# DEED VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SERVICES

# COMMUNITY REHABILITATION PROGRAM ADVISORY COMMITTEE

# Session Notes for Friday, December 7, 2018: 9:00 am – 3:00 pm

## Committee Objective

The purpose of the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee is to provide strategic advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on topics and issues affecting the mutual provision of DEED/VRS and CRP/LUV services to Minnesotans with disabilities. Our efforts to understand issues and to work collaboratively will build and nurture the capacity of Minnesota’s rehabilitation community to advance the employment, independent living and community integration of Minnesotans with disabilities.

Specifically, the VRS Community Rehabilitation Program Advisory Committee will:

1. Represent the perspectives and interests of CRP/LUVs in advancing rehabilitation and employment issues while fostering dialogue and engagement on critical issues throughout the greater rehabilitation community
2. Promote innovative service practices to accelerate the adoption of best practices at a systems level and foster equitable access to quality services on a statewide basis
3. Provide strategic level advice and consultation to DEED/VRS on matters affecting CRP/LUVs
4. Identify key topics and issues affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS
5. Consider input from subject matter experts and strategic partners in issues affecting economic development, state demographics / population trends, and promising practices
6. Engage in active reflection, spirited discussion and strategic dialogue on critical topics affecting CRP/LUVs and DEED/VRS services to persons with disabilities in Minnesota
7. Provide a forum for the review and discussion of critical VRS and CRP/LUV service delivery topics including, but not limited to: current service delivery practices; new and emerging service needs; identifying best practices; and the consideration of statewide service needs and resources

## 2018 membership and schedule

**2018 Community Partner Members (*listed alphabetically)*:** Lena Balk (term completed by Meghan Hanson), Heather Deutschlaender, Josh Howie, Kassia Janezich, Jolene Juhl, Lisa Parteh, Andrea Pearson, Julie Peterschick, Robert Reedy, Krista Stafsholt, Sarah Timmerman, Bobbi VanGrinsven

**VRS Members:** Jay Hancock (RM/South Region), Mimi Schafer (RAM representative), Jan Thompson (VRS Field Director), Dee Torgerson (RM/Metro Region), Jeri Werner (RM/North Region)

**Sponsor:** Kim Peck, VRS Director (retired November 2018) / John Fisher, Interim VRS Director

**Co-leaders:** Chris McVey, Director of Strategic Initiatives, and Kim Babine, Director of Community Partnerships

**Facilitator**: Holly Johnson

**2018 Schedule:** Jan 26, Mar 23, Apr 27, May 18 (cancelled), Sep 28, Oct 26 (cancelled), Dec 7

## December 7, 2018 Session Objectives:

1. Recognize outgoing advisory committee members and announce the 2019 cohort.
2. Provide state and federal updates on the VRS contracting process for community partners and gather advisory input on proposed contracting process improvements.
3. Engage committee members in a thoughtful review of 2018 and brainstorm potential topics and strategies for committee consideration in 2019.
4. Provide a conduit for sharing relevant, important and timely updates and information for the benefit of vocational rehabilitation community and consumers.

## December 7, 2018 Attendees (listed alphabetically):

Kim Babine, Heather Deutschlaender, John Fisher, Jay Hancock, Meghan Hanson, Josh Howie, Kassia Janezich, Jolene Juhl, Chris McVey, Lisa Parteh, Andrea Pearson, Julie Peterschick, Robert Reedy, Krista Stafsholt, Jan Thompson, Dee Torgerson, Mimi Schafer, Sarah Timmerman, Bobbi VanGrinsven, and Jeri Werner

**Absent:** None

**Facilitator**: Holly Johnson

## Agenda Topics:

1. Welcome / Overview
2. Strategic Topic: VRS Service Provider Contracts and Processing
3. VRS CRP Advisory Committee: 2018 in Review
4. VRS CRP Advisory Committee: Anticipating Our Focus in 2019
5. Vocational Rehabilitation Community Updates
6. Wrap Up/Adjourn @ 3:00 pm

## Meeting Highlights:

* The Advisory Committee recognized members completing their service terms and announced the new cohort who will begin appointments in 2019.
* VRS Director of Community Partnerships Kim Babine provided an update on VRS Professional and Technical (P/T) Contracts focused on invoicing and amendments processes.
* Advisory members provided input on a new draft invoice, invoice report instructions and samples of both documents. They discussed a variety of ways to effectively communicate and train CRP and LUV providers on VRS P/T Contracts.
* The Advisory Committee reviewed strategic topics and key deliverables covered in the 2018 meetings and developed a slate of recommended strategic topics for 2019.

## Next Steps:

1. **Preparation of Key Messages for Distribution to CRP/LUV partners:** The facilitator will work with the Committee leaders to develop key messages from today’s meeting for distribution to the entire distribution list of CRP/LUV partners on the GovDelivery list within one week of the meeting. To verify/add your email to this list please contact Karla Eckhoff at Karla.Eckhoff@state.mn.us
2. **Document Session Notes:** The facilitator will document the complete session notes, including the Key Messages, for VRS Co-leadership review and approval for distribution to key audiences including the CRP Advisory Committee, VRS, and CRP/LUV partners.
3. **Next Meeting:** The next meeting is scheduled forFebruary 22, 2019 at the VRS Fairview Workforce Center location.

## Welcome and Opening

Facilitator Holly Johnson opened the meeting with an overview of the objectives and agenda before introducing Interim VRS Director John Fisher. As a former member of the advisory committee, John is both familiar and supportive of the work of the advisory.

John was asked by DEED’s Assistant Commissioner Jeremy Hanson Willis to serve as Interim Director following the retirement of VRS Director Kim Peck on November 13. He is not seeking the role on a permanent basis and agreed to serve as interim to help ensure a smooth transition period between Kim’s retirement and the new director’s effective start. John shared Assistant Commissioner Jeremy Hanson Willis’ intentions to interview finalists from the approximately 30 applicants and select a new VRS Director by end of the calendar year with a goal of a January start date dependent on the new director’s ability to begin work.

John expressed his agreement with Kim’s strong belief that the CRP Advisory Committee has been invaluable to VRS for strategic partnering with service providers and said he will recommend that her successor continue its existence.

Committee Co-Chairs Chris McVey and Kim Babine thanked the members of the CRP cohort wrapping up their three-year terms at the end of 2018:

* Lena Balk, Avivo / Metro Region CRP representative
* Lisa Parteh, Functional Industries / South Region CRP representative
* Andrea Pearson, Opportunity Partners / Metro Region CRP representative
* Julie Peterschick. Productive Alternatives, Inc / North Region CRP representative

Next, Kim Babine and Chris McVey announced four new advisory committee CRP members who will begin their appointments in 2019:

* Jodi DiMaggio, Epic Enterprise Inc. / South Region CRP representative
* Jim Durdle, Goodwill Easter Seals MN / Metro Region CRP representative
* Linda Hogan, Blue Sky Inc. / North Region CRP representative
* Jenny Zebell, MRCI / Metro Region CRP representative

Chris and Kim noted that the final meeting of every year is a bittersweet milestone. While it is always exciting to welcome new members to the committee, it means we are also saying thank you and good byes to another cohort concluding their strategic advisory service to the greater VR community.

## Strategic Topic: VRS Service Provider Contracts and Processing

VRS Director of Community Partnerships Kim Babine provided an update on VRS Professional and Technical (P/T) Contracts focused on invoicing and amendments processes. Advisory members were asked to review and provide input on a new draft invoice, invoice report instructions and samples of both documents.

Kim also previewed new RSA requirements impacting VRS contracts. Contract requirements are impacted by several entities including Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the Minnesota Department of Administration, the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS).

The advisory agreed that ongoing training on the VRS P/T Contract process is especially important given the high number of new employees joining CRP providers and VRS team offices throughout the year.

The Advisory Committee discussed a variety of ways to effectively communicate and train CRP and LUV providers on VRS P/T Contracts including:

* Maintenance of current information, including links to webinars, posted as part of Community Partners and Related Resources section of the DEED website: mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/partners/resources;
* Development and ongoing updating of a FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) on common topics such as last milestone requirements and interpretation guidance, PBA placement milestone attainment, exception case considerations, etc.;
* Conduct, record and archive webinars. Questions from the VR community surfaced during webinars can also provide new FAQ content for the website;
* Share sample completed forms, standard guidance, and VR expectations on requirements by service type;
* Conduct joint training sessions for VRS staff and CRP/LUV service provider staff;
* Create and disseminate a list of VR definitions of contract services terminology; and
* Participate in ongoing and special event meetings e.g. local partners’ meetings.

Kim noted that VRS is finalizing information on the upcoming VRS Service Provider Contract updates and changes to share with staff and partners. She thanked the advisory for their thoughtful review and promised to incorporate their input into the update which will be announced through the govdelivery distribution list. Service providers with questions on VRS P/T Contracts should contact VRS Rehabilitation Program Specialist Anne Paulson.

## VRS CRP Advisory Committee: 2018 in Review

Holly Johnson reviewed a summary of the priority topics and key deliverables from the five VRS CRP Advisory Committee meetings held in 2018. The summary is provided later in these notes.

Next, she asked advisory members to share 2018 reflections on two focus questions which were sent out ahead of time with the agenda:

* 1. **What have you valued most about our time together as an advisory?**
  2. **What are the important benefits and results from our work in 2018?**

Advisory members reflections on 2018 were:

* I feel like I’ve learned so much being a part of this committee; there is such an abundance of information shared and discussed at each meeting;
* I think the subcommittee work really helped us do more with topics like job coaching and customized employment;
* The conversation on the MOU was helpful and informative to policy implications;
* This committee is proof of the value of multiple people working on big issues together. We tackled important topics with the benefit of input from all sides.
* In rural Minnesota interacting with other rehabilitation folks is rare. Being part of this advisory has been invaluable to me. It really helped me build a network of support, relationships and provided me a sounding board.
* The ongoing conversation helps with all the questions we’re facing. I’m proud to be part of this group.
* As our CRP is trying to expand services, the advisory committee has helped with navigating all the changes. It’s been invaluable to me.
* There have been so many changes in what we all do and in the funding for employment services. I feel like we’ve been able to help everyone with the changes over the past few years. As providers, we feel heard and that we have worked together to develop a blueprint for the future.
* While we are ‘a work in progress’, I appreciate how VRS actively seeks our input to inform the work and their continuous process of asking and acting upon feedback. Using today as an example, asking for our advice on how to address different contract impacts.
* As a VRS Regional Manager, my region includes 43 of Minnesota’s 87 counties. We strive to be one of the most transparent agencies with providers and communities out there.
* As another VRS Regional Manager, I appreciate the camaraderie and appreciation of the relationship between VRS and CRP/LUVs. We’re people - not ‘the state’. We speak the same language and strive to be on the same page together. I think that this advisory committee has helped us to cultivate better empathy on both sides.
* As a CRP, I really appreciate that VRS doesn’t just ask for input for input sake – they actually do stuff based on our input! I’ve been invited to many other government groups however VRS really listens and that’s a breath of fresh air from what usually ends up happening in forums with other entities.
* WIOA has forced a great deal of change in our world. I feel like we’ve created real community and a real place at the table for collaboration to move through all the changes together.
* I value the relationships we build during these meetings as well as the relationships we have in between these meetings. I know I can pick up the phone or send an email and people care about solving problems and creating a better future.

## VRS CRP Advisory Committee: Anticipating Our Focus in 2019

After sharing 2018 reflections, Holly asked the committee for their recommendations of strategic topics the advisory should focus on in 2019 to continue important, shared work for the benefit of Minnesota’s disability employment services.

**Proposed 2019 Topics included:**

* Continued work on job coaching – increasing quality and capacity, training resources, etc.
* Understanding changes and implications associated with a new VRS Director and the new Governor and Administration. The advisory is ready and willing to assist the new VRS Director.
* Serving as a bridge with DHS and increased expectations
* Joint training for shared learning and accelerated improvement throughout Minnesota

**Proposed 2019 VRS CRP Advisory Committee meeting dates are:** February 22, March 22, April 26, May 17, September 27, October 25, and December 6.

## VRS CRP Advisory Committee: 2018 Year in Review

| **Date** | **Priority Topics** | **Key Deliverables** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Jan 26th | * **Launch of Year Eight** * **The Current State of Job Coaching Service Quality, Consistency, and Availability in Minnesota** | 1. Welcome new committee members 2. Review 2017 CRP Advisory team charter for updates and refinements in 2018 3. Advisory discussion on challenges associated with job coaching and the insufficient level of ongoing supports available to meet the needs of the more challenging populations we are serving |
| Mar 23rd | * **Finalize 2018 Team Charter** * **Updates on Placement 101 and Pre-ETS Assessments** * **Exploratory Dialogue on Creating Job Coaching 101** | 1. Final review and adoption of 2018 team charter 2. Timely updates on Pre-ETS and Placement 101 3. Advisory recommendations for creating a new ‘Job Coaching 101’ curriculum for the Minnesota VR community including design considerations |
| Apr 27th | * **Update on Job Coaching 101 development plan** * **Strategies for Accelerating Availability and Quality of Person-Centered Services in Minnesota** | 1. Presentation by VRS counselors on real life case studies for surfacing jobseeker skills and interests 2. Update on Job Coaching 101 curriculum work 3. Committee discussion of strategies for expanding person centered employment services for individuals with multiple, significant disabilities |
| Sep 28th | * **Update on MN Customized Employment Training** * **Check-in and Dialogue on DHS Community Based Employment Services Interim Guidance** | 1. Update on the new Minnesota Customized Employment training expected to launch in 2019 2. Advisory discussion focused on CRP observations and experiences with the July 2018 DHS interim guidance and its impact on work with individuals on waiver services seeking employment. |
| Dec 7th | * **2018 Review and Initial Recommendations for Strategic Topics in 2019** * **Updates and Advisory Inputs on VRS Service Provider Contracts** | 1. Review of eighth full year of advisory committee work process and outcomes in 2018 2. Initial forecast of advisory topics for 2019 3. Update on federal and state requirements and changes impacting VRS Service Provider contracts 4. Advisory dialogue focused on contract content and process changes and improvements including invoicing, new providers, contract amendments, issue resolution and training |

## Vocational Rehabilitation Community Topics

## VRS updates:

### John Fisher, Interim VRS State Director / VRS Director of Public Affairs

* DEED and VRS are preparing for the upcoming legislative session. As part of the legislative agenda, VRS will be seeking to change the one-time appropriation of $3.5MM per year for the current biennium budget to an ongoing and permanent addition to the base appropriation.

### Chris McVey, VRS Director of Strategic Initiatives

* VRS and DHS, together with their respective technical assistance centers, met in late October to revisit development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). Since the late October meeting, a small work team of DHS and DEED/VRS staff has been meeting on a weekly basis to develop a MOU that will fully replace Interim Guidance for Home and Community Based Employment Services that was published this summer. The goal is to have a signed MOU in place by Spring 2019.

### Kim Babine, VRS Director of Community Partnerships

* VRS will use input gathered today to help finalize information on P/T contract updates and changes. Information will be announced through a govdelivery communication.

### Jan Thompson, VRS Field Director

* VRS team reconfigurations triggered by staff retirements and transitions appear to be having a positive effect on staff, partners and communities. Transitions included:
  + Jeff Bjornson is the new RAM for the Moorhead VRS Office
  + Elise Knopf is the new RAM for the new St Paul Team focused on employment services for Deaf/Deaf Blind/Hard of Hearing individuals
  + Jamie Cyson is the new RAM for the St Paul Team providing employment services to all other disabilities
* In 2019, we anticipate revisiting employment measures as well as exploring options for Deaf/Deaf Blind/Hard of Hearing support given Elise Knopf’s change from statewide specialist position to St Paul RAM for the new focused VR team.

## CRP Updates:

* **Heather Deutschlaender, ProAct,** was awarded a VRS grant for Pre-ETS working with Scott and Dakota counties.  We are currently working with 50 students.
* **Kristi Stafsholt, Occupational Development Center Inc,** we are developing a new ‘Job Club’ incorporating a lot of the practices we’ve discussed here to assist the 10-remaining center-based individuals in exploring integrated, competitive employment.
* **Kassia Janezich, Tasks Unlimited,** we are continuing to diversify our services. We will be attending the CE training starting in January. We recently started a fundraising project aimed at subsidizing rent/affordable housing as part of our Transitional Housing program.
* **Josh Howie, Trillium Works,** historically Trillium has focused on only Supported Employment however we are adding DT&H services in response to the new employment rules that impact the quality of life for some individuals who choose volunteering and paid employment. It is no longer a possibility to do both at the same time without another service to support them. It is important to support a continuum of services for individuals so that they can enjoy their best quality of life.
* **Meghan Hanson, Avivo,** we recently filled two important leadership positions including Erik Aamoth, as Vice President of Career Education and Employment Services.
* **Andrea Pearson, Opportunity Partners,** in October we restructured our VR department. We kept Extended Employment (EE) and job coaching services while closing our REDI and Certified Learning Platforms programs and downsizing our Vocational Evaluation program. We are increasing emphasis on our DT&H employment services. My staff has been reduced from 25 to 12, 8 of 12 are largely focused on EE and job coaching. In 2019 we hope to expand EE services, hourly job coaching services and private pay services.
* **Robert Reedy, RISE**, work continues securing the needed licensing in Minnesota and Wisconsin to facilitate the merger with ESR, an east metro/WI provider to increases RISE service offerings to include DT&H services in Wisconsin. Policies and plans must all be reviewed and redone. We are happy to be able to serve bordering populations across the two states. Anticipated effective in January 2019. We are also exploring opportunities for mergers to better serve the Fargo ND and Moorhead MN area.
* **Julie Peterschick, Productive Alternatives,** we are remodeling thousands of square feet at our Fergus Falls office. We are reconfiguring our Willows location to provide childcare services. Local employers will be able to buy ‘slots’ of child care services to help with hiring and retention of staff with child care needs. We are happy to be able to offer child care to help address this important factor impacting families and employment.

## VRS CRP Advisory Committee – Meeting On December 7, 2018

## Key Messages for the Greater Vocational Rehabilitation Community

Note: Key Messages are first distributed via .govdelivery approximately one week after the meeting and posted on the DEED website. They are also included at the end of the official full session notes.

**VRS Leadership Transition**

* VRS Director Kim Peck retired on November 13. VRS Director of Public Affairs John Fisher has been named interim director until a new director is onboard. The Commissioners’ Office hopes to hire and have the new VRS Director start in early 2019.

**VRS Service Provider Contracts and Processing**

* VRS Director of Community Partnerships Kim Babine provided an update on VRS Professional and Technical (P/T) Contracts focused on invoicing and amendments processes. She also previewed new RSA requirements impacting VRS contracts.
* Contract requirements are impacted by several entities including Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), the Minnesota Department of Administration, the Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED), and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VRS).
* The Advisory Committee discussed a variety of ways to effectively communicate and train CRP and LUV providers on VRS P/T Contracts including:
  + Information posted on the DEED website: mn.gov/deed/job-seekers/disabilities/partners/resources;
  + Develop and maintain an FAQ (Frequently Asked Questions) on common topics such as last milestone requirements and interpretation guidance, PBA placement milestone attainment, exception case considerations, etc.;
  + Conduct, record and archive webinars. Questions from the VR community surfaced during webinars can also provide new FAQ content for the website;
  + Share sample completed forms, standard guidance, and VR expectations on requirements by service type;
  + Conduct joint training sessions for VRS staff and provider staff;
  + A list of VR definitions of contract services terminology; and
  + Participate in ongoing and special event meetings e.g. local partners’ meetings.
* The advisory agreed that ongoing training is especially important given the high number of new employees joining CRP providers and VRS team offices throughout the year.
* VRS will be providing information on the upcoming VRS Service Provider Contract updates and changes soon. Look for information through the govdelivery distribution list.
* Questions on VRS P/T Contracts should be directed to Anne Paulson, VRS Rehabilitation Program Specialist at [Anne.Paulson@state.mn.us](mailto:Anne.Paulson@state.mn.us)

**Other Updates**

* A small team of DHS and DEED/VRS staff are meeting on a weekly basis to develop a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) that will fully replace Interim Guidance for Home and Community Based Employment Services that was published this summer. The goal is to have a signed MOU in place by Spring 2019.
* The Advisory expressed support for greater coordination and collaboration of DHS and DEED/VRS employment-based services to clarify key definitions, roles, and services for individuals served by the programs.