



*Finding solutions. Generating success.*

December 28, 2021

Iowa Department of Management  
Kraig Paulsen

RE: Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services Strategic Plan, 2019-2022

IVRS is continuing to implement key initiatives as outlined in our current Strategic Plan, 2019-2022. This next year, we will begin discussions in identifying a new vision for our next strategic plan. The timing is excellent as David Mitchell, previous administrator, retired October 2021, and I am now on-boarded to lead the agency forward.

During the past year, IVRS has integrated the goals and vision of Future Ready Iowa and continued to advance opportunities for individuals with disabilities with special focus on the following:

1. Revision of Regional Workforce Development Centers and the role of the Disability Access Committee to positively influence accessibility and service delivery.
2. Facilitating business-training calls on a monthly basis linked to Job Classification Code areas matching job candidate employment goals.
3. Continued communication and development of school district work plans focused on the delivery of Pre-Employment Transition Services for students with disabilities.
4. Revision of our Supported Employment Service delivery related to Customized Employment and Discovery for those individuals with the most significant disabilities. This service effort has now gone beyond pilot project status to being rolled out across the state with involvement of community rehabilitation providers and VR staff being training in the technical assistance areas.
5. Restructuring of our management and planning and development teams to focus our communication, training and supervision areas.
6. Continuation of monthly statewide area office meetings and holding a virtual statewide training conference.
7. Further engagement and leadership with all staff focused on the strategic principles of:
  - a) Identifying innovative solutions to achieve greater success through the use and access of VR services.
  - b) Integrating improved practices to build careers and retain IVRS talent in the workforce by investing professional and content expertise and resources to positively impact service delivery.
  - c) Developing strategies to ensure services are customized to meet individual needs/supports and goals are related to improved preparation and attainment of employment meeting future ready Iowa needs and the needs of our business customers.
  - d) Interfacing through leadership and engagement in collaborative strategies to achieve collective impact at all system levels.

Our work environment continues to transition with a hybrid approach caused by our adjustment to the pandemic and we continue to find efficiencies and work effectiveness as we engage staff and our stakeholders in service delivery.

Strategic planning efforts will continue in 2022 as we build for the future. We remain focused at creating and maintaining a diverse workforce that is accessible, engaged and empowered to service our stakeholders and position staff to be at the Intersection of Disability Expertise and Business Intelligence.

Respectfully,

*Daniel Tallon*

Daniel Tallon  
IVRS Administrator



## Iowa Disability Determination Services (DDS) Bureau 2021 Update on the 2019 – 2022 Strategic Plan

December 28, 2021

Submitted by Liz McLaren, Bureau Chief

The Iowa Disability Determination Services (DDS) Bureau provides disability determination services to claimants for Social Security Disability and Supplemental Security Income in Iowa through a partnership with the Social Security Administration (SSA) and per federal regulations. The DDS receives 100% federal funding of approximately \$27 million from SSA with 168.5 Full Time Equivalent positions involved. This includes 15 physicians and 15 psychologists.

***The DDS meets all FFY 2021 SSA COVID-19 adjusted performance targets and provides timely, accurate and cost-effective services. The Iowa DDS is a top performer of adjudicative services in the nation in the critical areas of processing time and accuracy of claims determinations.***

The 2019-2022 DDS Strategic Plan focuses on services to the citizens of Iowa and our workforce. What we are doing to achieve results:

Revised organizational structure and created a training unit to accommodate realized and anticipated new hire disability examiners. Prepared organization for the increase in staffing in response to COVID-19 actuarial predictions of a large increase in claims.

Leadership Program kicked off with two sessions in spring and summer of 2021.

In June 2021, the DDS legacy contract ended and the agency is only processing Iowa DHS claims in that system while functionality is developed by SSA's Disability Case Processing System to support these state claims. DDS is preparing for data retention and decommissioning of IBM server.

Worked with Iowa DHS to support paperless processing of State Medicaid disability cases.

Internal DDS staff details created to offer development and skill growth opportunities. Mentoring program revised and expanded.

Deployed staff resources and expertise to SSA upon request.

Workplace culture improvements include utilization of flexible work hours, telework relaunch with employee/supervisor 1:1 meetings; surveying staff on challenges, ideas, and situation updates, and diversity and inclusion activities. All units held Work Team Agreement sessions to develop baseline team expectations in the "new normal".

Maintained solid employee retention rates. Began FY21 with 158 total staff and ended FY21 with 176 total staff.

Attrition rate for the Iowa DDS is 6.8% with national average 13.5%.

COVID-19 response and mitigation drove the DDS to innovate in work assignments, redeployment of human resources, utilization of new technologies to support work from home and policy application.

After selection as first state DDS to pilot SSA's Imagen (Intelligent Medical Language Analysis Generation) software with the goal to use automated intelligence to analyze and filter medical evidence, the DDS has expanded to additional users, with plans to increase in 2022. All new disability examiner, physician, and psychologist hires are trained in this tool.

We continuously update the Help Desk and DDS Intranet portal & modernize using Confluence tools. Evolving use for Bureau Chief Blog and support transition to WorkDay.

Evolved use of management information and data analytics, including SSA's Performance and Quality Dashboards and Microstrategy Business Intelligence. Expanded report usage and use of 365 data analytics.

Met federal draw down maximums with no lapse in funding.