



IARP WA SUMMER 2018 Newsletter

President's Column



Sandra Holman, MA, CRC, CDMS

Welcome to the Summer 2018 issue of the WA-IARP Newsletter! As hard working Vocational Rehabilitation Professionals, I hope you are also able to sneak some time away to enjoy your family, and our beautiful weather. This is my first President's column as your new WA-IARP President. I am so excited to help represent our Chapter, and work alongside the high-caliber professionals on our Board this year that

include Irina Razvina, Past President; Angela Westling, President Elect; Matt Nystul, Treasurer; Jennifer Bowes, Member at Large; Bradley Ehrlich, Member at Large; Leslie Weaver, Member at Large; Michelle Jensen, Member at Large; and Laurel Burditt-Creek, Member at Large. I am so thankful for our Board's contributions, and commitment to serving the Chapter membership.

Our May 2018 IARP Conference at the Emerald Queen Casino Conference Center was indeed a bit of a gamble, but we think we came out on top! We had some great feedback about the speakers, content, and venue. We had speakers from around the country including Jeff Carlisle, Mary Barros-Bailey, and Linda Parker come out to talk to us about ethics, transferable skills, and working with the Veteran's Administration, as well as a fantastic variety of local professionals in our field. We also had the honor of having Joel Sacks, Director of the Department of Labor and Industries; Vickie Kennedy, Assistant Director; and Ryan Guppy, Chief of Return to Work Partnerships, talk to us about our evolving partnership with the Department of Labor and Industries, and providing a worker-centric approach going forward. The Vocational Recovery Project that kicked off in February 2018 was discussed at length. If you would like to know more about the Vocational Recovery Project, I would encourage you to attend the Fall L&I Conference (Date to be announced), the RTW Summit sponsored by WSIA on 7/24/18, or any of the Town Hall meetings put on by L&I. We will do our best to keep our Calendar of Events updated on our webpage.

As your Board, we thought it would be valuable to offer a Job Search training considering our newer ability to provide enhanced services at any time on claims. **The training will take place at Suncadia Resort in Cle Elum, WA on 9/27/18.** The training will be featuring Adam Zajac, a Nationally Accredited Resume Writer; and Georgia Duffy; a Premier Job Search Expert. The content will include how to assist our clients with preparing their resumes; technical aspects of modern resume writing (applicant tracking software "ATS" system compliance, formatting, writing style, etc.), helping clients use LinkedIn as a job search tool, and assisting clients in preparing for interviews. CEUs will be available. We hope you will join us! Registration will be up soon.

IARP WA Summer 2018 Newsletter

President Elect Angela Westling, and I were able to attend an IARP Leadership Training in Minneapolis in June 2018. Washington State continues to have the highest number of members in the Nation with 167 members. Our commitment is to continue to host continuing education trainings which provide an opportunity to network with your colleagues, and keep you updated with all the current trends in our industry. I would encourage you to spend some time on the IARP Website at <https://connect.rehabpro.org/home>. It is rich with resources including active discussion threads, forums, and the quarterly Journal, RehabPro. We will also do our best to keep you updated on our website at <https://connect.rehabpro.org/washington/home>.

This year, we decided as a Board that we would like to send one of our members to the National IARP Conference in Charlotte, North Carolina from 10/25/18-10/27/18. We are offering a \$1,500.00 scholarship to one member. You can apply for the scholarship by writing in to the Board about why attending the National Conference would be of value to your career, and what you would like to gain from the experience. We will in turn ask that you write an article for our next Newsletter about your experience. If you are interested in applying for the scholarship, please submit your paper to sholman@scsvoc.com no later than 9/5/18. Preference will be given to individuals who have never attended a National Conference before.

This is a wonderful time to be a Vocational Rehabilitation Professional in Washington State. The Department of Labor and Industries is examining what is working, and what is not within the worker's compensations system, and have made it clear that they want to invest in vocational rehabilitation services because we can help our clients move forward with their lives. I have only been in the industry for 16 years, and this feels like a revitalizing, and refreshing time in our career field. I hope everyone will get involved.

As your Board, we always want to hear from you. Please do not hesitate to contact us with your feedback and suggestions on how we can serve you better. It is a pleasure and honor to serve as your WA-IARP President this year. You can contact me at any time with questions or feedback at sholman@scsvoc.com

Thank you! Sandra Holman, MA, CRC, CDMS, WA-IARP President

L&I's Vocational Recovery Pilot – What we're talking about when we talk about innovation

An interview with Rhonda Smith, L&I Claim Manager, followed by a reaction from Alice Jacobs, M.S., C.R.C.

Q: Rhonda, I heard that initially you felt skeptical about participating on L&I's Vocational Recovery pilot. Can you tell me why?

A: I was accustomed to working with a core group of VRCs in whom I had a lot of confidence. Over time, I had identified them as being highly effective in helping workers. Also, I respected them for having a strong work ethic and being very responsive. I admit it — I'm a Type A person, so I don't like change that I can't control. I felt the pilot might mean a step backward.

Q: 'A step backward,' what does that mean?

A: In the past, I felt burned on some referrals when a VRC may have dropped the ball or didn't meet my expectations. VRCs probably have the same reactions to us in Claims. All of us have experienced failures of compatibility, right? For collaboration, understanding and trust are key.

Q: What was it that you felt you might lose by participating in the pilot?

A: The VRCs in my core group were already coaching workers, setting positive expectations. They were also helping with coordination. For example, they made sure workers' appointments for PT or an MRI got scheduled or that we didn't miss a light-duty opportunity. So, they were informally using some of the best practices that we are embracing. The department was not yet embracing the practices, so they weren't doing it to the same extent as we are in the pilot. But, the VRCs in my core group were already ahead of the game.

Q: Tell me how your actual experience on the pilot has played out.

A: I haven't lost anything. Using these strategies creates success. I can observe some less experienced VRCs on the pilot trying strategies that may be new for them, like coaching workers instead of just assessing them. They're succeeding. It's exciting to see them get excited.

Q: What's it like participating on the pilot AND on the workstream that is observing the pilot?

A: It's been amazing. I always considered my core group of VRCs to be my front line. But the chance to be face to face with the VRCs and talk about our processes has taught me so much more. A lot of aha moments have come out of the meetings, on both sides, I think. Until now, I didn't really have a clear sense of how VRCs got things done, or really have a full vision of how invaluable they can be to all of us as claim managers.

I could see the same sort of light going on with VRCs related to their expectations for a claim manager. For example, a VRC might do something to help with coordination. Then a CM says, "Good, I'll look at that at the next review date." Then the review turns out to be too far out to be of any use. I suspect that

VRCs may have thought we just didn't care enough. What they may not understand is that sometimes before we can deal with their priority we have to complete a very long list of other tasks that are equally important.

It would be great if more VRCs and CMs on the pilot get to have this face-to-face experience.

Q: What are the challenging aspects of the pilot?

A: In the past, VRCs may have had some anxiety about offering to coordinate. They didn't want to offend the CM. Some CMs might have pushed back and told the VRCs not to get out in front of them on the claim. Now I'm trying to get other CMs to understand how invaluable the VRC can be. They aren't harping on you. They're offering to help! We can't get to all of this and VRCs have the skills and the willingness to fill the gaps, so why not let them? They can be our front line in more ways than I had previously understood.

Everyone on the workstream hopes that the pilot can give us an accurate picture of how successful these best practices could be. So, we are trying to capture issues or concerns that could impact opportunities for RTW.

One issue is the many miles VRCs now need to drive for the pilot referrals in order to meet face to face with workers. This was part of my learning more about how VRCs actually do their work. Having stronger relationships with workers, employers, and providers is already paying off, but the participating VRCs are on the road all the time. It doesn't seem sustainable.

Another concern is that the high caseload here at L&I may sometimes hamper a CM's ability to take prompt action.

More thoughts on coordination — from Alice Jacobs, M.S., C.R.C., Case Manager, SCA Pacific Case Management

I agree with Rhonda about VRCs being able to help by seeing in the chart notes an attending provider's request for PT and initiating actions to make sure it gets scheduled. Though I have to say, I never waited until the chart note was available (that could take a month). Usually I was reaching out to the worker right after their appointment with the medical provider to get an update on the treatment plan. I believe other VRCs do this too.

In the pilot, we are engaging with the worker much earlier in the claim. We establish relationships that allow me to attend more medical appointments with clients than ever before. I am able to learn about the treatment first hand and discuss what is being projected for the future. Then we discuss the worker's current status and what the employer might be able to offer — if not right away, then down the road — and what the worker will need to be able to do down the road to return to the JOI.

IARP WA Summer 2018 Newsletter

If I am present at a meeting where the attending health provider requests an IME, I ask them to put it in their chart notes and on the APF. Then I follow up with the CM about the request, so the CM can make plans to schedule the appointment.

Read next issue of IARP newsletter

Alice Jacobs will explain more about how a VRC's help can be vital to a worker — and she will share her strategies for solving some challenges.

Some feedback on L & I's conference:

At the recent Labor & Industries Spring Conference on June 1st, they had the pleasure of having Bob Wilson, President and CEO of WorkersCompensation.com speak to the audience. Bob attended the segment on the Vocational Recovery Project and, as you'll see in his attached blog, he was impressed by what he heard:

A column from "Bob's Cluttered Desk" By Robert Wilson, President and CEO of WorkersCompensation.com

With Vocational Recovery Project, Washington L&I Returns to Return to Work.

The Private Sector Should Pay Attention to Their Results- 06/07/18

It was one of the most inspirational presentations I've seen in years. They almost sounded surprised at the comments they were making. They were clearly enthusiastic and were describing outcomes of the experiment they were part of, yet they still sounded astonished at what they were conveying. This was clearly something new and unique for them.

And for the people speaking, it is only the beginning of a longer pilot project.

I was in Washington State last week, a guest of Washington Labor & Industry for their Vocational Counselor Conference. Assembled before the room of 300 attendees was a group of about 30 people; L&I Claims Managers and Vocational Counselors from the private sector. They were talking about the new "Vocational Recovery Project" pilot (VRP), and the wonderful things they saw coming out of it. From my experience and point of view, the Vocational Recovery Project is unlike any other in the country at this time.

But I will have to come back to that, as there is more to the beginning of this story.

Starting back in 2014, the department of L&I launched an effort to improve the return to work rate for their injured workers while lowering the amount of long term disability cases they were seeing. They launched an aggressive program designed to get injured workers into the hands of Vocational Counselors faster and to more effect. On the faster front, they took a VRC referral rate that was running over 350 days and reduced that time to an average of 68 days. They also made an intensive effort to partner with the VRC community, improving communications and encouraging them to "step beyond the box;" to look for and work on solutions using methods that were not directly addressed within their regulations. As part of this effort, they suspended a somewhat contentious audit process that caused angst within the VRC community. In short, L&I started making a concerted effort for their voc system to concentrate on positive outcomes instead of rote process.

The results since the inception of that effort have been impressive. The state has seen a 20% reduction in the number of long term disability cases – a number that equals about 800 workers every year. Director Joel Sacks, in a presentation to the group reported that the state is starting to see a reduction in "expected expenditures" of about two billion dollars.

That's "Billion" with a "B." And while that reduction in future liabilities may not be 100% attributable to early Voc intervention, it is the result of a culture shift that embraces creative solutions and ultimate recovery.

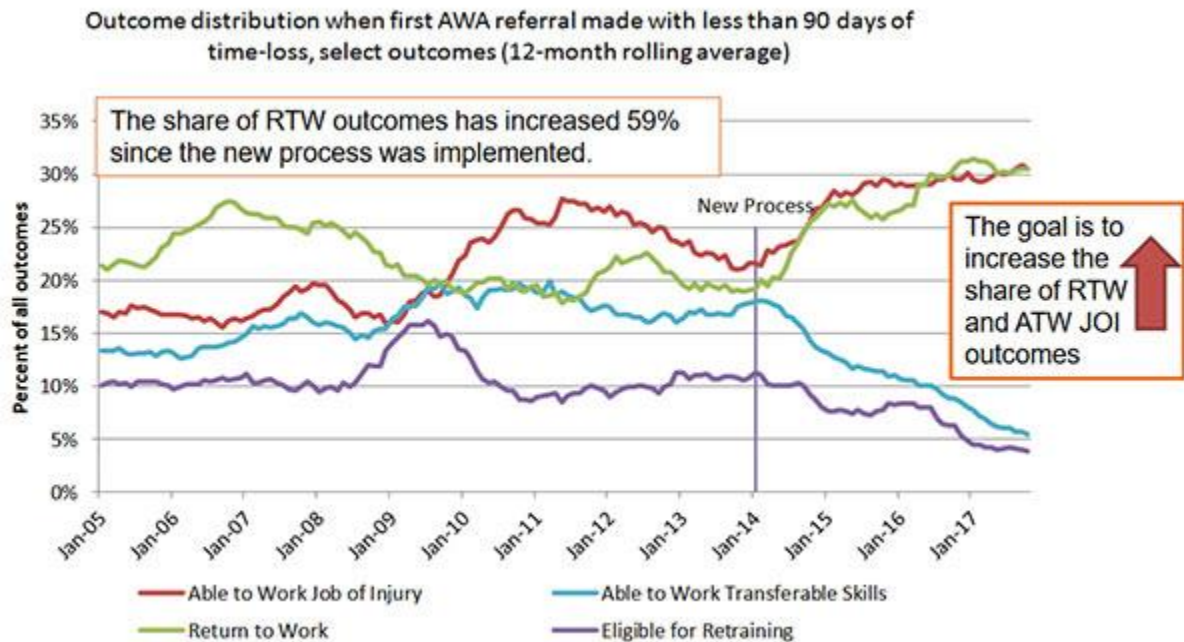


Chart courtesy of WA L&I. [Click for larger view](#)

The Vocational Recovery Project is, in my view, the next logical step in this effort. Laying out 9 distinct goals for the program (6 of which have been enacted in the current pilot), it is designed to pair claims managers directly with vocational experts to collaborate on a recovery plan for their injured workers.

I must admit to the potential for a slight bias here. Ryan Guppy, L&I's Chief of RTW Partnerships, freely told the group that the name, Vocational Recovery Project, was drawn in part from my now 5 year old "Workers' Recovery" effort. So clearly, I thought it to be a brilliant idea from the outset. Freakin' brilliant, if I do say so myself.

And if anyone doubts L&I's commitment to RTW, I would venture to point out that they actually have a "Chief of RTW Partnerships."

The 30 or so people I mentioned earlier were part of a group of 65 professionals tasked under the VR Referral Project, a subset program of the VRP. Many of them spoke of how positive an experience they had working closely with their assigned counterparts. They described unique problems with injured workers, as well as the very original solutions they created in this collaborative effort. They spoke about teamwork and troubleshooting. They talked about the importance of recognizing psycho-social influences. They described creative solutions that would otherwise not have manifested themselves. It was interesting to see people outside their comfort zones recognize that this was actually a good place to be.

IARP WA Summer 2018 Newsletter

I am a bit reticent to actually write about this. I am, after all, an unabashed fan of the free enterprise capitalistic system. I have always been of the school where government - slow, inflexible and stodgy, is normally not the solution. That belongs to the realm of the nimble and motivated entrepreneur – the “for profit” world looking to build a better mousetrap.

But in this case, I would be wrong (For God's Sake don't tell Paduda I said that. I'll never hear the end of it).

Washington Labor & Industries is a large government agency. While they have many functions in the state, they serve as the monopolistic (they prefer the word “exclusive”) provider of workers' compensation insurance for their population. By all private sector standards, they should not be innovating anything. However, with Director Joel Sacks, Insurance Director Vickie Kennedy, RTW Partner Chief Ryan Guppy and many more dedicated professionals, L&I has the right people in the right place at the right time.

And they are doing the right thing; showing that lives can be restored, disability can be avoided, and money can be saved in the process. L&I is embracing the importance of addressing psychosocial issues. They are encouraging collaboration and original thought in problem solving. And they are getting results that are making a difference. They understand that avoiding disability at all cost will ultimately save money and restore lives. There is a lot to learn from what they are doing.

It is a lesson that the private sector should be paying attention to.

Mark Your Calendars!

- WA-IARP Fall training: September 27, 2018 in Suncadia, WA:
<https://connect.rehabpro.org/washington/events>
- IARP Annual Conference: October 25-27, 2018, Charlotte, NC
<http://rehabpro.org/events/EventDetails.aspx?id=1054913>
- Deadline for scholarship application to National IARP Conference- September 5, 2018

Some highlights from our WA-IARP Conference!

The annual Washington Chapter IARP conference was held on May 17-18. Our members earned 15 CEUs by attending both days of the conference. We had some excellent speakers and engaging topics. One of our highlights included having all of the Vocational Service Specialists from the Department of Labor & Industries attend.

IARP WA Summer 2018 Newsletter

Below is our 2017-2018 incoming and outgoing WA Chapter IARP Board. *Amy Williams, Past President; Angela Westling, President Elect; Laurel Burditt-Creek, Member at Large, Michelle Jensen, Member at Large, Matt Nystul, Treasurer; Jennifer Bowes, Member at Large; Leslie Weaver, Member at Large; Bradley Ehrlich, Member at Large; Kim North, Past Treasurer; Irina Razvina, Past President and Sandra Thom, Current President.*



Director of L & I

IARP WA Summer 2018 Newsletter

When Ryan Guppy left the private sector to become the Director of Return to Work Partnerships at L & I, it was a few weeks before the fall Washington IARP conference. Although he did not attend the conference that year, he did come to the social, where the new IARP- WA Chapter President, Jennifer Bowes, was sporting a pair of 6-inch plaid platform shoes. Two years later, he joked that if she could find them in his size, he would wear them at the conference. As a surprise this year, she presented him with these shoes and a challenge, would he wear them? Ever true to his word, he donned the shoes, strutted his stuff on stage and down the aisles and owned it, like Mick Jagger himself! Well done Ryan and thank you for being a good sport, - you are a Rock Star!



IARP-WA Summer 2018 Newsletter – July 2018

Return to work- Rock Star Shoes!



From What's New for Vocational Counselors
<http://lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Voc/WhatsNew/Default.asp>

VSS Staff updates

July 2, 2018

L&I has added a new unit of claim managers– Unit Q. VSS staff have been realigned to support Unit Q. Please check [Contact Us](#) to find the most up-to-date unit coverage assignments.

Join us as an audience member at our September 25, 2018, VTSG meeting in Tukwila and November 15, 2018 in Tumwater and earn CEUs for your participation! You can also visit the [VTSG webpage](#) for additional information on upcoming meeting dates, times, and locations and to review meeting notes.

Maximum vocational training fund adjustment

June 11, 2018

The maximum vocational training fund is increasing. This change is the result of an annual adjustment required under the statute governing vocational rehabilitation services.

The training fund amount is directly linked to the plan approval date.

IARP WA Summer 2018 Newsletter

If the plan is or was approved:

- July 1, 2018 through June 30, 2019, the amount is \$18,294.57.
- July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018, the amount is \$17,885.00.

The amount of the maximum training fund applies regardless of whether a worker chooses Option 1 or Option 2 after plan approval.

Activity Coaching Referral form updated

June 11, 2018

We have updated the Referral for Activity Coaching Program form (F245-413-000). Effective immediately, use this updated version dated 04/2018, available online.

Changes include:

- Moved activity coach fax to top of page and added program information.
- Added “Activity Coach Preference” to Other Information area.
- Added a For Department Use Only section to bottom of page.

How does this change affect vocational providers?

- Vocational Counselors should discontinue use of the old form and start using the updated one.
- Clarifies it is the attending provider who signs the form.

New process: Employment Security Department records

June 11, 2018

We heard you! L&I has a new process that eliminates delays in obtaining records from the Employment Security Department (ESD).

By signing box 43 of the Report of Accident, a worker authorizes L&I to get ESD records. So now, within 10 days of an Ability to Work Assessment referral, our team member will obtain up to 10 years of the worker’s employment history and send it to the claim file.

If after 10 days, the records are not in the claim file and box 43 is signed, please contact the claim manager to request the records.

Please note that although the ESD records only go back 10 years, vocational counselors should continue to document a complete work history and address any gaps in employment.

Vocational conference slides now available

June 7, 2018

Thank you for attending our June 1 vocational conference, “What Do Workers Need?” Attendance was larger than ever!

There is a link on L & I’s web site to access the slides.

If you have any questions, please contact Jennifer Santos at Jennifer.santos@lni.wa.gov or call 360-902-6576.

New website for Vocational Recovery Project

May 30, 2018

Read about how the work of the project is getting done. The site includes [Frequently Asked Questions](#) that will be updated as the project progresses.

You can revisit the site in coming months to learn about proposals emerging from the project. This work will shape how vocational services are provided to workers in the future.

Plan Modification tips

May 15, 2018

The VSS team cannot approve over 50% of plan modifications as submitted. Here are the most common reasons for phone calls and denials.

1. Encumbrance Forms: When submitting a plan modification request, be sure to include **all** of the encumbrance forms (time, cost, and transportation). Even if the change is only to one form, we can reduce bill-paying issues if every plan modification includes all the forms.
2. Missing Accountability Agreements: If the modification changes anything that the worker is responsible for, such as changes in time spent retraining, the curriculum, or the order of courses, then a new accountability form should be included with the request. Use the Option 1 Plan Modification Accountability Agreement version and if the worker is Spanish speaking (and not legally represented), be sure to use the Spanish version.
3. Wrong type of request. If equipment is needed to accommodate restrictions due to the industrial injury, request these using the Pre-job Accomodation Assistance Application.

If you are unsure of the request, please call your unit VSS before submitting the plan modification.

Accountability Agreement updated — AGAIN

May 10, 2018

Previously, we announced changes to the Accountability Agreement for retraining plans. The changes had to do with clearly identifying behavior at school as it relates to a school's policies as one of the accountability expectations for injured workers.

We are removing that change. We determined that in some cases the new language could be construed as problematic. We are leaving the reference to RCW 51.32.096 as it provides one of the bases for actions if a worker is non-cooperative during a retraining plan.

- Please use the most current version of the Accountability Agreement (F280-016-000). Use of outdated versions of the Accountability Agreement may result in a temporarily denied plan.

Learn about the Preferred Worker Program's Continuous Employment Incentive

May 8, 2018

An eligible employer who continuously employs a certified preferred worker at a medically approved job without reduction in base wages for at least 12 months may receive a one-time Continuous Employment Incentive (CEI) payment of 10% of the worker's wages or \$10,000 (whatever is the lesser amount).

Employers can find the form to apply for the CEI on the Preferred Worker Program's [Apply and Get Benefits webpage](#). Please call 1-800-845-2634 with questions or assistance with completing the form.

CONSIDER ADVERTISING IN THE NEXT IARP-WA NEWSLETTER

Guidelines for advertising through IARP WA

The IARP-WA newsletter is distributed electronically to approximately 200 members quarterly. If you are interested in advertising in this newsletter, please note the following are guidelines:

We accept ads from vendors who provide ancillary services to injured workers to reduce the physical, mental, social and financial impact of disability. We do not accept ads for job postings. Job postings may be placed through the national IARP website. (www.rehabpro.org)

IARP-WA is scheduled to publish four newsletters per year; spring, summer, fall and winter.

E-mail the ad as an attachment to Sandra Holman at sholman@scsvoc.com. Please provide the phone number and email address of a contact person(s) who can make decisions regarding the ad. Please be sure the ads look exactly as you wish them to appear. IARP-WA is not able to provide ad development or editing services. Ads should be submitted in one of the following formats:

MS Word (DOC or DOCX), or as a TIF, GIF, JPG or other universal graphics file. Please do not submit ads in PDF format. Ads may be in color, grey tones or black and white. Ads may appear in the following sizes: cost:

- Full Page: 9 inches high by 5 7/8 inches wide. \$200
- Half Page: 4 1/2 inches high by 5 7/8 inches wide \$125
- Quarter Page: 4 1/2 inches high by 3 3/8 inches wide \$75

Prior to submission, please “preview” your ad with the final print size in mind, to make sure that fonts are large enough to be read.

Please proof-read ad for accurate spelling, phone numbers, and other important information as IARP-WA is not responsible for proof reading.

Stay cool and enjoy the summer!

IARP WA Summer 2018 Newsletter



IARP-WA Summer 2018 Newsletter – July 2018