

**NORTH DAKOTA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL
QUARTERLY MEETING MINUTES
July 8, 2025**

Roll Call

Members Present

Amy Bergan, Chaz Brobst, Trampes Brown, Mercedes Drechsel, Angie Dubovoy, Jacey Enget, Jim Fleming, Kaycee, Johnson, Lea Kugel, Robyn Soiseth, Trevor Vannett, Josh Villbrant

Members Absent

Misty Boully-Clementich, Gillian Plenty Chief, Landis Larson

Others Present

Aimee Volk, Alicia Halle, Cheryl Anderson, Barb Burghart, Robyn Throlson, Ben Wolf Necklace, Stephanie Bouche, Devyn Halvorson, Curt Markel, David Kvasager, Cathy Quintane

Call to Order

Jacey Enget called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. There was a quorum present.

July Agenda Approval

A motion to accept the July agenda was made by Chaz Brobst and seconded by Lea Kugel. The motion passed by unanimous decision. Motion carried.

January Minutes Approval: A motion to approve the January 2025 minutes as presented was made by Chaz Brobst and seconded by Trevor Vannett. The motion passed by unanimous decision. Motion carried.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Region IV (Grand Forks) Update – David Kvasager

The Grand Forks office is co-located with Job Service within the Job Service building.

Coverage Area

- VR Counties: Grand Forks, Nelson, Pembina, and Walsh counties.
- Older Individuals Who are Blind (OIB) Counties: Covers the above four counties plus Traill, Griggs, and Steele.

Staffing

- Total staff: 12
- 1 Regional Administrator (RA)
- 6.5 Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs)
- 0.5 Assessment Specialist
- 2 Support Staff
- 1 Business Service Specialist
- 1 Vision Rehabilitation Specialist (VRS)

Performance Data (Reporting period: October 1, 2024 – July 8, 2025)

- Applications: 304 out of 390 (78%)
- VR Plans: 244 out of 320 (76%)
- Successful Closures: 104 out of 130 (80%)
- Individuals Employed: 47
- OIB Performance: 43 out of 48 (90%); the VRS has logged 7,164 miles—second highest among all VRS staff.
- Current Open Cases: 638

- Average Caseload per Counselor: 98 (with 4 VRCs managing over 100 cases)

Staff Stability

- A new Vision Rehabilitation Specialist began in November. Aside from this, the office has had no turnover in the past three and a half years.

Case Movement Timelines

- Application to Eligibility: 13 days
- Eligibility to Plan Development: 41 days

Services to Students with Disabilities (SWD)

- 19 high schools are served across the four core counties.
- The Alternative Transition Program (ATP) provides Pre-ETS services through a contract.
- One VRC covers 13 additional high schools, primarily in remote northern areas.
- Teacher contracts are in place to provide job coaching for summer work experiences.

Community Partnerships

- Community Rehabilitation Providers (CRPs): DHI, Success Unlimited, All Embracing Home Care, Red River Stepping Stones, Anne Carlsen Center, and Community Options.
- Other Collaborations: Job Service, UND, Northland Community & Technical College (NCTC), Northeast Human Service Center (NEHSC), Centre Inc., and services for justice-involved individuals.

Recognition

- At the October VR Conference, the Grand Forks office received the “Swift Response Team Award” and the “Overall Team Achievement Award.”
- Additionally, a Grand Forks staff member was honored with the “Counselor Achievement” award.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Region V (Fargo) Update – Curt Markel

The Fargo office is a freestanding office and not co-located with other agencies.

Performance Data (Reporting period: October 1, 2024 - July 8, 2025)

- Applications: 399 out of 525 (76%)
- VR Plans: 303 out of 400 (76%)
- Successful Closures: 134 out of 195 (69%)
- OIB Applications: 52 out of 65 (80%)
- Average Caseload per Counselor: 79

Transition Services

- 35 secondary education programs, including two transition programs (InVest and Transition Academy).
- There are two proposals for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to develop and expand employment skills and opportunities for youth in high school.

Business Climate

- In Fargo, 2.3% in healthcare, technology, and agriculture.
- In Wahpeton, 2.4% in educational services, healthcare, and construction.
- Successful closure in all industries, including cooks, cleaners, truck drivers, nursing, certified nursing assistants, dietary aid, psych technicians, elementary education, speech pathology, IT, engineering, accounting, etc.
- Good working relationship with community partners.

Challenges

- Waitlist for services
- Housing for justice involved
- CRP waitlists, as it is difficult for them to serve areas outside of Fargo.
- Serving more participants with the same number of staff and funding.

Successes

- The Fargo office is fully staffed as of 6/16/2025.
- They had one counselor pass the CRC exam in January.

Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Region VIII (Dickinson) Update – Catherine Quintane

The Dickinson office is a freestanding office and not attached to other agencies.

Coverage Area

- Serves eight counties in western ND.

Staffing

Dickinson is currently fully staffed.

- Total staff: 5.5
- 1 RA
- 2 VRCs
- 1 VRS
- .5 Business Service Specialist

Office

The office runs on a hybrid model and is pre-approved when staff work from home. They offer appointments in-person, over the phone, or through Teams in an effort to meet participants where they are.

Performance Data (Reporting period: October 1, 2024 – July 8, 2025)

- Applicants: 112
- Successful Closures: 29

Challenges

- There is only one Community Rehabilitation Provider (CRP) in the region, and they only provide services in Dickinson.
- There are no schools that have a contract to provide VR transition services.

Successes

- Have a monthly collaboration with Developmental Disabilities (DD).
- Strong relationships with local employers.

VR Interim Director Update - Jim Fleming

He has been the interim director for one year. The revised target for getting a VR director is October 1, 2025. Turnover has created some challenges within VR. We are working on centralizing services statewide.

With the legislative session, VR's budget was largely left intact; however, we are still looking for savings. The VR budget is in the Department of Education budget plan. VR is 78% federally funded and 22% state funded.

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) has a provision for getting paid minimum wage, which has made it hard to recruit participants. During the legislative session, HB

1066 was enacted that adopted a compensation rate for SCSEP of \$12.00 per hour, instead of the federal minimum wage.

Jim stated that he will look at the Bylaws by the next meeting.

Statewide Independent Living Council - Robyn Soiseth

The last meeting was in May. Scott Burlingame presented a history of Independent Living and updates on the prospective budget. A presenter came and talked about Community Awareness and what has been successful for them. Currently, the council is full, and there are three new members.

Tribal Update – Ben Wolf Necklace – Standing Rock Vocational Rehabilitation

Ben has been with VR since 2012 and has been the director since 2018. They have 38 consumers they are serving. They are funded through 2029. The challenges have been with turnover, and as of yesterday they are fully staffed. They have a staff of four members. They have offices in Standing Rock, ND, and McLaughlin, SD. They were able to purchase a new work vehicle. They have not had a lot of face-to-face time with partners.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) – Angie Dubovoy

They provided information and referral services. They completed 52 trainings last year that reached 875 people. They participated in 22 vending booths. 14 people viewed the CAP video on their website www.nd.panda.org.

The main areas of conflict were services received, VR process, communication, employment plan, independent living services, etc.

National SRC update – Chaz Brobst

She attended a session on relationships between VR, DD Council, and the SRC. There were a couple of sessions on what the SRC is. She got a couple of books. Discussion was held on the books and if they would be helpful for the SRC. The SRC liaison and the Membership Committee will look into this prior to the next meeting.

Election for Chair and Chair Elect

Jacey Enget called for nominations for Chair. Chaz nominated Jacey. No other nominations were made. Jacey accepted the nomination.

Action: Chaz Brobst made a motion to nominate Jacey Enget for Chair, Trevor Vannett seconded the motion. All voting members present were in favor. No one opposed. Motion carried.

Jacey called for nominations for the Chair Elect. Chaz Brobst was nominated and Chaz nominated Trevor Vannett. No other nominations were made. Chaz declined the nomination. Trevor Vannett accepted the nomination.

Action: Chaz Brobst made a motion for Trevor Vannett as Chair Elect and Angie Dubovoy seconded the motion. All voting members present were in favor. No one opposed. Motion carried.

2026 SRC Meeting Dates

A discussion was held on the meeting dates and times. It was discussed to lengthen the meetings by one hour and start at noon.

Action: Trevor Vannett made a motion to have the meetings on Jan. 13, 2026, April 14, 2026, July 14, 2026, and Oct. 13, 2026, from noon till 4:00 p.m. CT, Angie Dubovoy seconded the motion. No one opposed. Motion carried.

Committee Reports:

Membership and Public Relations Committee

There are three new members, and we need one Business and Industry representative. The current disability of the board is 47%. We discussed how to get SRC members for the Business and Industry representative. We are going to look at the information from the National Center for SRC.

Planning and Evaluation Committee

Angie Dubovoy gave an update on the Conflict-of-Interest operational policy. There will be an ethics policy link added, filing will only be for those who need to know, and considerations for a counselor if they are out of the office. The committee agreed with the recommendations and had no changes.

Action: Chaz Brobst made a motion to approve the Conflict-of-Interest operational policy as presented, and Trevor Vannett seconded the motion. Robyn Soiseth asked for it to be read during the discussion. All council members were in favor of the change. The Council supported the change in the Conflict-of-Interest operational policy. No opposition. Motion passed.

They went over survey results and in the past, they used Market Solutions, and now they are using Market Research and getting more surveys back. They want to have more contact with the client/counselor. 89% of those surveyed said they had no problems with VR services.

Resource Committee

Cheryl Anderson gave an update since they were all new to the committee she reviewed the roles. VR training is done on multiple levels through an annual needs assessment, case reviews, staff members, monthly cyberchat meetings, specialized training, new staff go through new staff training, contract with a learning management services (Yes/LMS), VR annual conference, etc.

They review the progress towards meeting the Qualified Rehab Professionals (QRP) standards. In 2022, the criteria changed for counselors that needed a master's degree to a bachelor's degree. To ensure VR is providing quality services they developed an outline for training. They are working on developing a mentorship program with four senior counselors to ensure they are providing consistent training for new staff.

Public Comment:

No comment.

Trevor Vannett made a motion to adjourn, and Lea Kugel seconded. Meeting adjourned at 4:19 p.m. Motion carried.