

**Private Sector  
Vocational Technical Stakeholder Group  
September 19<sup>th</sup>, 2017 Tukwila**

***VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROVIDERS***

**Attendees**

April Poier, Ability Vocational Consulting  
Heidi Trisler-Ballew, Sound Vocational  
Robert Gaffney, Gaffney Consulting  
Cory Turner, Vocational Connections  
Cherie Smith, Vocational Connections Inc.  
Leslie Weaver, Disability Management Consulting  
Jan Veling, SCA Pacific  
Nicole Hernandez, Advanced Vocational Solutions  
Ken Smith, Rainier Case Management, Inc.

**Absent**

Jay Sloane, Rehabilitation and Evaluation Services  
Irina Razvina, Ability Vocational Consulting

***DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES/RETURN TO WORK SERVICES***

**Attendees**

Ryan Guppy, RTW Partnerships Chief  
Erin Moncada, PSRS Supervisor  
Erich Hahn, Management Analyst  
Melissa Sutherland, Vocational Service Specialist Supervisor  
Kristine Ostler, Vocational Service Specialist Supervisor  
Janice Orcutt, Vocational Performance Measure Administrator  
Lauren Royer, Administrative Assistant  
Amanda Fisher, RTWP Operations Manager  
Richard Wilson, Private Sector Compliance Manager

**Absent**

Coral Macy, VDRO Supervisor  
Kate Cashman, Strategic Business Office  
Laurinda Grytness, Vocational Policies and Rules Administrator  
Vickie Kennedy, Assistant Director Insurance Services  
Debra Hatzialexiou, Legal Services Program Manager  
Lara Drabek, Vocational Service Specialist Supervisor

## **Welcome and Announcements**

**Safety topic:** Use headlights during down pours and check windshield wipers, rain is likely here to stay.

**IW Focus Groups:** In August, we performed two IW Focus groups about the vocational process. The information gathered will not be used as a witch-hunt, instead it will be used to form best practices based on what our customer's want. There was also good feedback for CM's.

Q: Robert Gaffney: How were the IW's selected?

A: They were screened through a random selection using an independent market research company, which provided a generalized sampling

**ADMX Update:** There are two blurbs on ADMX on What's New, we are working on combining them into one over the next week.

## **Psychosocial Breakout Groups**

We'd like to get some feedback on the vocational conference and how it relates to the content of Psychosocial barriers and information. To refresh- Dr Sullivan provided an informational presentation on Psychosocial issues which was followed by Sarah and Ryanne's presentation on PGAP, Karen Ahrens on Private Schools, and Justin Helenius with resources such as 2-1-1.

### **How did this fit into your job, just general observations?**

Cory: I thought it was good timing, we have been approached by CM's several times and we did not understand our role in this and neither did the providers. The more it comes out the easier it will be

Cathy: There is a disability cycle that we're aware of, being able to find levers to get people out, PGAP really helps deal with that really well. If we can motivate a worker, we can get them back to work.

Robert: There has been a historical change in this, in the past we wouldn't talk about psychological problems, now it's an acceptance that these issues are out there. It's a historical evolution to be proactive in addressing these issues. It's enlightening as a mental health provider and VRC.

Cory: Historically we've been afraid to touch certain things and help people in this way, now there's a shift to being supported to do what we need to do.

The group then split into 3 breakout groups and provided report outs:

### **What is motivating and energizing about this?**

**Group 1:** Addressing psychosocial issues helps enhances the likelihood of successful outcomes. We identified the department walking the dog and we appreciate that. Leads to empowerment and validation for IWs.

**Group 2:** It allows us to be more creative in how we are solving the worker's issues. It our ties our educational and psych backgrounds into our work.

**Group 3:** It feels like the counselor gets to be a helper again and help our clients overcome disability and get them on the right path. It is researched based methodology, what are the options? Nothing is off limits; we are able to tailor to what our client's need.

**What barriers do you think could get in the way of our collective ability to implement effective practices?**

**Group 1:** VRCs have a responsibility to have a certain skillset in this new environment- could this be a requirement to evaluate quality and effectiveness, fee caps are a barrier, not all CMs are varying in their demands that do not meet the shift. Inconsistencies

**Group 2:** Competing motivations with different stakeholders that can create barriers (atty's, docs, TPAs), fear of opening Pandora's box (should we really go in and talk about homelessness), WACs and RCWs do not support this direction all the time, communication distribution. Private sectors are the mediators for the whole plan in education everyone involved in the claim and it's a lot to keep everyone engaged.

**Group 3:** Lack of counseling background in VRCs, referrals aren't always based on quality and effectiveness- having referrals go to VRCs showing they are interested in best practices, increasing education.

**What do you think needs to happen so that we can effectively address psychosocial risks and create a culture of engagement?**

**Group 1:** Brown bags for medical providers, attorneys, employers. Continue to identify and promote best practices. Workloads vary across the board.

**Group 2:** Eliminate fee caps, early referrals, LNI follow-through .

**Group 3:** Increase VRC requirements for relevant L&I CEU training, increasing expectations for firms and supervisors in their background/training.

**VRC's Access to Ask LNI**

The group discussed ways they have been currently keeping track of vocational policy at L&I. Answers varied from homemade binders and policies emailed by VSS staff. Rich provided a walkthrough of Ask LNI (as can be accessed through CAC).

**VRP Update**

1. **Identify best practices and guidelines that support worker engagement and return to work focus**
2. **Educate all parties on best practices**
3. **Analyze our existing partnership with vocational providers and incorporate changes to ensure that it is collaborative, transparent, supports innovation and improves service quality.**

Could we have a copy of the goals of VRP?

A: We can post on What's New or create a page dedicated to VRP.

Work streams are currently being organized in their focus, how they are going to function, timelines, and pre-work is being done before they are being launched. Some are a little further along than others. We'd like to launch, sooner than January, a VRP Pilot. We will also be recruiting additional members for our advisory committee to consult deliverables of the VRP work streams.

Work streams:

1. Complaint process
2. Referral Process
3. Incentives and payments
4. Quality Assurance/Quality Control
5. Vocational Recovery Referral
6. Best Practices
7. Communications

### **VTSG: Enhancing the Value**

*The purpose of VTSG is to maintain ongoing collaboration between L&I and vocational rehabilitation providers who work with the State's workers' compensation program. The roles and responsibilities of this group are to:*

*Give feedback on proposals related to current and emerging issues.*

*Serve as a professional resource on vocational rehabilitation issues to help inform the department's policy and program decision-making.*

We'd like to go over purpose of this group and gain clarity on how it is being utilized. Lately, it seems like attendance and participation have been lower and we've been mostly doing a report out at the group, which misses the original intention of collaboration with the group.

Membership: Terms, representation, recruitment and attendance- there haven't been discussions around these ideas, we'd like your feedback on how this group should be ran.

April: Historically, there wasn't anyone with a background in VRC, audience members were not allowed to speak, it was not collaborative or open. It was uncomfortable. It has evolved from that time and it's exciting. We all take our time to come to these meetings and we want to make it worthwhile for both sides.

Ryan: We're trying to figure out why people are not attending, is there not a value to the group?

Leslie: Eastern Washington does things differently, I love being able to share our perspective with this group. I do report back to my group about topics we discuss.

Ken: I think a lot of VRCs just do not know that VTSG exists, that they are invited, some may not be able to go or want to 'waste' time versus billable hours.

Robert: I think VTSG has fallen off since we went away from uniformed meetings on Mondays, and is more random meetings. If people knew they could get CEUs for showing up, that may get some traction as an incentive.

Cory: I remember the audience being packed during big items (particularly negative), perhaps there is a lack of participation because things are more on the positive side. In the past it was more about defending ourselves and now it's just going well and people don't feel the need to jump in and fix anything.

Group continued to discuss VTSG participation, roles of members, then participated in a survey.