

Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers 2018 SRC Annual Report Iowa State Rehabilitation Council Advising IVRS on a Future Ready Iowa

SIOUX CITY FOOT BRIDGE PHOTO

[Photo by Ali Eminov](#)

Catherine on the trail to First Bride's Grave in Ravine Park, Sioux City; licensed under CC BY- NC 2.0

Quick Facts

- Vocational Rehabilitation services are needed! Employment rates for individuals with disabilities remain consistently lower compared to people without disabilities.
- Iowa's ranks in the Top Ten nationwide for the employment rate of workers with disabilities.
- The purpose of VR is to enable eligible individuals with disabilities to engage in employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency.

Photo of SRC Chair Alex Watters

Message from the SRC Chair

"Together we can make a difference."

A reflective look back at 2018 shows a busy and transformative year for the Iowa State Rehabilitation Council. Our progress would not have been possible without a dedicated Council, and throughout this report, you will see pictures of both past and present members. A special thanks is extended to several long-time council members, including former SRC Chairs Jill Crosser and Rosie Thierer, as well as Sherri Clark and Lori Moore. These retiring members collectively served for 22 years.

They were instrumental in several changes during their tenure, including revised Bylaws, a new SRC brochure, as well as the creation of introductory videos for our new members, which are now available on the Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services website.

Building bridges from IVRS to its consumers and stakeholders, the SRC plays a critical role in creating pathways to employment success for people with disabilities. According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, working age people with disabilities participate in the workforce at a rate of less than one-third of the general population. Our focus is on breaking those barriers to close the employment gap between people with and without disabilities. By doing so, we not only are empowering people with disabilities to achieve their goals, but we are also helping companies with their workforce shortages.

The SRC also offered feedback in policy discussions this year. Just a few of the policies reviewed include: self-employment, the appeal process, job retention, career counseling, rehabilitation technology, case service guidance, financial assistance for post-secondary training, and post-

employment services. We also provided input regarding service delivery occurring with targeted groups such as those making subminimum wage, individuals with autism, mental illness, developmental disabilities as well as the Deaf/Hard of Hearing population.

We look forward to another year of partnering with IVRS on services and outcomes that create a Future Ready Iowa inclusive of those with disabilities!

Alex Watters

Photo of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services Administrator David Mitchell

Quick Facts:

- The Top 3 primary disability categories served by IVRS in FFY18 are Intellectual / Learning disabilities, Psychological/Psychosocial disabilities and Physical disabilities.
- The IVRS Iowa Self- Employment program continues to assist Iowans with disabilities to start, expand or acquire a business.
- IVRS served 10,737 students with disabilities this fiscal year, providing Pre-Employment Transition Services in the areas of job exploration counseling, work-based learning experiences, workplace readiness training as well as self-advocacy.

Message from the Administrator, IVRS

The State Rehabilitation Council plays an important role in providing guidance, oversight and advice in identifying priorities for service delivery to carry out the IVRS Vision of “making a positive difference for every person, one person at a time.” The Council does this through work groups, quarterly meetings and through work conducting a statewide needs assessment, of which we receive contract assistance from the Iowa Coalition for Integration and Employment.

Council recommendations have influenced the agency’s priorities related to our State Plan, Strategic Plan, policies and procedures. They advocate for VR services through legislative communication. Areas of attention have focused on key topic areas such as the increased role for IVRS youth in transition, limitations on the use of subminimum wage, eligibility for those in need of job retention services and the value of business services.

The work of our Council members is valued — they are a part of our work team. The SRC reviews how VR service delivery is impacting the goals and parameters set forth in the Future Ready Iowa initiative. This effort will build Iowa’s talent pipeline through education or training beyond high school. It is recognition that careers now and in the future will require knowledge and/or technical skills.

The Council and our state core partners recognize the need to align service delivery, increase capacity through a neutral budget, and collaborate with all partners to leverage opportunities for individuals with disabilities to compete in today’s employment market.

Progress is occurring! The volunteer efforts of our SRC members play a critical role in advocating for service delivery that produces quality results. Thank you to each of our members, past and present for their efforts in building bridges and breaking barriers!

David Mitchell

Who We Are

The SRC Purpose: With members appointed by the Governor, the State Rehabilitation Council is the advisory group for the Department of Education's Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services on the quality and effectiveness of programs and services.

IVRS Principals:

- We are responsive to the unique needs and goals identified by individuals with disabilities.
- We demonstrate teamwork and cooperation among staff, customers and partners.
- We operate with trust and integrity.
- We demonstrate compassion and respect for all people.
- We value continued improvement and learning.
- We openly communicate with clarity and consideration.
- We are results driven.

Quote from Frederik Nael: "It takes both sides to build a bridge."

BURLINGTON GREAT RIVER BRIDGE PHOTO

[Photo by Joanna Poe](#)

Great River Bridge over the Mississippi; licensed under CC BY-SA 2.0

Illustration of individual in wheelchair, with others standing together, holding hands in a show of support.

A Brief History of the SRC-VR Partnership

Photo of shaking hands in partnership.

- 1918 - Soldier's Rehab Act established for rehab of returning veterans.
- 1920 - Smith-Fess Act created to provide a program of rehabilitation for citizens with disabilities.
- 1930 - Public Law 317 extends civilian VR act for an additional three years and requires states to match federal funds.
- 1935 - State-Federal program strengthened; Congress now authorized to support VR as a continuous program.
- 1936 - Randolph-Sheppard Act requires states to license qualified personnel who are blind to operate vending stands in federal buildings or federally-sponsored buildings.

- 1938 - Javits-Wager-O'Day Act passed, requiring all federal agencies to purchase specified supplies and services from nonprofit agencies employing persons who are blind or have other significant disabilities.
- 1943 - Public Law 113 broadened the VR program. For the first time, medical surgical and other physical restoration services were authorized, and persons with mental health conditions and other intellectual disabilities were eligible to apply for services.
- 1954 - VR Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1954, Public Law 565 is intended to bring the public and voluntary agencies into a closer working alliance.
- 1965 - Extended Evaluation introduced to determine eligibility. The National Commission on Architectural Barriers to Rehabilitation of the Handicapped was established.
- 1973 - The Rehab Act is comprehensively rewritten, with priority placed on services for individuals with severe disabilities. The individualized written rehabilitation program was created to make the client a full partner in their rehabilitation process. Title V, the protection for certain civil rights for people with disabilities, was established as was the Client Assistance Program.
- 1978 - The national Independent Living program is established.
- 1986 - Supported employment and rehabilitation engineering added as services.
- 1992 - Statewide Rehabilitation Advisory Councils and State Independent Living Councils established in which consumer choice is emphasized. Disability rights advocates begin to find their voice, which helps to enhance the message that individuals with disabilities should be included in any changes to the Rehabilitation Act.
- 1998 - Consumer empowerment and the SRC's role in partnering with VR are recognized and considerably strengthened. The public VR program becomes Title IV of the Workforce Investment Act. State Rehabilitation Advisory Council is changed to State Rehabilitation Councils. The Individualized written rehabilitation program is changed to individualized plan for employment. A mediation option is added to the appeal process. Interagency agreements with higher education are mandated.
- 2014 – The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act replaces the Workforce Investment Act of 1998. The legislation increases coordination among workforce development programs.

Citation: McGuire-Kuletz, M., Tomlinson, P., & Siblo, M. (2010). The State Rehabilitation Council–vocational rehabilitation partnership: Working together works (Institute on Rehabilitation Issues Monograph No. 36). Washington, DC: The George Washington University, Technical Assistance and Continuing Education Center.

SRC Legislation Reception

February 14, 2018 – Capitol Rotunda, Des Moines, IA

“Working together so all can work.”

Group photo of SRC members, inside photo of the Iowa State Capitol dome, photo of SRC Chair Alex Watters with a legislator, group photo of Rehabilitation Services Bureau Chief Steve Faulkner and Administrator Mitchell with a legislator.

Committees

VR Service Delivery Committee

Photo of Page Eastin, Committee Chair

The SRC Committees spent a busy year focused on activities which moved forward our shared commitment with IVRS to create pathways to employment for individuals with disabilities.

The VR Service Delivery committee offered feedback to IVRS regarding under-served populations, recommending a focus on Deaf/Hard of Hearing and those with Intellectual Disabilities. Ongoing work continues in reviewing and offering feedback on IVRS policies.

We hosted a legislative reception in February 2018. This reception offers an opportunity to thank legislators for their support of vocational rehabilitation services as well as to educate about and advocate for VR services. Both committees provided feedback and input to address IVRS responsibilities under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act in the IVRS Unified State Plan.

Outreach Committee

Photo of Kim Drew, Committee Chair

The Outreach committee created a new SRC brochure this year as a marketing tool for the recruitment of new council members.

We also worked with the Iowa Coalition for Integration and Employment. IVRS contracted with them to assist the SRC with outreach, data gathering and feedback from various consumers and stakeholders regarding IVRS services. Significant feedback was received, which has created a bridge to discussion on what is working and what can be improved.

DUBUQUE TO WISCONSIN BRIDGE PHOTO

[Photo by SD Dirk](#)

View of bridge from Loras Blvd in Dubuque; licensed under CC BY 2.0

Membership

Dennis Bruce
Business, Labor and Industry
Linn County
VR Service Delivery Committee

Nicole Cleveland Disability Advocacy
Woodbury County
VR Service Delivery Committee

Randell Davis
Disability Advocacy
Mahasaka County
Outreach Committee

Kim Drew
IA Dept. of Education
Polk County
Outreach Committee Chair

Page Eastin
IA Workforce Development
Polk County
VR Service Delivery Committee Chair

Pamala Fitzsimmons Business, Labor and
Industry Marion County
VR Service Delivery Committee

Gary McDermott
Statewide Independent Living Council
Clinton County
Outreach Committee

Dr. Monalisa McGee Disability Advocacy
Ringgold County
VR Service Delivery Committee

Mari Reynolds
Parent, Training & Information Center of
Iowa
Polk County
Outreach Committee

Daryn Richardson Community Rehab
Program
Pottawattamie County
Outreach Committee

Kyle Roed
Business, Labor and Industry
Black Hawk County
Outreach Committee

Lisa Schneider
Client Assistance Program
Dallas County
VR Service Delivery Committee

Scott Turczynski, VICE-CHAIR
Business, Labor and Industry Polk County
Outreach Committee

Brian Warner
Vocational Rehab Counselor
Cerro Gordo
VR Service Delivery Committee

Alex Watters, CHAIR
Vocational Rehab Recipient Woodbury
County
VR Service Delivery Committee

DES MOINES CENTER STREET BRIDGE

[Photo by Phil Roeder](#)

The arch of the Center Street bridge in late evening sun; licensed under CC BY 2.0

By the Numbers – the IVRS investment

Vocational Rehabilitation is an investment in Iowa.

- 96.5% of successfully employed VR job candidates remain in Iowa — working, paying taxes and contributing to their communities.
- 2,097 Iowans with disabilities obtained employment in federal fiscal year 2018.

The investment pays off!

- Iowans with disabilities served by IVRS in FFY 2018 have an estimated income of \$40.6 million.
- This reflects growth of over \$26.6 million from increased employment and over \$14 million from increased savings.
- This results in Iowans with disabilities earning \$4.9 million more than was spent on the entire VR program
- 704 VR job candidates were receiving public support for living expenses (SSI, SSDI, TANF, General Assistance). Of those, 95 now support themselves – an annual savings for the State of \$793,809.

By the Numbers – the Governor’s Goals

1. **200,000 New Jobs:** In 2018, IVRS placed 2,097 Iowans with disabilities into competitive employment. IVRS assisted 16 entrepreneurs with their Iowa business! Cumulatively from 2008- 2018, 476 businesses were successfully started, expanded or acquired with support from IVRS.
2. **15% Reduction in Government:** IVRS provides services to individuals with disabilities that span many fields, including partnering with the Department of Education, Department of Corrections, Department of Human Services, Department of Veteran Affairs and the Department of Labor. Through the provision of vocational rehabilitation services, individuals with disabilities earned \$4.9 million more than was spent on the entire VR Program. Ninety-five individuals were on public support for their living expenses and are now supporting themselves, a savings of \$793,809 annually for the state.
3. **25% Increase in Family Incomes:** For those successful IVRS employment outcomes, there was an income increase of \$34.8 million from the time of their application status until their case file closure. This is a 601.96% increase in their income, as reported at application.
4. **#1 Schools in the Nation:** Twenty-nine percent of our referrals come from Iowa school districts for youth in transition. In 2018, 913 students were successfully employed working 31 hours a week, with average earnings of \$11.68/hour. Over \$4.46 million was spent on tuition assistance for students in our post-secondary training programs to obtain educational and occupational skills training to help compete in today’s labor market.

By the Numbers – Additional VR Data

Agencywide Numbers Served

FFY	Potentially Eligible Students Served	Job Candidates Served	Total Job Candidates Served	Closed, Rehabilitated	Hours Worked per Week	Average Hourly Wage
2018	6,921	15,015	19,439	2,097	28	\$12.12
2017	5,624	15,005	20,629	2,080	30	\$12.06
2016	3,484	14,388	17,872	2,225	31	\$11.99
2015		16,144	16,144	2,321	32	\$11.72

Veteran Numbers Served

FFY	Veterans Referred	Closed, Rehabilitated	Hours Worked per Week	Average Hourly Wage
2018	179	48	32	\$15.26
2017	184	50	32	\$13.50
2016	197	48	34	\$14.80
2015	184	70	32	\$13.26

Transition Student Numbers Served

FFY	Potentially Eligible Students Served	Transition Students Served	Total Transition Students Served	Closed, Rehabilitated	Hours Worked per Week	Average Hourly Wage
2018	6,921	3,816	10,737	913	31	\$11.68
2017	5,624	5,618	11,242	940	34	\$11.76
2016	3,484	3,701	7,185	968	34	\$11.77
2015		4,227		973	34	\$11.21

UNION RAILROAD BRIDGE PHOTO

[Photo by Phil Roeder](#)

This bridge is now a part of the Principal Riverwalk in Des Moines; licensed under CC BY 2.0

CEDAR RAPIDS RED BRIDGE PHOTO

[Photo by Neal Wellons](#)

Photo taken in a rural area in Cedar Rapids; licensed under CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

DES MOINES GRAY'S LAKE BRIDGE PHOTO

Bridge lighted at night with various colors.

Courtesy of Pixabay; released under CC0 1.0

Employers

1,368 businesses employed IVRS job candidates in FFY18. Here are just a few:

Kreg Tool

“As a growing company with high expectations and aspirations, we are always looking for great people to join our team. It is very important for us to build partnerships throughout the communities in order to find qualified candidates that fit our company’s culture, philosophy, and future direction. Our partnership with IVRS is a great way to recruit candidates that may not have known about or applied for position with Kreg Tool.

This has been a very positive partnership. IVRS conducts some of the prescreening, which provides us with firsthand knowledge of the prospective employee’s strengths, skills and experience. Once we hire an IVRS job candidate, they conduct follow- up with the employee and Kreg to ensure the employee has the right tools and resources to be successful here. Honestly, this is a win-win for everyone!” – Dave Brown, HR Business Partner, Kreg Tool

DeeZee

“Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) instills hope in individuals with disabilities who want to be productive members of their community. Dee Zee partners with IVRS to assist these individuals to gain employment or transition back into the workforce. We value our partnership; it is an opportunity for their job candidate’s employment and for us to meet a business need.” – Corbin Kinney, Talent Acquisition Consultant

Manpower

“Manpower has partnered with IVRS for several years to find talent to fill our open job orders. This year we held an onsite interview day at IVRS, which allowed us to connect with counselors and job seekers. We were able to meet the job seekers in a setting in which they were comfortable and allowed the counselors to better understand Manpower’s open positions and our hiring process. The IVRS counselor created a thorough job analysis for our client to help them understand how they can break down their job duties, create workplace efficiencies and open the door to opportunities for talented employees who happen to have a disability. IVRS creates partnerships with business and industry; I appreciate their focus on creating a win/win approach to talent acquisition.” – Kathy Joblinski, Vice-President

ReTech

“Why do we partner with IVRS? First of all, as an employer, we have the chance to reach out to people who may not otherwise find their way into our recruitment. Second, we can dispel inaccurate perceptions of what jobs are available in today’s manufacturing sector. Third (and most important), we fill positions with people who are eager to learn, have a great work ethic and are supported by a great network of VR counselors and coaches. IVRS has helped us to learn ways we can foster an inclusive work environment.” – Ken Krause, President

Heartland

“Our apprentice, David, is diligent, shows up on time and is a hard worker. It is working out great. We will definitely partner with IVRS again!” – Scott Turczynski, President, Heartland Companies

UnityPoint Health, Des Moines

“Throughout 2018, IVRS provided guidance and consultation as we worked on quality improvement for high turnover jobs that included Environmental Services and Sterile Processing Supply Technicians. In addition, they provided employee support for our staff with disabilities who were in need of job retention assistance. IVRS also provided education and insight to our leadership team so that we can better understand the employment needs of those with disabilities. Our partnership with IVRS helps ensure we are an inclusive organization for patients and team members. We are very proud to support and employ those with disabilities and want to provide opportunities whenever possible.” – Emily Brown, HR Business Partner - Retention Specialist

HIGH TRESTLE BRIDGE PHOTO

[Photo by Carol VanHook](#)

Night photo of the bridge. The lights of the spiraling arches give the appearance of being bathed in blue. Located between Madrid and Woodward, over the Des Moines River Valley; licensed under CC BY 2.0

Success

Photo of IVRS Counselor Rhonda Draisey and IVRS job candidate Julie in front of the U.S. Capitol in Washington, DC.

Julie

From Marshalltown, Iowa, to Washington, DC, oh what a trip it's been!

"Think of where YOU would like to work." It was just eight words, but they launched a life-changing journey. Julie had worked in a sheltered workshop her entire life, and when services began with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, she was earning \$2.00 an hour. When her IVRS case successfully closed, she was earning over \$11.00 an hour and working independently in community employment.

"She was 57 years old and had NEVER worked in competitive community employment," shares her counselor, Rhonda Draisey.

Business Director Michelle Krefft had established a partnership with Kwik Star, a grocery and gas store chain with 500+ stores in three Midwest states. "Kwik Star prides itself on customer service and saw a need for modified retail helper jobs," noted Michelle. "It allows necessary work to be completed while freeing up time for guest services staff to focus on customers."

Callout quote: "Julie is a valued part of the Kwik Star team and is included in after-work hour activities. How cool is that?" – VR counselor Rhonda Draisey

And so, with the help of her IVRS team and supported employment services, Julie was offered a job and a star was born.

Among coworkers and store guests, her smile and customer service shine; Julie is considered an integral part of the Kwik Star team.

In October 2018, along with Kwik Star management and IVRS' Krefft and Draisey, Julie's journey took her to Washington, DC. She had never left Marshalltown or flown on a plane, but there she stood, sharing her story at a federal briefing on Capitol Hill.

She told of her happiness in being a part of the store team, and pride in the additional wages she earned. "I am doing work that I choose to do," conveyed Julie to those in the audience. "I love my job."

Kwik Star has been a business leader in recognizing the talents of individuals with significant disabilities, receiving national recognition for their employment efforts. They also embrace the philosophy of Employment First, a belief that with the right supports, people with disabilities are capable of competitive, integrated employment.

For Kwik Star, the qualified applicants provided by VR fills a business need, enables process efficiencies, and offers workforce diversity. It makes good business sense.

Photo of IVRS Business Director Michelle Krefft and Counselor Rhonda Draisey stand in front of the Freedom Statue in Emancipation Hall.

Jake

“There should be no boundaries in human endeavor.” Quote by Stephen Hawking.

Jake was born with a congenital condition which left him without legs and only about one-third of his arms. He currently utilizes an electric wheelchair for mobility, which he controls with his right arm. He is a science teacher at Hempstead High School in Dubuque, head wrestling coach at Washington Middle School and assistant football coach at Senior High School.

A variety of Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation services helped Jake to break down barriers to employment. He benefited from VR counseling and guidance, job placement services, rehabilitation technology and benefits planning.

Jake also now drives a conversion van, modified with VR assistance. After successful completion of his driver evaluation, Jake called his mom. “I drove! I actually did it!”

The road to employment started in 2010, when Jake began working with IVRS. His persistence and determination, along with the dedicated effort of his IVRS counselor, Jason Rubel, paid off. Through the partnered efforts of Jake and counselor Rubel, they have defined the IVRS motto, *Finding Solutions. Generating Success*. Jake is independent and no longer receiving Social Security Insurance benefits.

Photo of Jake smiling.

Photo of Jake in the driver’s seat of his modified van.

Emily

Narrowing the Workforce Gap – Connecting food industry employers and Iowans with disabilities.

Emily is a high school student who worked with IVRS counselor Travis Taylor. Her counselor coordinated Pre-Employment Transition services that offered Emily work-based learning opportunity, skills training and self-advocacy. After a summer internship with Sodexo, they were so impressed that they offered Emily paid employment with their organization.

Christine Ha is a blind chef who won in season three of Food Network's "MasterChef" with Gordon Ramsay. The student and chef met at an event at Des Moines Area Community College in which Ha spoke to employers of hiring people with disabilities.

Emily plans to continue her studies and will be enrolling at DMACC in their Iowa Culinary Institute program.

A recent report by Central Iowa Works, Preparing for Partnership, indicates that central Iowa restaurant owners and other food industry employers will need 14 percent more workers in the next 10 years. Iowans with disabilities can fill this workforce gap, and help fill jobs ranging from dishwashers to chefs. – from the *Des Moines Register*, October 30, 2018; *Event aims to pair Iowans with disabilities with restaurant jobs*

Photo of Emily with her VR counselor Travis Taylor

Photo of Emily with Master Chef Christine Ha. Emily was recognized by Ms. Ha for her outstanding effort as a student in the food service industry.

Contact Us – IVRS Area Offices

Finding Solutions. Generating Success

[IVRS Website](#)

Ames Area Office

819 Wheeler Street, Suite 6
Ames, Iowa 50010
515-233-5753 (Voice/TTY)

Burlington Area Office

1000 North Roosevelt, Suite 7
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319-753-2231

Cedar Rapids Area Office

4444 1st Avenue NE, Suite 436
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Council Bluffs Area Office

300 W. Broadway, Suite 33
Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503
712-328-3821 (Voice/TTY)

Davenport Area Office

3827 W. Locust Street
Davenport, Iowa 52804
563-386-1200

Des Moines Area Office

IVRS Administrative Office
510 East 12th Street
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515-281-4211
Toll-free 800-532-1486

Dubuque Area Office

2600 Dodge Street,
Suite NW2
Dubuque, Iowa 52003
563-588-4697 (Voice/TTY)

Fort Dodge Area Office

Two Triton Circle
Fort Dodge, Iowa 50501
515-573-8175

Iowa City Area Office

1700 South 1st Avenue, Suite 11-A
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319-354-4766 (Voice/TTY)

Mason City Area Office

600 South Pierce Avenue
Mason City, Iowa 50401-4836
641-422-1551

Ottumwa Area Office

15260 Truman Street, Suite 4
Ottumwa, Iowa 52501
641-682-7569 (V/TTY)

Sioux City Area Office

2508 East 4th Street
Sioux City, Iowa 51101 712-255-8871

Waterloo Area Office

3420 University Ave., Suite D
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DAVENPORT CENTENNIAL BRIDGE PHOTO

[Photo by Vigil Photography](#)

Evening photo of Centennial Bridge; licensed under CC BY 2.

Building Bridges, Breaking Barriers

State Rehabilitation Council logo

The photos you see on the pages throughout this report are of some of the beautiful bridges — old and new — throughout the State of Iowa. We offer our thanks to these talented photographers for sharing their photos. Credit is provided within the pages of this report.