



State Rehabilitation Council

# STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

*JANUARY 14, 2026*

## **ATTENDEES:**

Brandi Fitch (virtual)  
Cindy Kurtz-Hopkins (virtual)  
Diane Hernandez  
Eva Castillo  
Hugh Kelly  
Kelsey Teeter  
Linda Rouse  
Margee Woywood (virtual)  
Pam Woelber  
Richard Phelan (virtual)  
Victoria Keith  
William Stumpf

## **PUBLIC/GUEST:**

Greg Bal  
Kara Huss with Kyle Stumpf (virtual)

## **IVRS SUPPORT STAFF:**

Amy Markham  
April Stotz (virtual)  
Brandy McOmber  
Director Beth Townsend  
Jeff Haight  
Jesse Dougherty  
Mary Jackson  
Sandy Ostendorf  
Victoria Carrington  
Vienna Hoang

## **ABSENT:**

Lisa Schneider  
Krys Purcell  
Susan Bunz

## **CALL TO ORDER**

Castillo called the January 27, 2026, State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) meeting to order at 10:35 a.m.

## **QUORUM**

A quorum was established at 10:37 a.m.

## **ADOPTION OF AGENDA**

Motion by Kelly, Second Teeter – approved agenda for January 27, 2026, meeting at 10:39 a.m.

### **APPROVAL OF JULY 2025 MEETING MINUTES**

Teeter requested to open for discussion, specifically in reference to the job interview interpreter services document drafted and shared by CAP at the last meeting. The document was not developed by Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) and may not follow IVRS guidance and policy. Request to keep the document in the minutes but add a notation clarifying the document was not developed by IVRS and is not a representation of IVRS's interpretation of regulations and policy.

Motion by Kelly, Second Keith – approved January 27, 2026, meeting minutes with change stated above at 10:46 a.m.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT**

None

### **STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS**

#### **Outreach Committee (Hernandez)**

- Discussed logistics for Legislative Reception tomorrow at the Capitol and organization of a spreadsheet listing SRC members and their legislatures to use with follow-up.
- Talking points were developed by Jesse and the Communications Team and will be available tomorrow for those members attending the reception, along with copies of the annual report.

#### **VR Service Delivery Committee (Ostendorf for Schneider - absent)**

- Reviewed changes to the Hearings and Appeals policy, which will be reviewed later in the meeting.
- Discussed the waiver waiting lists and how this is causing serious concerns for long-term supports for job candidates. In the beginning stages of having meetings with Health & Human Services (HHS) where IVRS is addressing modifications to the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the two agencies.

#### **Business Services Committee (Castillo)**

- Discussed the National Employment Disability Awareness Month (NDEAM), the employers, videos and inviting some of them to join tomorrow at the Capitol.

- Would like to reach out to and recruit more businesses but may need more guidance from SRC members as far as a clear and defining purpose of for the Business Services Committee. If a Fact Sheet or FAQ is not available, one will be created.

## **RSB BUREAU CHIEF REPORT** (Jackson)

- Management Changes
  - The new Fort Dodge Area Office supervisor is Lisa Worden effective January 2, 2026. Worden was previously a counselor on IVRS's statewide team, so we are currently looking to backfill that position. A Rehabilitation Assistant (Rachel Linderman) was also added to the statewide team. The purpose of the statewide team is to provide services to job candidates in offices where there are staff shortages.
  - The Burlington Area Office and the Davenport Area Office were being supervised by the same individual for approximately the last year. IVRS has found there is a need for a supervisor in each office. The Burlington Supervisor position is currently being backfilled.
- State level positions
  - One of our Self-employment Rehabilitation Counselor positions was vacated on January 2, 2026, and we are backfilling this position.
  - One of our Transition Workforce Program Coordinator positions will be vacated tomorrow, and we will be backfilling this position as well.
- Services in rural areas
  - In response to the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), a meeting was held with divisions within Iowa Workforce Development (IWD) to discuss outreach options for those individuals in a rural setting.
  - Will be targeting Sheldon and Clarida. The IVRS Supervisors and local operations managers will work collaboratively to develop some outreach events. If successful, this will be rolled out to more locations around the state.

## **ADMINISTRATOR REPORT** (McOmber)

- Internal goal as an agency is to align and strengthen our agency culture. Will be engaging in listening sessions in each of the area offices around the state to share the structure of the state level team and hear issues effecting service delivery directly from field staff.
- Another internal goal is to ensure sustained fiscal responsibility and improve data. Have been working on this over the previous eight months, changing our internal structure, while making sure we are maintaining compliance with regulatory requirements.

- Third internal goal is to strengthen our relationships across IWD divisions. The realignment allows us to take advantage of a much larger team, such as services from the Communications team, Human Resources, Labor Market division, etc.
- External goal is to re-engage community partnerships since the exit of our last Administrator and the gap in those efforts. Have partnered with Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) to hold town hall sessions to share information with the public on what we are doing, how we are collaborating and what programs are available.
- The Deputy Administrator, McOmber's previous position, will be backfilled. This individual will serve in interpreting complex regulations and making sure they are being followed, as well as using that information to help drive decisions.
- State Workforce Development Board is reactivating the Disability Access Committee. SRC members interested in participating on the committee should reach out to McOmber. Major focus for this committee will be updating information and looking at physical and programmatic accessibility, especially in our American Job Centers (AJCs).

#### **UNIFIED STATE PLAN** (McOmber)

In our past SRC meetings, we discussed the tentative updates to VR's portion of the Unified State Plan, with VR having two goals for the broader plan for the whole state. Final touches were being made when additional federal and RSA guidance was recently received. For the VR portion, we may have to include a statement regarding not discriminating based on race, sex, disability, etc. This would be the only change.

#### **IOWA APPOINT** (McOmber)

- Method for applying for the SRC has changed from Talent Bank to IAppoint, search for the Vocational Rehabilitation Council (this is what they have named SRC).
- Members whose first terms are ending June 30th will need to apply for a second term if interested.
- Login information and training materials have not been received yet but will be sent out to council members once received.
- We will have two business, industry and labor seats open, as well as the Workforce Representative seat.
- Governor makes appointments in July, but applications should be submitted now. VR receives a list of applicants and can make recommendations based on the category, but the Governor makes the decision.

#### **BUSINESS SERVICES** (Markham) – replaced agenda item DIF Update

- Role Overview: Disability Workforce Planning Coordinator for Vocational Rehabilitation.
- Covers all 99 counties in Iowa; primarily business-facing.
- Responsibilities:
  - Educates employers on ADA compliance and accommodations.
  - Conducts ADA accessibility studies (physical and digital spaces).
  - Provides guidance on Work Opportunity Tax Credit and other incentives.
  - Offers training on neurodiversity hiring practices and inclusive employment strategies.
  - Assists businesses with accommodation requests and problem-solving for employees.
- Recent initiatives:
  - Collaboration with Iowa Funeral Directors Association on ADA and service animal policies.
  - Works closely with VR counselors and business engagement consultants on the IWD side to connect job candidates with employers.
  - Emphasized practical solutions for workplace challenges and building trust with employers.

#### **IMPARTIAL HEARING OFFICER (McOmber)**

- Regulatory requirement to maintain a list of impartial hearing officers.
- Attorney General's Office declined renewal of previous contract. Steve Wooderson approved as first hearing officer.
- Have recruiting challenges. SRC members encouraged to refer individuals who may serve in this capacity. Training is provided on the official duties. Knowledge of VR and services, our Unified State Plan, and federal and state regulations that govern our services.

ADD STEVE WOODERSON TO LIST OF IMPARTIAL HEARING OFFICERS

Motion by Teeter, Second Kelly – approved with unanimous vote.

#### **KYLE STUMPF PRESENTATION**

- Kyle works at Papa John's and Pizza Ranch.
- Uses AbleNet communication device (iPad Mini) funded by Medicaid.
- Device empowers independence and advocacy; has customizable grids and Bluetooth speaker.
- Saving in ABLE account for future independence.
- Advocates at Capitol; presented at National Down Syndrome Congress.

#### **IVRS DECISION REVIEWS POLICY (Ostendorf)**

- Formerly named Hearing and Appeals Policy.
- Revised definitions to align with federal regulations.
- Options to resolve disputes between our job candidates and the VR program in terms of decisions that are made by VR staff:
  - Refer job candidate to the Client Assistance Program (CAP)
  - Bureau Chief / Administrator Review
  - Mediation
  - Impartial Hearing (binding decision)
  - Director Review (after impartial hearing officer has made the decision)
  - Civil Action
- Created IVRS Decision Review form outlining IV options to facilitate the process for disputes.

#### **QUALITY IMPROVEMENT (Ostendorf)**

- Quality Improvement process for the agency:
  - Case file reviews reviewing staff work.
  - Customer satisfaction cards available in the area offices allowing job candidates to provide feedback.
  - Customer satisfaction survey that goes to all job candidates upon successful or unsuccessful closure of their VR file.
- Reviewed results for FFY25 survey results.
  - Results broken down between successful and unsuccessful closures.
  - VR initiatives outlined in survey results.
  - Request SRC members to review results and initiatives and provide guidance on other measures VR could take to improve customer satisfaction.
- VR is currently in the process of contracting with a new vendor for the next Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA).
  - To begin in June.
  - Changes in survey questions likely.
  - SRC input is imperative. SRC Chair will request volunteers through a Doodle poll and put together a group to review the survey results, initiatives and questions. Guidance will be developed to share with the core SRC group.

#### **CORE4 AND DISABILITY CAREER PLANNERS (Ostendorf)**

- CORE4 Program: Accelerate job placement for job-ready candidates. Increased collaboration between VR and IowaWORKS staff.
- In-Person Workshops: Launch in April (job search, soft skills, mock interviews). Facilitated by Disability Career Planners with VR staff assistance.

- Rural Outreach: Will bring in various resources and the Mobile Unit, as well as employers. Will begin in Clarinda and Sheldon and expand if successful.
- Highway 30 Job Fair Expansion: eight locations planned May–July. Will span the state from west to east.

## COMMITTEE REPORTS / UPDATES

### Financial Overview (Haight)

- Shared current data for half-way through the Program Year 25 including eligibility categories, rehabilitation rate, success rates, expenditures and operating costs.
- Compared to previous year, very minor changes in data categories.
- Shared Full-Time Employee (FTE), Maintenance of Effort (MOE) and Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) progress toward goals.
- Increase in successful closures in comparison to this time last year.
- Case service authorization total dollar amount has dropped compared to last year.
- Shared actual budget amounts for FY25 and projections for FY26 and FY27.

### CAP UPDATE (Schneider)

- CAP representative Schneider absent.

## ADJOURNMENT

Meeting adjourned at 2:39 p.m.

The next SRC meeting is April 28, 2026.

Meeting minutes approved by the Council on this date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signed by SRC Chair – Eva Castillo \_\_\_\_\_

Equal opportunity employer/program. Accommodations are available upon request: [workforce.iowa.gov/accessibility](http://workforce.iowa.gov/accessibility)