STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

APRIL 28, 2026

ATTENDEES:
Brandi Fitch (virtual)
Cindy Kurtz-Hopkins (virtual)
Diane Hernandez (virtual)
Eva Castillo
Hugh Kelly
Pam Woelber (virtual)
Linda Rouse (Virtual)
Margee Woywood
Susan Bunz (virtual)
Richard Phelan (virtual)
Victoria Keith
William Stumpf

IVRS SUPPORT STAFF:
Amy Markham
Brandy McOmber
Director Beth Townsend
Jeff Haight
Jesse Dougherty
Eric Evans
Sandy Ostendorf
Vienna Hoang

PUBLIC/GUEST:
Greg Bal
Brooke Lovelace (virtual)

ABSENT:
Kelsey Teeter
Krys Purcsell

CALL TO ORDER
Castillo called the April 28, 2026, State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) meeting to order at 10:38 a.m.

QUORUM
A quorum was established at 10:38 a.m.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA
Motion by Stumpf, Second Phelan – approved agenda for April 28, 2026, meeting at 10:39 a.m.

APPROVAL OF JANUARY MEETING MINUTES
Motion by Kelly, Second Stumpf – approved January 27, 2026, meeting minutes at 10:41 a.m.

PUBLIC COMMENT
None.

STANDING COMMITTEE REPORTS

Outreach Committee (Hernandez)

- Focus remains on recruiting new council members. Committee reviewed a previously developed recruitment flyer. Primary modification needed: update the contact person. Vienna will help secure updates to the flyer. Members will distribute the flyer for outreach once finalized.
- This council in need of a member from the State Workforce Development Board (SWDB). An announcement will be made at the SWDB June 11th board meeting. Updated flyer will be emailed to their chair and copies of the updated flyer will be printed to hand out at the meeting as well. SRC members with direct connection to board members will reach out to encourage interest.

VR Service Delivery Committee (Ostendorf)

- Nomination of VR Service Delivery Committee chair – Stumpf volunteers. Motion to elect Stumpf for chair by Kelly, second Kurtz-Hopkins – motion passes with unanimous vote.
- Haight discussed service categories with the highest expenses. Expect to continue to see reduced spending in these categories because of policy changes, leaving more service dollars for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- Personnel changes
    - Ostendorf promoted Deputy Division Administrator.
    - Her previous position will be restructured to include supervision of policy, training, and quality improvement (QI).
    - Training Specialist position previously held by Stotz will be refocused primarily on staff training.
    - Hendrickson promoted to Dubuque Supervisor; his previous QI position is being backfilled with a renewed focus on policy writing.
    - New case management system will require additional policy updates.

Business Services Committee (Castillo)

- The committee did not meet due to vacancies and transitions. Renewed efforts will be made to outline future priorities. Anticipation of new business representatives joining the council should help guide direction.

RSB BUREAU CHIEF REPORT (Evans)

- Listening tours
    - Leadership visited all 14 area offices over the past two months. Purpose was to improve communication, build morale, and clarify agency structure.

    - Staff feedback centered on communication needs, transparency, and workload challenges. Executive Team will compile notes and develop an action plan.
    - A new process will allow field staff to review and comment on draft policy changes before adoption.
- Transition events for summer
    - Numerous summer transition proposals are being reviewed; updates will be provided at the next meeting.
    - Council will receive a list of summer events and is encouraged to attend local activities.
- Staffing updates
    - Hendrickson is new Supervisor in Dubuque. Faulkner is new Supervisor in Burlington.
    - Fitch promoted to Workforce Program Coordinator role specializing in transition.
    - Webbeking is newest counselor for the statewide counseling team. Team now includes three counselors and an assistant. Team fills in offices around the state who have office vacancies.
    - Victoria Carrington retired.
- Rural events – joint effort between IWD and VR
    - Clarinda hosting a resource fair related to work in a couple of days. Sheldon will host on May 6th. Many partners participating.
    - Will expand statewide if events are successful with participants.

ADMINISTRATOR REPORT (McOmber)

- Leadership attended Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) spring conference in Washington D.C.
    - Discussed importance of funding VR services, impact of federal sub-regulatory guidance on budget, concerns about burdensome reporting requirements and match requirements.
    - Meetings held with staffers for Iowa's federal delegation; follow-up requested on several issues.
- Listening tours
    - Provided an opportunity to give staff information about how they can support being cost effective through service delivery.
    - Discussed ongoing efforts for collaboration with Health & Human Services (HHS) regarding challenges with funding changes for extended support services for VR job candidates.
- Easterseals tour

    - Director and McOmber toured Easterseals facilities including Camp Sunnyside and Technology building and learned about other services provided including therapeutic and skill building services.
    - Setting up meetings to discuss opportunities to collaborate.
    - A future SRC meeting may be held there in their large conference room with optional tours.
- State Disability Access Committee (SDAC)
    - Current priorities are to create a one-page flyer for business recruitment efforts for local DACs and updating website and resource materials.
    - Rouse working with Doug Keast to assist with technical assessment and updates to include disability planners and Core 4 initiatives.

EASTERSEALS (Bell)

- Easterseals Iowa will celebrate 100 years of service this summer. The organization continues to expand programs supporting individuals with disabilities across the state.
- Brain Health program expansions include outpatient individual and group therapies, youth services and crisis stabilization for children across the state.
- Easterseals continues to operate Camp Sunnyside, now celebrating 65 years of summer programming. Components include overnight camps for children and adults with disabilities as well as day camps, recreational activities and respite for families.
- Other services include Supported Community Living (SCL) services, Adult Day and Community programs, assistive technology and lending library and collaboration with public schools on transition initiatives.

DEMAND-SIDE EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN VR (TRAINING) (Markham)

- Overview of a 5-year initiative focusing on how VR professionals work with businesses to improve employment outcomes.
- Elements include disability hiring and retention, virtual reality career modules, quick tip two-minute employer education videos (i.e. autism employment) and community of practice sessions.
- Website: tiptrain.com (shared with SRC members via email)

IOWA DD COUNCIL STATE PLAN DRAFT (Lovelace)

- Presentation of the upcoming five-year state plan, including goals, objectives, and public comment timelines.
- Goals include leadership and advocacy development and empowering communities through systems change.

- Attendees suggested collaborating with local emergency management agencies for registries for individuals with special support needs and offering pre-legislative-day training for self-advocates and families.

NEW CASE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM UPDATE (Ostendorf)

- VR program will retire the aging IRSS system (in use since 2008) and transition to inFormed, a modern case management platform developed by Libra.
- Reasons for transition include security risks, high IT staffing and maintenance costs and the availability of DIF grant funding.
- New system will include a vendor portal for CRPs to submit reports and invoices and an opportunity for increased communication with VR staff.
- The new system will provide a significant cost savings over time allowing for funds to be allocated for service delivery rather than software development.
- Costs and implementation timeline shared.

RECOGNITION OF EXITING COUNCIL MEMBERS (Castillo)

- Exiting council members Phelan and Rouse recognized for their years of service and contributions to the council. Certificates were presented.

COMMITTEE REPORTS / UPDATES

Financial Overview (Haight)

- Successful closures up slightly compared to this time last year.
- Increase in unsuccessful closures with possible factors of policy changes and availability of long-term employment supports.
- Total full-time employees (FTEs) currently at 204 filled positions, down 10 FTEs from this time last year. Allowed 233 FTEs but will not fill all due to budget concerns.
- Met pre-ETS services goal and will have additional spending occurring with summer programming.
- Authorizations trending lower due to policy changes.
- Top categories for authorizations include job search services, supported employment, postsecondary training, maintenance (room/board) and rehabilitation technology. Adult work-based learning experiences no longer within the top five.
- Increase in DIF services. Grant will be ending in October of 2027. Will be looking at sustainability of DIF services into the general VR budget.

CAP Update (Humphrey)

- Rebuilding after longer than expected staff vacancy. Expectations for the position to be filled by May.
- CAP will move from being houses under HHS to the Aging & Disabilities division for better alignment.
- Request for the updated CAP brochures noted by presenter.

OTHER BUSINESS

New Training Requirement (McOmber)
New requirement for governor-appointment officials training for those appointed July 1, 2025, and later. Council members appointed after July 1 are encouraged to take the training if interested.

ADJOURNMENT
Meeting adjourned at 2:04 p.m.

The next SRC meeting is July 28, 2026.

Meeting minutes approved by the Council on this date: _____

Signed by SRC Chair – Eva Castillo _____