ensured they are equipped with the necessary tools for their future, resulting in a 15% increase in the number of students served.
- USOR's ongoing efforts to promote the ABLÉ Utah program, a savings initiative based on the Achieving a Better Life Experience (ABLE) Act, continue to enhance financial stability and independence for individuals with disabilities. ABLÉ Utah enables participants to save and invest without affecting benefits like Medicaid or Supplemental Security Income (SSI), with funds available for disability-related expenses. During the past year, the program has seen a 46% increase in active accounts and \$6 million in managed assets.
- USOR's Work Ability Internship Program continues to offer valuable opportunities for individuals with disabilities to gain paid work experience, develop essential skills and prepare for reentry into the workforce. During the past year, USOR hosted 12 interns in its offices, providing them with practical experience and professional development. As a result, four interns secured permanent positions with state agencies. Other interns found employment in the private sector or were connected to training programs for further support and skill enhancement.

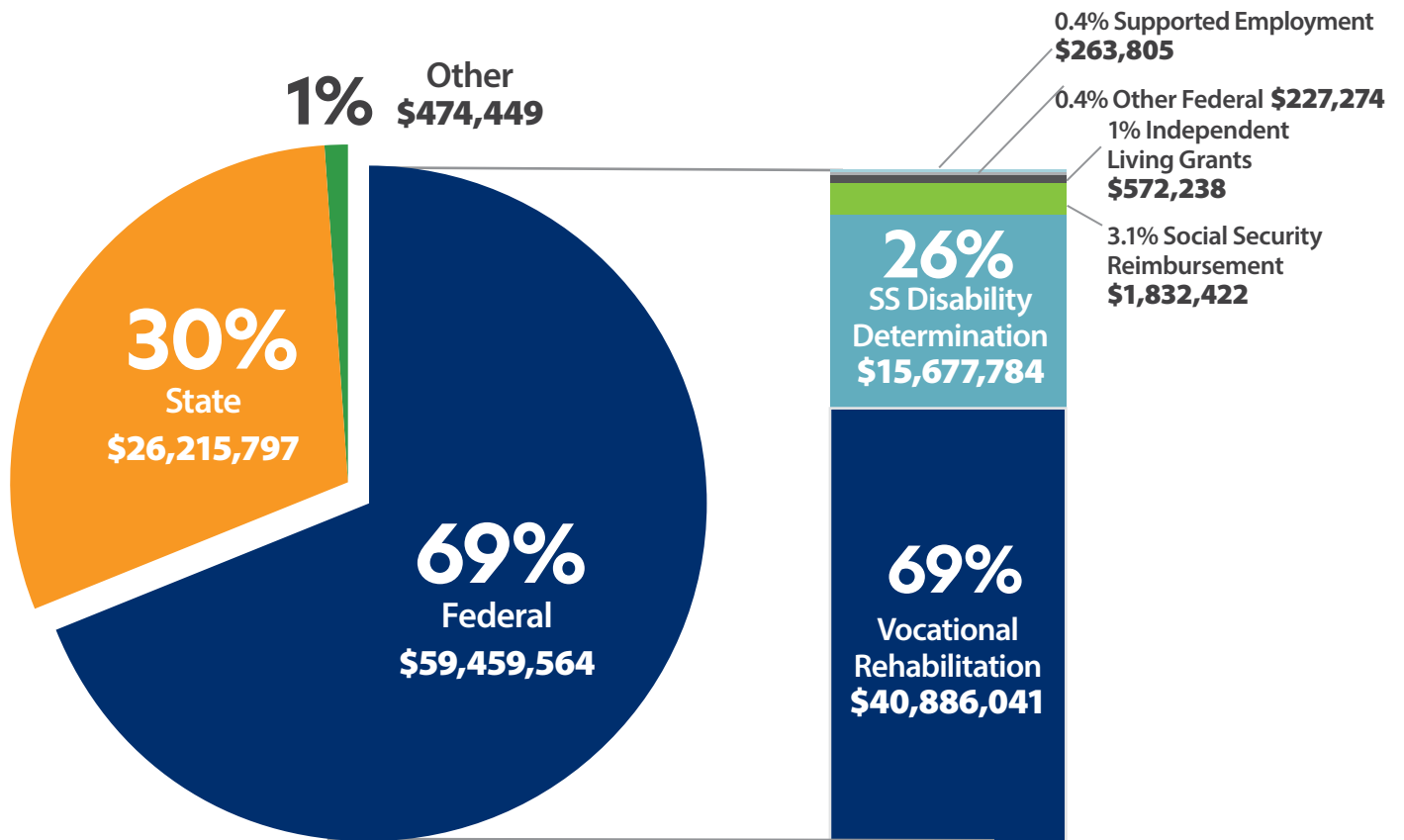
## CHALLENGES

- While USOR's Vocational Rehabilitation program has made significant progress in serving more students with disabilities, it has not yet fully expended its reserve funding for pre-employment transition services. To address this, USOR has developed a strategic action plan to meet its program goals. This plan includes ongoing outreach and awareness initiatives targeting students, partners and educators, as well as allocating additional resources to support students in educational, community and workforce settings.





# USOR SFY 2024 EXPENDITURES



# USOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PERFORMANCE DASHBOARD 2024

Performance Year	New VR Applicants
2023	6,599
2024	8,427
Performance Year	VR Clients Served
2023	16,477
2024	18,830
Performance Year	VR Clients Closed Employed
2023	2,165
2024	2,003
Performance Year	Employers Served by Business Relations
2023	1,881
2024	2,116
Performance Year	Benefits Summaries presented by the Utah Work Incentives Planning Services
2023	515
2024	627

Performance Year	Clients Served by the Utah Center for Assistive Technology
2023	712
2024	612
Performance Year	Percent of Individuals with Significant Disabilities Closed Employed
2023	84.82%
2024	81.09%
Performance Year	Percent of individuals served that were transition-age youth with disabilities
2023	42.47%
2024	47.48%

## WORKFORCE INNOVATION & OPPORTUNITY ACT (WIOA) COMMON PERFORMANCE MEASURES

Federally Negotiated Targets and Outcomes for the Utah Vocational Rehabilitation Program

	Employment Rate 2nd Quarter After Exit		Employment Rate 4th Quarter After Exit		Median Wages		Credential Attainment		Measurable Skills Gain	
	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome	Negotiated Goal	Actual Outcome
2023	51.0%	53.7%	49.3%	52.7%	\$3,996	\$4,726	30.4%	37.5%	53.9%	55.2%
2024	52.0%	54.1%	50.3%	51.4%	\$4,096	\$5,019	30.9%	38.0%	56.3%	56.7%



# CLIENT SATISFACTION SURVEY RESULT PRESENTED TO SRC DURING PY23

VR staff treated me with respect	
Strongly Agree/Agree	82.38%
Neutral	8.05%
Disagree	4.21%
Strong Disagree	5.36%
Total	100.00%
I understood from the start that the goal of VR is to be employed.	
Strongly Agree/Agree	91.53%
Neutral	5.93%
Disagree	0.42%
Strong Disagree	2.12%
Total	100.00%
I understood my responsibilities as a client during each stage of working with VR.	
Strongly Agree/Agree	81.82%
Neutral	13.42%
Disagree	3.03%
Strong Disagree	1.73%
Total	100.00%
I had the opportunity to work together with my VR counselor to develop my plan	
Strongly Agree/Agree	83.46%
Neutral	8.66%
Disagree	5.12%
Strong Disagree	2.76%
Total	100.00%

My VR counselor listened to my needs and concerns.	
Strongly Agree/Agree	79.04%
Neutral	10.04%
Disagree	6.11%
Strong Disagree	4.80%
Total	100.00%
I work in a job that I chose	
Strongly Agree/Agree	86.79%
Neutral	8.81%
Disagree	1.89%
Strong Disagree	2.52%
Total	100.00%
Overall, I am satisfied with my experience with USOR.	
Strongly Agree/Agree	71.57%
Neutral	10.78%
Disagree	9.31%
Strong Disagree	8.33%
Total	100.00%
I would recommend VR to friends with disabilities who are looking to find work, keep work, or advance their careers.	
Strongly Agree/Agree	78.67%
Neutral	10.67%
Disagree	3.56%
Strong Disagree	7.11%
Total	100.00%

# SUCCESS STORIES



## Fernando Cabana



OCCUPATION:  
Massage Therapist

COUNSELORS:

VR Counselor: Bill Miller, Provo  
Claudia Knight, CTW Employment Specialist

VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Vocational Counseling and Guidance
- Individualized Plan for Employment
- Clothing and Transportation for Employment
- Assistive Technology
- Training Assistance
- Job Search and Placement

When Fernando Cabana first applied for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services, he needed some direction. Fernando was born blind and already had independent living skills with this disability. Frustrated, Fernando was unaware of his work potential and the direction he needed to meet his life goals. He needed an assessment of his strengths and abilities, and accommodations to find employment. The VR program put him on track to achieve his dream of becoming a massage therapist. Bill Miller, Fernando's VR counselor, provided excellent counseling and guidance in this process. VR paid for Fernando's training through the Healing Mountain Massage School, and transportation, clothing and assistive technology resources led to successful certification in massage therapy.

Bill's understanding of Fernando's disability-related issues opened doors that led to his current employment with Massage Envy in Sandy, Utah. Working together as counselor and client, Bill and Fernando actively

collaborated with the employer to provide the needed jobsite accommodations. Claudia Knight, Choose to Work employment specialist, was also instrumental in helping Fernando develop self-advocacy and empowerment skills to assist with job placement and accommodations, and confidence to make his dream a reality. Now, Fernando is making \$25 an hour and has a growing clientele of satisfied customers.

Fernando says, "Vocational Rehabilitation has been a very good program for me because they didn't look at me as just a person with a disability, but as someone that wants to be a part of society. They show you how to be out in the world without being afraid. I am a licensed massage therapist, and I enjoy what I do." Fernando Cabana is a good example of overcoming the odds, working hard and proving that a disability can be a stepping-stone to a successful future.



# Quade Lance



OCCUPATION:  
School Teacher

## COUNSELORS:

VR Counselor: Sharon Denison, Eastern Utah District

## VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Vocational Guidance and Counseling
- Individualized Plan for Employment
- Mental Health Treatment
- Educational Assistance

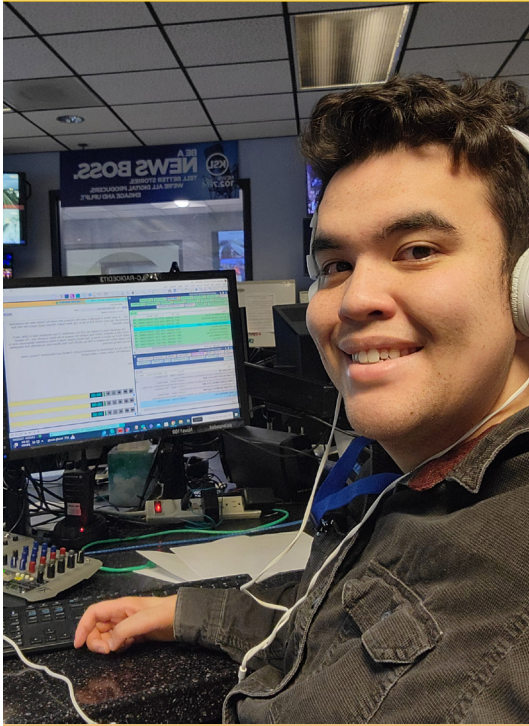
**W**hen Quade applied with vocational rehabilitation (VR), he was in high school and dealing with significant disabilities that impacted him emotionally, socially and educationally. He was initially hesitant about the transition to adulthood. “When I first became a client, I was not so sure that I was going to continue being a client for VR. However, my counselor, Sharon Denison, who oversaw my journey within the agency, listened to my concerns and made me feel that I was capable of some great things.”

During his time with VR, Quade would graduate from high school, attend therapy to develop the skills to address barriers in his path, complete a bachelor’s degree from Utah State University-Uintah Basin and obtain competitive employment as a secondary education teacher in the Uintah School District. “VR helped provide me with the tools necessary to succeed in my current workplace, achieve my college degree, and as a by-product, helped me achieve...and further my impact

within the community in which I was born and raised. I was empowered and motivated through the life skills and coping skills that I developed.”

Quade has already made an impact on the students whose lives he touches daily. In February 2023, he was recognized for teaching excellence by the Uintah Schools Foundation and was awarded the 2023 Showalter Endowment Excellence in Teaching Award. But Quade has not forgotten the role the VR program and played in his development and success in life. “I will never forget the help I received from my counselor. I credit much of my future and my present to her.” That type of collaboration between a VR counselor and client is truly worth celebrating. Put an apple on both of their desks!





# Michael Camit



**OCCUPATION:**  
Producer/Early Morning Reporter, KSL NewsRadio

**VR COUNSELOR:**  
John Trenton, South Valley District

**VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:**

- Vocational Counseling and Guidance
- Individualized Plan for Employment
- Tuition Assistance
- Vehicle Modifications and Transportation Assistance
- Assistive Technology

Life is like a trampoline... full of “ups and downs.” In Michael Camit’s case, however, it was a trampoline that left him with a spinal cord injury in 2017. Yet Michael’s life’s journey has been nothing short of newsworthy. In May, 2018, Michael applied for vocational rehabilitation (VR) services and was presumed eligible as a recipient of Social Security benefits, with a diagnosis of quadriplegia. His VR counselor, John Trenton, assisted him with the development of his employment plan and academic objectives. Michael’s need for independence and achieving his educational goals resulted in a referral to the Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT) for an evaluation of needed modifications to his vehicle while attending his academic program at Brigham Young University (BYU). VR funded the truck modifications that made completion of a degree in communications a reality. While at BYU, Michael worked in the advertising department as a copywriter, and graduated with honors in 2023. During his

schooling, he also worked as a social media and weather anchor for the Daily Universe, the school’s newspaper, and published stories on BYU’s TikTok page.

His journalistic skills and related experience earned him a position as a producer and early morning reporter at KSL NewsRadio in Salt Lake City. Michael feels his experiences with BYU Radio as an on-air host of “Evening Classics” on Classical 89 and his academic background prepared him for his current position. His most current news stories include topics ranging from disability accessibility to consumer protections. As Michael reports, “My counselor was always willing to pivot with me and now I’m doing something I enjoy. VR gave me enough guidance to narrow my field and make a living doing something I was good at.”

The future looks bright for Michael as he gives both meaning to the stories that shape our world and proof that, like a trampoline, a person can bounce back from life’s hardest falls.

# FY 2024-2025 MEETING SCHEDULE



---

January 29, 2025  
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Virtual via Zoom

March 26, 2025  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Judy Ann Buffmire Building  
1595 W. 500 S, Salt Lake City

May 28, 2025  
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Virtual via Zoom

June 25, 2025  
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Virtual via Zoom

September 24, 2025  
9:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.  
Judy Ann Buffmire Building  
1595 W. 500 S, Salt Lake City

November 19, 2025  
9:00 a.m. - 11:00 a.m.  
Virtual via 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)**  
<https://jobs.utah.gov/usor/vr/partners/src.html>



*Equal Opportunity Employer/Program*

Auxiliary aids (accommodations) and services are available upon request to individuals with disabilities by calling 801-526-9240. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing, or have speech impairments may call Relay Utah by dialing 711. Spanish Relay Utah: 1-888-346-3162.



**WORKFORCE  
SERVICES**  
REHABILITATION



**[usor.utah.gov](http://usor.utah.gov)**

Utah State Office of Rehabilitation  
A Division of the Department of Workforce Services  
1595 West 500 South  
Salt Lake City, UT 84104