

**Private Sector
Vocational Technical Stakeholder Group
March 21, 2016 Tukwila**

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROVIDERS

Attendees

Robert Gaffney, Gaffney Consulting
April Poier, Ability Vocational Consulting
Jan Veling, SCA Pacific
Bradley Ehrlich, Career Opportunities Group
Todd Gendreau, Strategic Consulting Services Inc.
Heidi Trisler, Sound Vocational
Jay Sloane, Rehabilitation and Evaluation Services

Absent

Brad Reckord, Rainier/Vocational Options Inc.
Nicole Hernandez, Advanced Vocational Solutions
Todd Martin, Martin Consulting
Kimberly North, Achieve Consulting Team
Roselyn Blair, Strategic Consulting

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES/RETURN TO WORK SERVICES

Attendees

Ryan Guppy, RTW Partnerships Chief
Debra Hatzialexiou, Legal Services Program Manager
Coral Macy, VDRO Supervisor
Erich Hahn, Management Analyst
Donna Spencer, RTW Services Management Consultant
Laurinda Grytness, Policy & Education Coordinator
Kristine Ostler, Vocational Service Specialist Supervisor
Melissa Sutherland, Vocational Service Specialist Supervisor
Janice Orcutt, Vocational Performance Measure Administrator
Mary McEvoy, PSRS Customer Service Specialist II

Absent

Richard Wilson, RTW Program Manager
Rheo Aieta, Private Sector Rehabilitation Services Supervisor
Bill Smith, RTW Partnerships Outreach Program Manager

Audience Members

Kaethe Long, Grant & Associates
Cathy Cottingham, People Systems
Coreen Urrutia, People Systems

Chrissy Pierce, Favorite Associates
Kari D'Aboy, D'Aboy Career Horizons
Cleo Risser, Ability Vocational Services
Leslie Miller, Peninsula Vocational Services
Allison Baldwin, Single-Handed Consulting
Justin Helenius, Pacific Rehab Centers
Anne Bornholt, Peninsula Voc. Services

Welcome and Announcements

The VTSG meeting minutes from January 21, 2016 were reviewed and approved.

Spring Vocational Conference Announcement - Donna Spencer

Please save the date June 8, 2016, for our Spring Vocational Conference. The focus will be on reducing long term disability through understanding the psycho-social issues that workers may face when they are in our system and encouraging employers to access the many return to work incentive programs L&I has available. Preferred Worker rules and ESD platform demonstration are other agenda topics. We hope to see you there.

Preferred Worker Rule Making Announcement - Laurinda Grytness

We are asking VRCs to be actively involved. Here is a brief overview of rulemaking process:

- CR-101 Preproposal – informs public we are proposing changes to rules
- Early stakeholdering – involves business and labor in rule drafting
- CR-102 Proposed rulemaking – informs public about upcoming public hearing(s), publishes the proposed rules, and gives directions on how to submit comments
- Public hearing – gives public the opportunity to comment on the proposed rules in person
- CR-103 Adoption – advises public of adoption and the effective date of the rules

Preferred worker rulemaking – progress so far

- Early stakeholdering is almost finished
- Planning to file the CR-102 April 5, 2016
- Public hearing is scheduled May 17, 2016, at 1:00 p.m. at L&I's Tumwater main building, in the auditorium.
- Anticipated rule adoption is June 14, with effective date of July 15, 2016.

You can view preferred worker rulemaking documents that have been filed at <http://www.lni.wa.gov/LawRule/WhatsNew/Proposed/default.asp?RuleID=265>

Option 2 Announcement - Kristine Ostler

Kristine asked for feedback from VTSG members about their concerns with closing a plan implementation referral when a worker has selected Option 2. The audience responded with the following comments:

It is not clear what the Department would like in a closure. It was suggested a cover sheet be used to note why PI has stopped, what skills were gained, and were there any barriers or concerns while in plan implementation.

VRCs would like to provide an exit interview and assist workers with the direction they are headed. This includes:

- Completing preferred worker application
- Assisting with resume
- Referral to WorkSource
- Explaining how to use option 2 benefits
- Tying-up any loose ends.

VRCs are not always aware that Option 2 was selected. When L&I enters the Option 2 outcome, the VRCs no longer have access to CAC. Once the Option 2 selection is entered, VRCs still have 14 days to bill. VRCs indicated that they would be ok using the 14 days after option 2 is entered *if* they were made aware of the Option 2 selection.

VDRO Announcement - Coral Macy

The VDRO currently faxes a copy of the dispute and mails a copy of the final determination to the assigned VRC. The VRC receives a copy of the director's letter as well as the VDAR indicating whether the vocational determination was upheld, not upheld or deferred. The VDRO will continue to do this.

Currently, the VDRO sends a finding worksheet to the VRC only. It is a one page document and indicates whether a finding is given or not. There is a short narrative which indicates the basis for the finding.

The VDRO currently sends the finding worksheet to the assigned VRC both for uphold and non-uphold decisions. However, findings are not given when a vocational determination is upheld. A finding is only applicable when the vocational determination cannot be upheld.

- The VDRO will continue to communicate a copy of the dispute to the VRC.
- The VDRO will no longer send a finding sheet when the vocational determination is upheld.

- The VDRO will send a finding worksheet on all non-upholds whether a finding is given or not.
- The VDRO will continue to communicate the final determination whether upheld, not upheld or deferred to the VRC.
- The VRC will receive a copy of the letter indicating the dispute is deferred as well as a brief VDAR. The claim unit VSS will coordinate with the VRC for the next steps.

Other Announcements - Ryan Guppy

Donna Spencer's retirement: Donna will be retiring from L & I on 3/30/16 after several years of service.

WorkForce Board Liaison hire: Karen Ahrens, from Health Services Analysis, was recently hired to assume the role of the WorkForce Board Liaison. This role will focus on increasing the value of retraining for injured workers who attend private schools. Karen will be embedded at the WorkForce Board to review, observe, and identify gaps in the regulatory environment (shared between L&I and the WorkForce Board) and will bring recommendations to the forefront. Karen will be reporting out as her role develops.

Recruitment: We continue to have multiple VSS openings in Tumwater and are actively working to fill these positions. It was reported that in some cases there are opportunities to telecommute. We are actively exploring the expansion of telework opportunities but this is dependent on VSS staffing levels. We also offer flex schedules.

RIVA update: The Re-Imagine Vocational Audit project is well underway. The vision of this project is: Support vocational providers in doing the right thing, effectively address those who cannot or will not, and ensure the audit program is easily understood by the vocational community, stakeholders, and claim staff. The RIVA Advisory Committee is comprised of 6 private VRC's and department staff and has been meeting monthly since November 2015.

The first project is around complaints sent to PSRS. Quick wins from the complaint project include:

- All complaint investigations now begin with a phone call to the VRC to better understand and perhaps mitigate the complaint issue. Five of eight recent complaints did not require submittal of case notes
- Electronic submittal of case notes: Project staff is finalizing plans for vocational providers to have the option of submitting audit documents electronically.
- Education and program transparency:
 - Changed our audit letters to use "plain talk" and provide more information about what to expect.

- Shared the Audit Manual with VRCs
- Developing audit FAQs based on feedback from the vocational community.

Next steps include:

- Updating the PSRS website
- Evaluating the changes made to the complaint process as part of the Lean PDCA (Plan-Do-Check-Adjust) model
- Identify and prioritize what services matter the most and define quality and effectiveness. We will continue collecting feedback and, working with the Advisory Committee, we use this information to help us re-imagine what vocational services should look like.

Testing project update: A Testing Enhancement Explanatory Statement was handed out to VTSG members to address feedback received at the previous VTSG meeting.

Substance and addiction guidelines: We received a request from a VTSG member to discuss the department's current stance on substance abuse and addiction. We worked with claims to obtain information about the department's current stance on these topics. Much of the current stance is determined by the following WAC's:

Addiction Treatment--Limitation of treatment and temporary treatment of unrelated conditions when retarding recovery

We briefly reviewed the language of WAC 296-20-03085 and 296-20-055 to help inform the vocational community on how to navigate situations of substance and addiction issues. The VTSG member who submitted this question was not in attendance but a follow up call was placed to this member following the meeting and the information was shared.

Competing RTW Resources: This discussion was a continuation from a previous VTSG meeting. This topic concerns Retro/TPA's, VRC's, and CM's seemingly in competition to provide RTW services. It was reiterated that informal or quasi AWA (meaning ability to work assessments completed outside of a CM's request) were considered but were not used to make final determination on the vocational disposition of claims. The department only uses assessments from a formal AWA referral that was requested by the department.

Performance standards of VRC standard work: A rumor was reported that VRC standard work performance indicators are going to replace the current performance measures. The importance of VRC standard was discussed and the rumor was *dismissed*. Our data regarding VRC standard work is important but is not currently part of the formal performance measurement system.

ADMX Pilot —Ryan Guppy

The purpose of the ADMX pilot is to enable VRCs to do “what matters most” to get a return to work.

There have been 39 AMDX requests granted by the VSS staff. Of those, the average duration of the AWA was 414 days. We are currently fine tuning the ADMX Pilot and the intent is to identify barriers and engage the injured worker. This pilot will remain in place for the foreseeable future.

Feedback from VTSG about ADMX so far included “One of the best things I’ve seen in voc”, “Fantastic! It’s a great opportunity to work better with voc and engage workers” and positive experiences with same day turnaround and continuity of services.

Enhanced Vocational Services Project—Erich Hahn

The project has made 99 AWA referrals and has 29 referral closures. The chart below shows a comparison of the mix of RTW, ATW, and Eligible for Plan Development outcomes for AWA referrals made when Over 90 days of Time Loss has been paid before the referral was made, when Under 90 days of Time-Loss has been paid before the referral was made, and the referrals in the Enhanced Vocational Services project.

Although the sample size of closures is still small, the Enhanced Vocational Services project shows a promisingly higher RTW rate and decreased percentages of ATW and Eligible for Plan (SAS3) outcomes.

99 referrals / 29 closures	Referrals made at Over 90 days of TL	Referrals made at under 90 days of TL	Enhanced Services
RTW	21%	37%	46%
ATW	54%	55%	50%
SAS3	25%	9%	4%

Worker Engagement—Erich Hahn

VTSG members and audience participants broke into four groups to discuss what worker engagement looked like to them and what barriers they face in engaging the workers in the return to work process. This generated 27 perspectives concerning worker engagement and a list of 18 barriers that VRCs encounter when facilitating worker engagement. This feedback will be used to inform the Enhanced Vocational Services Project.