VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION PROVIDERS
Attendees
April Poier, Ability Vocational Consulting
Jay Sloane, Rehabilitation and Evaluation Services
Jan Veling, SCA Pacific
Heidi Trisler, Sound Vocational

Absent
Nicole Hernandez, Advanced Vocational Solutions
Kimberly North, Achieve Consulting Team
Roselyn Blair, Strategic Consulting
Robert Gaffney, Gaffney Consulting
Brad Reckord, Rainier/Vocational Options Inc.
Todd Martin, Martin Consulting
Amy Williams, Strategic Consulting Services, Inc.
Cherie Smith, Vocational Connections Inc.
Leslie Weaver, Disability Management Consulting

DEPARTMENT OF LABOR AND INDUSTRIES/RETURN TO WORK SERVICES
Attendees
Ryan Guppy, RTW Partnerships Chief
Coral Macy, VDRO Supervisor
Erich Hahn, Management Analyst
Kristine Ostler, Vocational Service Specialist Supervisor
Melissa Sutherland, Vocational Service Specialist Supervisor
Janice Orcutt, Vocational Performance Measure Administrator
Lauren Royer, Administrative Assistant
Amanda Fisher, RTW Outreach Program Manager
Richard Wilson, RTW Program Manager
Debra Hatzialexiou, Legal Services Program Manager

Absent
Bill Smith, RTW Partnerships Outreach Program Manager

Welcome and Announcements
**Safety topic was Kitchen Safety**- Baking soda for grease fire, don’t forget to use oven mitts even after taking items from the oven.

**Melissa**: Announced new VSS Matt Perkins

**Debra H**: Will be presenting to trial lawyers on VDRO to give them guidance on how to assist us in handling disputes. If you have any items you’d like for me to share with the trial lawyers, let me know so I can share your message with them. Please feel free to email your questions to Rich, Lauren, Kristine

April: Why are they not interested in enhanced services for their clients? They’ll tell some clients they don’t need the services. Debra will bring this question forward

**Amanda**: Hired fourth outreach Robbie Rotts out of Region 1, we will be posting for a 5th outreach specialist in the next month. Tacoma has a recruitment for VSS currently

**Rich**: Announced Bills retirement and provided an update on PGAP: The program has been in pilot phase for the last few years and now we’ve decided to operationalizes under RTW partnerships and administrated by Sarah Martin in addition to her regular duties. The objective is to grow the use of the program and we’d like to see more people become coaches. There will be a workshop in Tumwater in September.

What is the best way to send referrals? Contact Sarah Martin, site should be updated.

We will be posting the position soon.

-Announced the private school collaboration project run by Karen Ahrens will be open to a permanent position as there is a need for a full time liaison.

-We are close to filling the PSRS Sup position, there should be an announcement on the what’s new soon.

**Audience Announcement**: Gardient (Sanjeed): Launched a community forum to open up engagement, open to everyone. Will share with L&I, it pulls updates from What’s new and send notifications. It’s in the early stages of launch, the more people participate the more valuable it is. Currently there are about 300 counselors signed up.

**Improving the plan modification process**

Erich presented flipchart illustrations that speak to the work done to improve the plan modification process. Starting with a problem statement, he explained the process with the end result being the updated form that was reviewed by the group.

Kent Powell, Fernando Herron, and Shelli Fleming (VSS staff) reviewed the Plan Time/Cost/Travel Encumbrance form with the group. This form actually condenses 3 forms into one form. Anytime you do a plan mod, you will fill out this one form and send it in.

-Sometimes the person writing the plan mod isn’t the assigned VRC, can there be a spot for the person who authored the report?

-A column for previous expanded cost? Fernando: it wasn’t necessary and could create confusion, now it’s just one form.
Kent notes you’ll want to complete the form every time, fully. It will always be the most up to date form. The group paired off and wrote down questions based on the scenarios using the original form.

-Erich collected feedback from the group

**Working** - Simpler, one page, combined code

**Not-Working**: Other, change in curriculum accountability agreement, need to get used to it, need instructions and scenarios on back possibly?

Group discussed accessing the form electronically

Leslie: Prior to 2016 you couldn’t work with the forms due to some quirks, could you test outside of your system to make sure quirks aren’t there?

Sanjeed: How much are you modifying the plan? Kristine: We need to review the narrative regardless as it could be disputable.

**Voclink Connect Changes**

Ray Jones and Sony Garza presented Voclink Connect changes. Please refer to the presentation handout for details of the presentation.

-Where do we get a copy of the LINIIS manual? It’s where the current voc link manual is.

-Sanjeed: Existing Washington Secure Access- can the same account be used? Yes, you can get to LINIIS, it will be on your ‘My L&I’. You will have to add this new service, and register one time only. When you log into ‘My Secure L&I’ and register once, it will then always generate your account without needing a password.

-Leslie: Do we do this on every computer? No, once your account is updated it’ll just always update with your account.

**PW Applications**

Steve Edwards (VSS) gave a background on PW changes noting things are moving along well and presented the Preferred Worker Request form (part A). What we’d like to do is look at the form, the three criteria, and we’re looking for notes on improving the form.

Ryan: If a person can’t get back to JOI but to a perm modified work, they won’t need to go through a formal retraining.

How many EOI have hired? 85-90% hired and a strong connection to TPA’s.

Ryan: There are three bullet points as criteria listed on the site that were pulled right from WAC and incorporated on this form:

1. The worker’s health care provider has permanently restricted the worker from returning to the work they were doing at the time of injury.
2. The Work restrictions given by the health care provider are supported by medical findings related to the accepted condition
3. Further recovery is not expected, due to the worker’s permanent loss of physical or mental function related to the accepted condition.

Once you can start becoming familiar you can apply it.

Ryan stressed the importance of attaching the necessary documentation along with the PW form to ensure that down the line, all the steps can be completed.

Continuous Employment benefit: If an IW is employed for 12 months and exhibit the same work pattern, employer can apply for 10% of their gross wage. We haven’t received any yet.

Melissa: Some additional notes about what we’ve been seeing so far:
- VRC is only attaching the signature page, we need the full JA. We also need permanent JA’s.
- There isn’t documentation showing timeline of treatment.
- Provider numbers not listed correctly.
- VRC marks all three boxes but doesn’t attach anything.
- Over documentation is an issue too. The hardest thing just seems to be transitioning from the old way.

Feedback-
- Clear info to voc community that it doesn’t have to be temporary approval but a modification on approval, instead of disapproving due to restrictions?

- What about a medical questionnaire? Yes, that could be really useful, Melissa notes we’ve seen some good ones that address the questions on this form. April: it makes sense that we need to ensure this is completed and clear but providers don’t always make the requested information easy to access/clarify.

- Ryan notes to use caution when sending letters due to context and recommends working on different routes to create engagement. The preferred method is to meet with the provider and he recommends letting L&I know if there is a lack of cooperation in allowing this interaction as a VRC needing to complete this task.

- April: The auto letter mentions that the ‘intent to hire form’ which is no longer around and to perhaps add part B so it is readily accessible for the customer.

Please feel free to send any questions to Steve in anything PW related

Update on the Vocational Recovery Project

Ryan began a follow up discussion on Vocational Recovery Project to lead to a discussion of next steps.

Merging two separate initiatives- putting rehabilitation into the system and supporting people doing the right thing and re-establishing the audit program. Previously, the Enhanced Services and Vocational Audit were running separately. The goal is to take an approach that is similar to other divisions (such as an escalation process, instead of immediate fees and penalties). The fees and penalties also created behaviors in the community. RIVA was launched to address those issues. Referring to the handout
“Vocational Recovery Project” which outlined the Project Goals and Objectives as well as Work Streams that have been identified. Ryan notes that there will be continuous updates on the progress of the VRP as this project are the nuts and bolts of RTW Partnerships. The work streams will not always be working simultaneously and at the same time however.

Janice: We’ve taken your hopes and concerns and identified which workstreams they would fit in and will be incorporating them into this.

        Why is it called Vocational Recovery Project? It came out of the discussions, the language these groups were using were resonating with providers. It’s language that a couple groups are using. It sends a positive message.

Ryan: We’ve had some internal meetings about going on knowledge campaigns around the state to express the changes. It’s important from an awareness standpoint to bring everyone along.

        For the Good of the Order

March 31st is the date of the Spring Vocational Conference and will be a return of Jason Parker to keep dialogue going. It will be an updated approach as well, so if you have had JP training you will still learn something new.

Leslie: Is there a way we could access some reinforcement of the material? That is one of those gaps, we’d like to have aligned into our program moving forward.