

Board of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR)

September 9, 2021

Meeting Held Via ZOOM and DHS Hillview Plaza/Conference Room

MEMBERS PRESENT: Vicki Stewart, Jennifer Trenhaile, Jonathan Englund, Eric Weiss, Cole Uecker, Beth Schiltz, Bill McEntaffer, Joe Vetch, Brooke Lusk, Chris Olson, Pete Bullene, and Kevin Barber. **MEMBERS ABSENT:** Brad Konechne, Jolleen Laverdure and Lisa Merchen. **OTHERS PRESENT:** Bernie Grimme, Dan Rounds, Ben Higgins, Vicki Nelson, Katie Gran, Kyrsten Zimmerman, Linda White, Jordan Trumbo, Jessica Sehnert, Kim Ludwig, and Colette Wagoner. Interpreters were Julie Paluch and Rick Norris.

OPENING ACTIONS: Cole Uecker, Chairperson called the meeting to order. Welcome and Introductions. Cole welcomed Chris Olson as a new member and asked all members to introduce themselves as well as any guests.

Housekeeping items. Zoom features were reviewed and individuals were reminded to recognize themselves by name when speaking because we are utilizing interpreters. The voting process was outlined, with the need to conduct roll call with any action items, each voting member would be asked for their reply of yes, no, or abstain.

Approval of Agenda: Cole asked if there were any changes/additions to the agenda. Beth asked to add an agenda item, Indicator 14/Stakeholder feedback. Staff requested to switch two speakers and timeframes under the Project SEARCH item. **MOTION TO APPROVE THE AGENDA AS AMENDED – MADE (M), SECONDED (S) AND CARRIED (C).** YEAS: Vicki, Beth, Joe, Jonathan, Brooke, Bill, Peter, Kevin, and Chris. NAYS: None.

Review/Approval of Meeting Minutes: Cole called for changes/additions to the June 29 meeting minutes that were disseminated prior to the meeting; **MOTION TO APPROVE THE MINUTES FROM THE JUNE 29 MEETING, MSC.** YEAS: Vicki, Beth, Joe, Jonathan, Brooke, Bill, Peter, Kevin, and Chris. NAYS: None. Cole called for changes or additions to the Executive Committee meeting minutes; **MOTION TO APPROVE THE AUGUST 18TH EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES, MSC.** YEAS: Vicki, Beth, Joe, Jonathan, Brooke, Bill, Peter, Kevin, and Chris. NAYS: None.

ANNOUNCEMENTS: Cole invited announcements of any kind. He noted the Division's Fall Conference in October and that more information would be provided later in the meeting. Kevin shared that South Dakota Association of the Deaf board meeting will be held September 25th via Zoom. Cole asked members that if there are announcements to forward to him or staff so the information can be shared.

PUBLIC COMMENT: There was no public comment provided at this time. A conference room was reserved for anyone wanting to attend the virtual meeting, no one was present.

INTRODUCTORY COMMENTS: Cole had shared information earlier and turned it over to Bernie. Bernie asked members to pause any presenter if there were any questions, especially if acronyms are utilized. He noted the Boards/Commissions website portal and all state related boards/commissions can be found on this portal along with meeting agendas, minutes and other information. Located at: <https://boardsandcommissions.sd.gov/>. Colette spoke briefly about the board, meetings, meeting arrangements, and the staff support agreement. Bernie noted that if a member would like to attend an event as a representative of the Board, costs would be covered i.e., NDEAM registration fee, travel, etc.

POST SCHOOL OUTCOMES - INDICATOR 14 – STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK:

Beth explained that the Office of Special Education is required to establish a new baseline and target for post school outcomes. She utilized a Powerpoint to review related information. The baseline is the 2018-19 school year with the 2024-2025 school year as the target. Post school outcomes – percent of youth who are no longer in secondary school, had an IEP in effect at the time they left school, and were:

- Enrolled in higher education within one year of leaving high school;
- Enrolled in higher education or competitively employed within one year of leaving high school;
- Enrolled in higher education or in some other postsecondary education or training program; or competitively employed or in some other employment within one year of leaving high school.

She explained respondents (students/exiters); response rate and representativeness of respondents. Race/ethnicity is a new requirement this year, using regions of the state vs. urban/rural areas, and further defining disability groups. She explained the four target groups and baselines for each: higher education; higher education and competitive employment; higher education, other education or training, competitive employment, and all other employment. The last slide displayed the intervals and targets for each grouping. She noted the feedback form will be shared with members and she invited comments/feedback/suggestions on the intervals and targets i.e., too rigorous/not enough, etc. She invited members to contact her with questions, and she asked for feedback by October 1st.

TRANSITION SERVICES LIAISON PROJECT (TSLP) OVERVIEW: Dan Rounds was available to speak to the project. He stated TSLP started in 1995 as a result of a systems change grant with the purpose to improve and expand high school transition options and services for students in South Dakota. TSLP provides technical assistance

and resources to teachers, educational agencies, students, and family members. TSLP is funded by the Division of Rehabilitation Services and Office of Special Education through an agreement with Black Hills Special Services Cooperative. TSLP staff includes one coordinator (Dan) and four regional transition liaisons. He described the services and activities of the TSLP project to include:

Youth Leadership Forum: a five-day leadership and self-advocacy training for high school students with disabilities. Dan introduced Ben Higgins as a YLF student delegate who attended in 2019 and returned in 2021 as an assistant team leader. Ben shared some of his experiences from both years. He spoke of barriers he has personally overcome, addressing groups, being in new places, and meeting people. He spoke of being approached to return as an assistant leader, being grateful for the experience and expressed a thank you to the Board for its support of YLF. He shared his favorite parts of YLF included the speakers (others with disabilities), meeting legislators, and learning about the legislative process.

Catch the Wave: one day workshops to assist students with disabilities to prepare for the next level of school. These events are held on a university/technical institute campus involving the post-secondary disability services staff, student presentations, and adult agency presentations. Virtual recordings of previous workshops are available on the TSLP website located at <https://tslp.org/>.

Let's Talk about Work: one day workshops to assist students with disabilities to prepare for employment (finding and keeping employment). Focus is on employability skills and supports. Collaborative partners were outlined e.g., business community, VR, Division of Developmental Disabilities, Department of Labor and Regulation, and Business Resource Network (BRN).

Regional Transition Forums are informational interactive meetings for transition age students, family members and service providers. The forums provide awareness of TSLP events and activities, students meet local service providers and learn about available services. Topics include transfer of rights/guardianship/informed decision making, Social Security benefits and benefits counseling, as well as Person Centered Thinking (PCT) and Charting the Life Course.

Individualized Educational Plan (IEP) Workshops focus on professional development for teachers with an emphasis on Indicator 13 compliance. Areas include transition assessment, measurable post-secondary goals, annual goals, student and outside agency involvement.

Monitoring Indicator 13: TSLP staff join educational specialists in reviewing IEP's of transition age students in which approximately 30 school districts are reviewed on an

annual basis. Staff provide technical assistance and follow up in addition to providing in-service training for school district staff.

Dan spoke to a few other activities to include the Summer Institute, annual meeting for disability services coordinators from post-secondary schools, employment and SSA benefits workshops, coordinating workgroups, YLF alumni gatherings and maintaining a website. Cole thanked Dan for sharing all this information. It was noted that 15% of VR federal dollars are directed to pre-employment transition services (Pre -ETS).

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION SIOUX FALLS DISTRICT OFFICE OVERVIEW:

Bernie introduced Vicki Nelson, Sioux Falls District Office supervisor. She has worked for the Division for over 25 years. This district has one office located in Sioux Falls (no satellite offices), serves 3 counties (largest populations) and 15 school districts. She highlighted the partner agencies. It is co-located with Division of Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, DOLR, and DSS. There are 3 other staff located in the building to include the Division's Transition Program Specialist, a Benefits Specialist, and a TSLP staff member. She reviewed the VR staff, years in service, schools or educational coops and areas they each work with. Challenges for the Sioux Falls office include transportation, homelessness, cost of affordable housing, pandemic uncertainties and ensuring students receive Pre ETS. She talked about returning to work post pandemic and the increased use of Zoom, Teams, conference calls, and each counselor now has a cell phone. DocuSign and mailing forms has been utilized to obtain required participant signatures and/or permissions/releases signed. Other important considerations include how to maintain contact with schools/students. Successes included the Sioux Falls office had its first Project SEARCH site started in 2009 which is a partnership with Teachwell Solutions and Avera Health. The second Project SEARCH site started in 2020 with the Sioux Falls school district and Dow Rummel Village. Vicki spoke about the partnership with the Business Resource Network and coordinated activities. Vicki S. thanked Vicki N for the great working relationship over the years between the offices. She shared that Vicki N was chosen as the recipient for the Distinguished Service Award this year.

BREAK

(Agenda items were switched to respect the time specified for joining speakers at 11:40 AM)

WHAT IS PROJECT SKILLS?: Bernie introduced Katie Gran as the Division's Transition Specialist. Katie described Project Skills as a paid work experience for high school students with disabilities. It is a collaborative effort between VR and school districts or educational cooperatives. VR pays the student's wages, benefits and workers compensation. The school district or educational cooperative is responsible for identifying the employment site, job development/coaching and monitoring the

students' progress. This helps build upon the student's skills, work history, and references. Currently, 145 schools or educational cooperatives have signed written agreements to offer Project Skills. At the end of the third quarter of FY 2021; 135 schools/cooperatives had 362 students participating in the program since October 1, 2020. Since this time, \$436,019 has been paid out in wages/benefits (compared to \$410,000 spent during the same time period last year with COVID). Counselors are scheduling meetings now with schools and teachers, to discuss the referral process and provide information about services.

Options offered during COVID last year included allowing counselors to approve in-school placements if outside of school options were not available; VR paid for hourly job placement, job coaching and follow along services with a private provider to offer employer paid work experiences; and On the Job training was offered if the employer did not want a job coach onsite. The Employment Skills Program - a program similar to Project Skills was offered (typically reserved for students on 504 plans or adults with disabilities) as an option which VR paid for wages, benefits, job development, job coaching, and on-site monitoring.

FOLLOW UP ON SUMMER TRANSITION PLACEMENT PACKAGE PROGRAM:

Katie stated the majority of schools do not allow Project Skills over the summer e.g., shortage of teachers/staffing. VR explored options for students who were interested in summer employment e.g., employment skill development, earning a paycheck. In the past, VR counselors authorized an hourly rate to the provider to assist a student with finding employer paid summer work experience. However, providers weren't always willing to accept these referrals because students are rarely closed, thus a provider's pay was minimal i.e., finding employment, job coaching, and follow along services. The Summer Transition Placement Package benefits providers because they are paid a set amount for finding summer work experience. Due to this not being available right away when summer started, usage was minimal. Three students were authorized for this service. The Division plans to continue next summer in order to gather more data to determine its effectiveness.

A question was asked about the number of hours a student can work with the placement package and the response was a student could work a 40 hours/week (Project Skills is part time). Another question was asked if a student is doing well/likes employment, can they continue this during the school year. Katie replied that if the student participates with Project Skills it will be a different work site. Project Skills focuses on the students' IPE career goal/career exploration, whereas the pilot program could be any type of employment. Again, the goal of this program was to incentivize providers to work with students over the few short summer months.

OVERVIEW OF SUMMER PRE ETS CAMPS: The Division funded 10 summer camps which focused on independent living and employment soft skills development for

students with disabilities. There were a total of 101 students participate - 74 had an open case with VR and 27 are potentially eligible to receive services (they must apply for services). The total cost for all 10 camps was \$45,416 which was less than budgeted. Some camps were scaled down due to the number of students participating and four camps were cancelled completely because they did not have enough students registered to participate. CSD is continuing with plans to host a camp this fall.

DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Eric welcomed everyone and thanked them for their participation. He apologized for missing the start of the meeting, however a meeting conflict surfaced. He noted the Board plays an important role in the involvement with the activities of the Division. He also invited members to contact him if they have questions or concerns.

Kyrsten Zimmerman joined at this time. The above item was paused in order to continue with the Project SEARCH item.

OVERVIEW OF PROJECT SEARCH: Katie explained that Project SEARCH is a business-led transition program for students with disabilities. Students who have completed all academic requirements for graduation yet still receive services from their secondary school (students between the ages of 18 to 21 are eligible to apply). Students have the chance to explore careers and develop transferable job skills. The goal of Project SEARCH is competitive, integrated, community employment for each participant. Project SEARCH is an internship program which provides students the opportunity to put employability skills into practice during the school year. For five days a week, students report to the host business to learn employability skills in the classroom and job skills while participating in targeted internships. They receive support with accommodations, adaptations, and on-the-job training.

South Dakota has five different Project SEARCH sites. Aberdeen - Avera St. Luke's; Brookings - SDSU, Rapid City and surrounding communities - Monument Health, Teachwell Solutions-Sioux Falls - Avera McKennan, Sioux Falls School District - Dow Rummel Village. The only site that was able to participate this past year during COVID was the Brookings/SDSU site.

A total of 205 students have participated since 2010, the start of Project SEARCH in South Dakota. Project SEARCH sites in SD have a 96% successful closure rate for those who have participated; with an average hourly wage of \$9.51/hour while working on average of 23 hours/week. There was discussion with potential partners to start a site in Yankton, however a school needs to be identified.

Brookings/SDSU Project SEARCH Site: Katie introduced Kyrsten Zimmerman with the Brookings/SDSU site and turned the report over to her. Kyrsten noted the site started in 2013 and recently started the 9th year. To date, fifty students have started the

program with forty-five completing the program successfully. Five of the eight years, 100% of the student interns have obtained competitive integrated employment. The majority of students have been hired by the host site with some students identifying work in the community. The community is very supportive of the project. Work experiences with SDSU include AirMark/food service provider, Wellness Center, and facility and services. Some unique work experiences have included work in the Vice President's office as well as in the museum. During COVID, some changes were made but for the most part it was business as usual. This led to adding a rotation opportunity with a local manufacturer and a rotation site with a daycare center. Each project involves staff from the local school district/special education, and an employment specialist. In Brookings the Division pays a fee for service to Advance, a local community service provider for Kyrsten's time as an employment specialist who works with the local school district's special education teacher.

Aberdeen/Avera St. Luke's Project SEARCH Site: Linda White joined the meeting and was introduced. She is a special education teacher with the Aberdeen school district. This is the 13th year for this site. Linda is the instructor and coordinator for this site. She attended the international Project SEARCH training virtually along with Ann Fortin, VR counselor. New curriculum was introduced and is specifically designed for Project SEARCH (i.e., technology, work place safety, maintaining employment, team building, self-advocacy, financial literacy, health and wellness). Last year due to COVID they were unable to have work site rotations in the hospital. They were able to identify rotations with the Salvation Army i.e., cooking, food distribution, and working in the store. The Salvation Army is willing to continue working as a partner, however, one issue is identifying transportation for students to the work site. This current year they have returned to Avera St. Luke's Hospital, which requires the student and any staff member participating to be vaccinated. As of last year, transition services have been extended to students following completion of school. Students have identified employment as their main goal, however other transition services can be offered i.e., cooking classes, independent living skills. Another change included the option for students to accept or decline the stipend. Issues with reporting the stipend to Social Security was creating issues for students as the stipend was being viewed as income which impacted benefits. All Project SEARCH students will work with a benefits specialists to help them better understand the impact of wages on benefits.

A question was asked about transportation issues and if the school district provides this service. The response was that no not in Aberdeen the student must find their own way to work and home as public transportation is available in the community. In Brookings, the school provides transportation for students to the work site. The Brookings school district contracts with the local transit provider to provide services.

Katie noted that the National Project SEARCH Team determined that transportation to the host business and internships off site should be as independent as possible. Some

SEARCH sites have students transferring from neighboring towns with help from the school district, but if students live in the community of the SEARCH site, they should utilize personal or public transportation and not rely on school districts for the transportation.

Another question was asked about the location of the site and if this impacts or limits the student's choice. The response provided was looking at the overall site of the hospital or university campus and the number of different employment options available and what would be a good fit for the student to include the need for transferable skills e.g., cashier, janitorial, inventory, grounds keeping, food service. Kyrsten shared that in Brookings, student's are requesting to be around similar age peers and/or wanting the experience of being on a college campus. Staff talked about weighing the students' wants with what they need (social skills, instruction, behavior).

BREAK FOR LUNCH:

DIVISION OF REHABILITATION SERVICES DIRECTOR'S REPORT CONTINUED:

Meeting Options: Eric talked about testing a hybrid meeting format combining the use of ZOOM and DDN equipment. The DDN sites are located throughout the state in conference rooms of various state offices. This would allow a small group to congregate at one site and join a meeting virtually. The Executive Committee discussed meeting options and elected to use ZOOM for the September meeting with the rise in positive cases for COVID. This will be an ongoing discussion item for members. Data Report: The data report was shared with members prior to the meeting. Eric noted this report includes 4 years of data with the most recent quarter April 1, 2021 through June 30, 2021. This quarter typically reflects the least number of applications for VR. He reviewed data in terms of total applications, eligibilities, total served and the closed case data. The numbers are lower when compared to previous program years, but things are improving with numbers slowly increasing. Budget Summary: Eric explained the federal VR grant program noting the fiscal year of October 1 through September 30th. VR agencies can use the 2nd year carryover if all regulations are met. All funds must be obligated and expended by the 2nd year. Expenditures are down due to the pandemic. Service enhancements have been implemented to utilize some funding. He explained the re-allotment process where the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) allows states to either relinquish funds or to request additional funds. Annually, VR agencies are required to complete and submit the RSA 692 Form to relinquish or request a specific amount of funding. There have been a number of years where the Division has requested additional funds, however last year the Division gave \$2 million back. This year no VR funds were relinquished. The same process is utilized for Supported Employment (SE) funds and a total of \$200,000 was relinquished this year. Changes have been made in terms of how SE funds can be utilized with funds only utilized for a participant the on the start date of employment and thereafter. In addition, SE funds have to be utilized to support

to two groups; youth with significant disabilities (ages 14-24) and only an equal level (no more) of SE funds can be utilized on the 2nd grouping i.e., individuals with the most significant disabilities. A question was asked if the Division relinquishes funds does this impact future funding levels? The response provided was that if funds are relinquished this does not impact future funding levels.

Tribal Native American Vocational Rehabilitation Programs or 121 Programs: Eric explained that the federal government has a competitive grant process specific for tribal nations which, if awarded are 5-year grants. There are six tribal NA VR programs in South Dakota. Oglala Sioux Tribe, Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe, Standing Rock Sioux Tribe, Lower Brule Sioux Tribe, Rosebud Sioux Tribe and Sisseton-Wahpeton. The Division has a cooperative agreement in place with each Native American VR program. The status of each: Oglala and Cheyenne River Sioux Tribes are nearing the end of their 5 year grant; Standing Rock and Rosebud missed the deadline for grant submission, and both have submitted requests for no-cost extensions. Lower Brule may be competing for new grant and Sisseton Wahpeton is in either year 2 or 3 of the grant cycle. It was noted that if a Tribal Native American VR program ceases to exist, individuals can be served through the state agency, which is required to serve all eligible individuals in the state. Cole noted that through various conversations he has had with a few programs, several may reach out to the Division for assistance/support.

OTHER VR PROGRAM INITIATIVES: Bernie invited members to think about items or topics for upcoming meetings and asked members to be in touch with him or other Division staff. The 2021 Fall Conference is scheduled to be held October 26-28 in Deadwood. Staff has registered and obtained sleeping rooms for members needing accommodations. He invited members to be in touch with BVR staff if interested in attending. The Agenda at a Glance was disseminated which highlights speakers and break out sessions. Approximately 225 individuals have registered to attend.

Bernie spoke to the Employment Specialist Coordinator Request for Proposal. This initiative is being implemented to fill a void in services especially in very rural areas. The proposal calls for a total of four new positions to meet the needs of VR with the primary responsibility of obtaining competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities. Duties include resume/interviewing skills development, job placement, support services needed on the job and contacting employers/businesses on hiring people with disabilities. Two responses were received in regard to the June 4th request for proposals. Black Hills Special Services Cooperative (BHSSC) was selected and a contract has been signed. BHSSC has listed the positions and is currently soliciting applicants. Interviews will begin after September 15th with an expected hire date in October. The new hires will be located in the Rapid City, Pierre, Aberdeen and Yankton VR offices and they will report to the district supervisor. These full-time positions will be dedicated solely to the role of employment specialist to work with VR

clients and businesses. The Division is hoping this will also reduce the turnover rate, offering stability and full-time hours.

Customized Employment Initiative: Jordan Trumbo, DRS staff, spoke to the provider training being conducted by Griffin-Hammis Associates (GHA). Initially, monthly community of practice meetings were held with private providers virtually to identify training needs and provide networking opportunities. Work continues with the initial training groups. GHA staff will provide in person training soon. Customized employment training will also be conducted virtually in January/February. This training will target VR and community service provider's new staff, private providers, and mental health center staff. Another focus has been on updating policies and procedures for customized employment. This involves working on a process for fidelity reviews, providing extra measures to ensure quality services are being provided. A Customized Employment Establishment Grant Request for Proposals was issued on September 1st to establish positions within a CSP. These positions will be within a community service provider and dedicated to providing customized employment (CE) services to obtain better outcomes and expand CE efforts. The goal is to have contracts in place by early January and staff that are hired will be CE certified or obtain training to become CE certified. These will be four-year grants with funding decreasing over the four-year time period.

Jordan spoke to a first draft of an internal data report the Division is working on which will contain information on applicants and available services, and it will be completed prior to the end of the year. Jordan passed it on to Jessica who is the staff person responsible for generating the Division's year end data.

Jessica Sehnert spoke to the following items: Application/Eligibility Applications were down 183 as compared to the previous year. There was a decrease in all age groups except youth (an additional 25 applicants this past program year). The average amount of time from Application to eligibility was 27.6 days, which is a decrease from the year prior; however there was a slight increase in the time from eligibility to IPE by an average of 5 days. Individual Plan for Employment: 82% of those that apply for services were unemployed with 23% of them being students. Employment and Closure: The number of individuals who exited after eligibility and prior to plan had a significant decrease from 444 in 2019-20 to 266 in program year 2020-21. However, there was a decrease exit with competitive integrated employment this past year from 515 to 474. Overall, case closure type reflected a 2% increase in those that exited this program year with competitive employment. (Total exited in 19-20 was 1817 and in 20-21 it was 1571.) The service industry continues to be the most common employment occupation within the state. Average weekly hours and earnings saw an increase from \$10.95 average to \$12.28, with reduction of average hours from 23 to 21.

Youth with Disabilities: There was an increase in number of youth who applied for services this past program year. The data report shows that each district is serving about as many youth as adults across the state. The most common IPE services were counseling and guidance, OJT, Project skills, follow along and job coaching services. Additionally, Project SEARCH was added this year to the annual data report. A total of 205 students have participated in this program since it started; and there were 9 successful closed cases this past program year.

Project Skills: there was a decrease in the number of students who utilized this service 2019-2020; 465 students used this service as compared to the last program year of 362 students. There was no significant decrease noted with an individual school.

Fiscal Analysis: Overall, there was a 5% increase in payment to private organizations; and a 3% increase for payments to community rehabilitation programs. And, a 5% decrease in payments to educational institutions. There were 3 community service providers with no payments during this program year and a slight decrease in payments to the others throughout the state. Overall, there was an increase in payments to community mental health centers from the previous year (just below \$14,000). There was also an increase in payments to Career Learning Centers (just below \$29,000).

Ticket to Work: There was a decrease in payments this past program year as well as number of clients. Program Year 2019-20 the payments were based on 630 clients and Program Year 2020-21 had 529 clients.

Section 511: When the law went into effect there were over 1000 individuals who fit under this requirement, this past year it was down to 182, which is a 41% decrease since 2016. The changes mandated by Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Section 511, outlines limitations on the payment of subminimum wages imposed by Section 511 require individuals with disabilities, including youth with disabilities to satisfy service related requirements in order to start or maintain subminimum wage employment. Jessica will forward a copy of the draft report to staff to be shared with the Board.

Kim Ludwig, DRS staff presented next on the following items. Business Technical Assistance: Staff has been meeting with staff from Avantara, which is a medical/healthcare facility with 17 locations throughout the state. Initial meetings were to learn more about the business, the variety of employment related positions and to provide information on VR and services available. Kim put the Avantara staff from the Groton and Milbank offices in touch with VR staff that work in these areas to discuss potential opportunities. Conversation is continuing and meetings are being arranged to identify potential VR candidates that may be interested in working for Avantara.

Kim has been working with VR staff and representatives from a Housing Development Authority office. Discussions have involved a VR recipient who was interested in part time employment and the need for reasonable accommodations (effective communication). Information was provided on the Rocky Mountain ADA Technical Assistance Center and the Job Accommodation Network in addition to information on the ADA (Title I/Employment) and Section 503 regulations (organization in receipt of federal funds).

Kim and other Aberdeen District office staff have partnered with the local Aberdeen Department of Labor and Regulation office to share information on the VR program to several large businesses in the northeast part of the state that are closing and laying off employees. This effort created an opportunity for VR to conduct outreach to any employees with disabilities from those businesses.

Trainings to Businesses: DRS, the Business Resource Network (BRN), and the Workforce Diversity Network of the Black Hills (WDMNH) are co-hosting statewide WINDMILLS trainings to businesses. Two sessions are held virtually on a quarterly basis. These are interactive trainings that equips employment professionals to become more inclusive of individuals with disabilities in the workplace. The following are a few trainings that were held or scheduled:

- Two trainings held in August. The first focused on teaching participants to anticipate situations that might occur in the workplace with people with disabilities, disability etiquette/language, and to familiarize them with disability employment laws. The second training focused on acquainting participants with the process in identifying reasonable accommodations, the interactive communication process to develop accommodations, sensitize them to a variety of disabilities that may require accommodations, and provided information on the ADA Amendments Act's definition of a reasonable accommodation.
- DRS, BRN, and WDMNH will be conducting an in-person training during the 2021 SoDak Society of Human Resources Management State Conference September 15th-17th in Sioux Falls. The training will focus on highlighting the difficulties managers and supervisors can have dealing with a problem without the inclusion of a new employee with a disability. It will allow for participants to illustrate the importance of understanding a company's goals, such as affirmative action and what a supervisor's responsibility is.
- An in-person training will be provided on a reasonable accommodation curriculum at the SD Department of Labor's Veterans' Training Conference to be held in Pierre on September 23rd.
- Staff will present on a WINDMILLS training curriculum during the annual SD National Alliance on Mental Illness (NAMI SD) conference to be held virtually the end of September.

- Staff will facilitate a WINDMILLS training curriculum during the annual Fall Conference that will be held October 26th-28th in Deadwood.

Statewide National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Event: DRS will be hosting a statewide, virtual NDEAM training event. The event will feature the *Hearts of Glass* film which will be followed by hosting a virtual panel discussion. **Hearts of Glass** follows the first 15 months of operation of Vertical Harvest (VH), a multi-story, state-of-the-art hydroponic greenhouse located in Jackson Hole, Wyoming which provides meaningful, competitive employment for people with disabilities. The format will consist of participants viewing the film independently and then a live panel discussion will occur the following week. The public can view the film October 7th-14th and the live panel discussion will be held on October 12th at 8:30 AM (CST). This event will be open to the public.

STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL (SILC) UPDATE: Eric shared he serves on the SILC and provides updates to the Board, as it is a standing agenda item. The Rehabilitation Act (Act) requires each state to have a SILC in order to receive federal funds. The Act outlines the need for the SILC to develop a State Plan for Independent Living in addition to language of coordinating activities with other entities such as the BVR and Council on Developmental Disabilities. The SILC hosts quarterly meetings and it last met on June 3rd. Agenda items included an overview of CSD and Independent Living Choices programs/services and Rapid City's Rapid Transit System. Standing agenda items include a review of the SPIL goals/objectives and indicators, CIL quarterly reports, program reviews, Division of SBVI and SBVI Board and BVR updates, and staff report. The next meeting will be held virtually on September 22nd. This meeting will honor Helen Hartmann, as the recipient of the 2021 Champion of Independent Living Services Award.

STAFF UPDATE: BVR/SILC Appointments: The BVR had two pending vacancies the end of June created by term limits. One member was interested in serving a second term (if appointed) and the other member was unable to serve a second term due to workload. Information and submitted nominations were forwarded to the Governor for her consideration following a statewide solicitation of nominations. As result, Kevin was reappointed for a second 3-year term and Chris was appointed as a new member (3 year term). The SILC had six vacancies occur at the end June as well. Four members were interested in serving a second term, if appointed. The names of these members in addition to gathered nominations were submitted to the Governor for consideration. The four members were reappointed, and two new members were appointed for a total of six appointments. The BVR and SILC are fully appointed.

National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM): NDEAM highlights events to recognize the contributions of people with disabilities in the workforce, and

employers who demonstrate a commitment to an inclusive work environment. Activities are being planned by local communities across the state with financial support from the Boards of Vocational Rehabilitation, Service to the Blind and Visually Impaired, SILC, Division and Department of Human Services. A Request for Proposals was issued in December of 2020, and requests were due in February. A review committee with representatives from the SILC and two boards review the proposals and funding requests and provide their funding recommendations to the BVR. Twelve communities were awarded funding for a total of approximately \$26,000. Each community has a local planning committee which determines training/educational needs. Events consist of speakers (in person or virtual), social/media blitz, or featured articles of employees with disabilities or employers who hire individuals with disabilities. A list of events is being gathered and will be shared with members. If an event is taking place in a location near a member, they are encouraged to attend. The 2021 NDEAM theme is "America's Recovery: Powered by Inclusion". Information is located on the Department of Labor/Office of Disability Employment Policy's website in addition to ordering this year's poster: <https://www.dol.gov/agencies/odep/initiatives/ndeam>.

Governor's Awards Ceremony: The recipients have been announced for each of the award categories. Plans are progressing with hosting the Governor's Awards Ceremony and reception on October 5th in Pierre. Members are invited to attend if interested and should have received information and a RSVP form. Members were encouraged to contact staff if interested in attending.

Budget update: A budget report was disseminated prior to the meeting which identified expenditures for the time period of January 1, 2021, thru the end of June. To date there have been limited expenditures under the meeting expense line item (pro-rated cost of Zoom renewal and outgoing member gift). Staff spoke to anticipated expenditures to support Board member's expenses to attend the 2021 Fall Conference and Strategic Planning expenses (Governor's Awards and NDEAM events).

OTHER BUSINESS: There was no other business.

CLOSING ACTIONS: Future Agenda Items: A new member orientation will be held in the future. The orientation would be open to any member interested in attending. Cole spoke to the benefit of hearing from VR participants or YLF student delegates as was done today. He noted the value of hearing from those who receive services and how it impacts ones' life. Cole invited members to be in touch with him or staff about other possible agenda items. Other December meeting items will include the Governor's Report to the Governor/RSA Commissioner. Schedule Next Meeting: Staff will send out a doodle poll to try to identify a date in December that will work for the majority of members. Adjournment: Cole asked if there was anything else to discuss, and hearing none, **MOTION TO ADJOURN THE MEETING AT 3:12 PM, MSC.** YEAS: Vicki, Joe, Jonathan, Pete, and Kevin.

