

**Private Sector  
Vocational Technical Stakeholder Group (VTSG)  
September 21, 2015 Tumwater**

***VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROVIDERS***

**Attendees**

Heidi Trisler, Sound Vocational Services Inc.  
Jay Sloane, Rehabilitation and Evaluation Services  
Robert Gaffney, Gaffney Consulting  
Ken Smith, Rainier/Vocational Options Inc.  
Bradley Ehrlich, Career Opportunities Group  
Kimberly North, Achieve Consulting Team  
Todd Gendreau, Strategic Consulting Services Inc.  
April Poier, Ability Vocational Consulting  
Jan Veling, Pacific Rehabilitation Centers

**Absent**

Nicole Hernandez, Advanced Vocational Solutions  
Todd Martin, Martin Consulting  
Roselyn Blair, Strategic Consulting Services Inc.

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

**Attendees**

Vickie Kennedy, Assistant Director, Insurance Services  
Ryan Guppy, RTW Partnerships Chief  
Richard Wilson, RTW Compliance Program Manager  
Bill Smith, Stay at Work Program Manager  
Rheo Aieta, Private Sector Rehabilitation Services Supervisor  
Donna Spencer, RTW Services Management Consultant  
Kristine Ostler, Vocational Service Specialist Supervisor  
Laurinda Grytness, Policy & Education Coordinator  
Jody Witham, Vocational Performance Measure Administrator  
Mary McEvoy, PSRS Customer Service Specialist II

**Absent**

Melissa Sutherland, Vocational Service Specialist Supervisor  
Debra Hatzialexiou, Legal Services Program Manager

**Audience Members**

Kaethe Long, Grant & Associates  
Kari D'Aboy, D'Aboy Career Horizons  
Joseph Young, Ability Vocational Consulting  
Sean Murphy, Peninsula Vocational Services

Loren Zinder, Labor & Industries  
Cleo Risser, Ability Vocational Consulting  
Kevin Leneker, Single Handed Consulting  
Dale Bristow, Single Handed Consulting  
Alice Jacobs, SCA Pacific Case Management  
Katrina Linker, Vocational Rehab Specialists  
Patti Kacz, J. Donley & Associates  
Cathy Cottingham, People Systems  
Coreen Urrutia, People Systems

### **Welcome and Announcements**

The VTSG meeting minutes from July 20, 2015 were reviewed and approved.

### **Bill Smith—Safety Tip**

Wet weather driving tips include:

- Slow down when visibility is reduced
- Keep your windshields and windows clean and crack open your window and turn fan to a higher speed to keep your windows from fogging up
- Drive with your lights on, even during daylight hours, use low beams when driving in fog, and periodically wipe mud and dirt from your headlights
- Pull over if the weather is so bad you can't see the side of the road or other vehicles at a safe distance.

### **Ryan Guppy Announcements**

We will not be hosting a Vocational Conference this Fall but will host a conference in the Spring of 2016

Preferred Worker Program (PWP) draft rules and policies are currently being developed through a collaborative stakeholder process. We are anxious for the rules and policies to be developed and will inform the vocational community as soon as we know. VRC's will play an integral role in the success of this newly enhanced benefit for employers and injured workers.

The Early Ability to Work Experiment has proven successful and the Department is currently working on implementing this approach as a new standard for making AWA referrals. Two claims units will be trained each week on this new approach between now and full implementation which is scheduled for this December.

### **Rich Wilson Announcements**

A draft charter has been completed for VRC performance audit reform. We recruited six external members for the Advisory Committee. Three were identified by IARP and IMG and three applied and were accepted. The Advisory Committee will meet monthly. The first meeting is October 26<sup>th</sup>. Project staff have been developing current state materials (data, narrative and process charts) to help educate the Advisory Committee. The project vision is to create an audit program that (1) supports vocational providers in doing the right thing and effectively addresses those who cannot or will not, and (2) is easily understood by the vocational community, stakeholders, and claim staff.

Alia Kennedy was hired recently for the position of Workforce Board Liaison. She will head up a 12 month project aimed at ensuring quality retraining for injured workers. The focus will be primarily on private career schools and Alia will be working closely with the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board. In fact, she will be located there so that we can make the most of the agency partnership.

Alia's background includes research and analysis for the Department of Health, experience working in Senate support services and the legal system. She has undergraduate degrees in journalism and communications. She recently received her law degree from Gonzaga. We'll plan to come back to VTSG for feedback on issues regarding private career schools.

### **Donna Spencer Announcements**

WorkSource new hire --Erin McPhee is now accepting referrals at WorkSource Renton: She was added to the vocational services contact page and can be reached at: **206-477-7007**. The *new AWA referral letters* to the worker and employer have been drafted for review by stakeholders. They include many VTSG suggestions and we hope to present the final versions at the next VTSG meeting.

Increasing RTW Visibility on the Internet: Project Update--Thanks to everybody who participated in the card sort to determine our main topic headings. We're ready to start looking at navigation and messaging. Some things we've accomplished before we begin:

- Reordered the Industrial insurance page from "More" for vocational providers to direct links for: What's New, Vendor Lookup Tool: Approved Providers, and Forms.
- Provided a link to MARFS Chapter 30 on fee caps, billing, payment policies, and fee caps" directly on the Voc Rehab website.
- Made the name line longer on the Accountability Agreement form for the school field.

- Changed the name of the “Request for Preferred Worker Status” form to “Preferred Worker Status Request”– since in an alphabetical listing of forms, most look for “Preferred Worker” not “Request”.
- Deleted 20 outdated pages, links, or PDFs
- Put a link to per diem rates on the plan development website.
- Updated the list of employers offering OJT positions.
- Provided contact information for re-employment specialists.

Here’s what we are working on:

- Providing VRC access to previous claims in CAC.
- Adding information for training programs about temporary or permanent relocation.
- Providing a link to the SS Disability website.

Sarah Martin is exploring an expansion of the Vendor Look-up tool--approved Providers list:

- By county not just city
- Separating bookstores from tools in the filter options.
- Including companies that can provide computers.

We also have a work group reviewing the 2004 Guidelines: including VDRO, claims floor sups and program managers. We need a couple of volunteers to contribute to a deeper dive of the transferable skills analysis guideline. If you are interested in participating contact [Spn235@LNI.wa.gov](mailto:Spn235@LNI.wa.gov).

### **Kristine Ostler Announcement**

Claims Unit VSS Supervisors are excited to announce that they have hired two new Vocational Services Specialists.

Loren Zinder--Loren has a B.A. Degree in Psychology as well as a M.S. Degree in Psychology. He holds certifications as a Disability Management Specialist (CDMS), Worker’s Compensation Claims Administrator (WCCA), and as a Certified Professional of Disability Management (CPDM). Loren impressed the panel with enthusiasm as well as his wealth of knowledge in Disability Management and Industrial Insurance.

Greg Castleberry-- Greg has a B.A. Degree in Psychology and a M.A. Degree in Rehabilitation Counseling. He holds a certification as a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). Greg impressed the interview panel with his communication style, quiet manner, thoughtfulness and presentation style. He has experience managing a vocational rehabilitation caseload and with job placement.

### **Rheo Aieta Announcements**

A timelier posting of VTSG minutes had been previously requested. Feedback was requested regarding the department's recent "What's New" posting of an earlier abridged version of VTSG minutes that only emphasized key messages. No concerns were expressed regarding the lack of specific details in the preview version of VTSG minutes.

The department has been working on the development of standardized testing referral form with instruction sheet as well as a standardized testing report format with instruction sheet. We hope to present the documents at the next VTSG meeting in November or in January 2016. We will be looking for volunteer teams with one person piloting the referral form and the other person completing the testing report.

### **Laurinda Grytness Announcement**

#### Option 2 updates

1. The Spanish translation of the NEW Accountability Agreement has been requested and should be available soon.
2. Updates are completed and publication has been requested for:
  - F280-018-000 Plan Development: What are my rights & responsibilities
  - F280-019-000 Carrying Out Your Vocational Plan: Your rights and responsibilities during plan implementation

While we're waiting for publication, please use the Accountability Agreement to review Option 2 information with workers.

3. Please remind VRCs to use the new Option 1 Plan Modification Accountability Agreement when doing a plan modification.
4. We're compiling a list of Option 2 FAQs and answers. Please send your questions to [VocRehabProgram@LNI.WA.GOV](mailto:VocRehabProgram@LNI.WA.GOV). We'll post updated information on *What's New* as soon as we can.
5. The CR-102 for Option 2 rules will be filed September 22. The public hearing is October 27 at 1:00 p.m., in the auditorium here in Tumwater.

### **Megan Bjornberg Announcement**

The AWA Enhancement project was developed to create a standardized form which would increase WAC compliance and encourage standard work.

Initial review of closing reports which were received in January of 2015 revealed 18% of them met WAC requirements.

The reports that did not meet the WAC had the following issues;

- Missing Work History information
- No information regarding level of education
- Missing date of injury wages
- Missing JA signature page, no medical release within report
- Post-injury conditions completely blank, no N/A or “none” indicated, just not addressed
- Missing return to work wages
- There was no explanation provided when information was missing

Volunteers were asked to pilot a new form. We received 102 reports with an 89% WAC compliance rate!

There will be a few revisions to the form as we were able to identify some trends regarding what made the report more difficult, or items that were consistently incorrect.

Once revisions are completed, a recommendation will be sent to executive management.

### **Functional Capacity Evaluation (FCE) Update—Sarah Martin**

Members supported a guideline allowing to 3-5 JAs per FCE. A few more would be ok in rare cases such as a union employer who has multiple JAs/JDs that need to be considered that will help facilitate return to work. The VRC could call the FCE evaluator to discuss the unique circumstances.

A draft document of AP Concurrence was handed out providing possible questions a VRC could ask an AP instead of the concurrence question. Minor edits were made and two new questions were added based on feedback and concerns.

Quality: L&I is starting FCE evaluator training in October to expand those in the pilot who are following the new report, procedures, and testing requirements. We hope to roll it out system wide by the end of the year.

Members supported the idea of having the VRC and FCE evaluator talk before and after an FCE.

### **Early AWA Update/JLARC Findings—Vickie Kennedy/Ryan Guppy**

The Department has been experimenting with making AWA referrals at 60-70 days of time-loss since January 2014. This experiment has been met with great success by delivering significantly better outcomes to injured workers and employers. As a result, the Department has decided to make this early approach to making AWA's a regular part of how it makes referrals for private vocational services. Between September and December 2015, the Department will be training two claim units each week on how to make AWA referrals between 60 and 70 days of time-loss.

The Joint Legislative Review Committee recently completed an 18 month review of the Departments claims administration process. One of their recommendations was to move several of our initiatives out of pilot, or experiment phase, and into a regular part of how it administers claims. These initiatives include the Return to Work Score Pilot, which uses a predictive analytic algorithm to determine those injured workers most at risk for long term disability, and the Early Ability to Work Assessment. The Department has been working on implementing these pilots and experiments since June 2015 and September 2015 respectively.

## **Goal 2 Performance Measures--Vickie Kennedy/Ryan Guppy**

The Department has been tracking time-loss persistency for some time as a way to measure the overall effectiveness of operational and other efficiencies. Time-loss persistency is measured at various intervals: three months, six months, nine months, and twelve months. Over the past couple of years some of these intervals have remained relatively flat. Recently, however; we have seen positive movement in that time-loss persistency is decreasing. This trend will take additional analysis to determine which operational, or other efficiencies, are contributing most to the overall health of our system.