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The Rehab Council Connection

A Quarterly e-Newsletter

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Help Us Build the DVR of Tomorrow, Today!

Now is the opportunity to influence the way DVR does business. DVR is required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration, the federal agency which monitors its performance and distributes the majority of its funding, to submit a plan for how it will provide services. The plan is called the "state plan." Every five years (or when the Rehabilitation Act is reauthorized) DVR creates a new state plan. On the other years it updates the existing plan. This year DVR is submitting an updated state plan.

During the planning process the Rehabilitation Services Administration requires DVR to establish goals, priorities, and strategies for serving customers. More than just a dusty bureaucratic document, the state plan is a tool that federal monitors use to assess whether DVR is serving Washingtonians with disabilities who want to go to work in the way it said it would.

Even when DVR is submitting an updated state plan, substantive changes to goals and priorities can be made. The Washington State Rehabilitation Council (WSRC) is a partner in developing DVR's updated state plan. We write a section which outlines the input and the policy recommendations we have made to DVR, and DVR is required to explain how they responded to our recommendations. We also collaborate with DVR in developing the goals and priorities included in the state plan. Most importantly, the Council works with DVR to garner public input on the draft state plan update before it is submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration.

During the month of May, DVR and the WSRC are co-sponsoring two public meetings. We are inviting stakeholders to provide input on the state plan update. We hope you will join us in creating the plan that will be the foundation for the DVR of tomorrow.

You can review DVR's current State Plan by visiting:
<http://www.dshs.wa.gov/dvr/aboutdvr/StatePlan.htm>

STATE PLAN MEETINGS

May 5, 2008

1:00 pm – 2:30 pm
Spokane DVR Office
Rockpointe East Building
1313 N. Atlantic,
Suite 1000
Conference Room 1
Spokane WA 99201

May 8, 2008

1:00 pm to 2:30pm
St. Placid's Priory
500 College St. NE
Lacey, WA 98516

Reasonable
Accommodation is happily
provided upon request by
contacting Don Alveshere
at: alvesdj@dshs.wa.gov

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WSRC and DVR Collaborating on Needs Assessment

Over the next eighteen months the WSRC and DVR will jointly conduct a statewide needs assessment. The Rehabilitation Act establishes that every three years we collaborate to identify the needs of people with disability within our state, especially needs related to VR services. The law also specifies that the assessment should illuminate: the needs of those with the most significant disabilities, including their needs for supported employment; the need to establish, develop, or improve Community Rehabilitation Programs; the needs of people with disabilities served by

other workforce development partners; and the needs of people with disabilities who are also members of other minority experiences underrepresented in the customer base.

The Council's Customer Satisfaction and Program Evaluation Committee has identified the key tasks involved in coordinating a successful assessment effort and we are working closely with DVR on the project.

In Coming Meetings...

The Council will focus on DVR's relationship with CRP Contractors

and

DVR's role in the process of supporting young people to make successful transitions from high school to work

On March 3rd, Governor Gregoire showcased the end of DVR's waiting list, during her weekly media advisory. The same day Washington was celebrated by the Pew Center for the States for its management of public resources. The Governor chose to highlight DVR's performance on the occasion of the prestigious award.



PASSAGES

The WSRC extends our deepest sympathy to the family of Nicholas Miller, who died April 15th. Mr. Miller, 27, of Sumner, was a customer of DVR's Tacoma office in 2002. He went on to work for Goodwill Industries. Mr. Miller worked near heavy machinery and died as a result of injuries sustained on the job. The Department of Labor and Industry is investigating the incident.

Higher Wages at Closure a Matter of Quality and Justice

These days, everyone, regardless of their ability, is feeling the economic pinch. With gas approaching four dollars a gallon and the grocery bill on the rise, economic hard times are hardly debatable. Though many are cash strapped, DVR customers are hurting more than most. According to RSA in 2006, Washington DVR was 26th out of 56 publicly funded VR programs regarding customer wages at closure. While there are many indicators of DVR's improving performance such as the increasing rehab rate, the number of plans being written, and the end of the waiting

list, it is still struggling to meet the federal standard for customer wage at closure. The Rehab Act was one of the first tools people with disabilities had with which to challenge poverty. It's not about wage as much as what wages make possible. DVR should take practical steps to help customers earn more such as: Supporting customers to be more financially literate; helping customers implement plans that build skill and opportunity for wage progression; DVR can strengthen its internal capacity for providing benefits planning;

it could also build inroads with labor, by providing technical assistance to unions on issues facing workers with disabilities; If DVR revises the CRP contract it could consider providing financial incentive to CRPs who support customers to secure placements which exceed the average wage DVR has been achieving at closure. These are just a few ways for DVR to challenge low customer wages.

DVR staff have demonstrated an ability to achieve great positive change in seemingly intractable circumstances. We hope they will apply the same elbow grease and creativity to helping customers find and keep better paying work.

The WSRC

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We're on the Web!

Visit us at:

www.wastrehabcouncil.org

Abe-Gunter Brings Heart and Skill from the East Side

Jeffry Abe-Gunter is a good listener. Maybe listening is part of his nature, or maybe it is a skill he has refined during the eleven years he has worked for the Division of Developmental Disabilities in Spokane. Abe-Gunter is a Case Resource Manager who serves seventy-five young people and their families to acquire the supports and services they need to live in the community. The people he serves range in age from nine to nineteen-years old.

Abe-Gunter is a representative of Labor on the WSRC. Similar to the Council as a whole, Abe-Gunter's strength comes from



*Jeffry Abe-Gunter
builds bridges between
DDD and DVR*

the depth and diversity of his personal and professional experience. Abe-Gunter says "Having a collection of people from different

backgrounds to improve the system that helps people with disabilities go to work has made us more effective at influencing DVR." Speaking about his own background Abe-Gunter reflects "I purposely designed my professional path to work in range of areas, with children, adults, and the elderly; in mental health, and residential." These experiences combined with his firsthand knowledge of disability, well-timed humor, and candor make Jeffry Abe-Gunter an asset to the WSRC.

Help the WSRC Spread the Word

To subscribe or unsubscribe to this newsletter, contact Joelle Brouner at brounjm@dshs.wa.gov, or call (360) 725-3690

Upcoming Quarterly Meeting Dates and Locations

July 24th and 25th
*Spokane Doubletree City Center Hotel
322 N Spokane Falls Court
Spokane, WA 99201*

October 16th and 17th
*Sea-Tac
Location to be determined*

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QUARTERLY
FROM CYBERSPACE**