

State Rehabilitation Council Annual Report 2017

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Photos of current members

From the IVRS Administrator

The State Rehabilitation Council remained active in 2017 and the following highlights key activities and accomplishments:

- Reviewed and approved changes in by-laws and restructured our committees and work groups to become more efficient and increase capacity.
- Contracted with the Iowa Coalition for Integration and Employment to facilitate communication across the state with diverse stakeholder groups. This effort was integrated into state-wide needs assessment work and resulted in a state-wide survey with over 300 responses. The feedback generated is being reviewed and integrated into state plans and agency strategic planning.
- Work related to agency quality improvement and job candidate satisfaction levels continue to be addressed. Data is reviewed at each SRC meeting with discussion occurring regarding impact of service delivery. This continues to build upon the consultation work of Dr. Darlene Groomes who in previous years met with the Council to advise.
- Provided recommendations and advice to the agency on policy and procedures with specific attention to areas related to WIOA's Section 511 supporting competitive integrated employment for all; referral and intake information involving situations where a guardian is involved, support of business engagement efforts, updated transition service processes and discussed the policies regarding service animals.
- Participated in Council presentations on self-employment, Olmstead Task Force, Council of State Administrator's VISION 2020, Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act and business engagement.
- Hosted a legislative awareness day, providing education and information on the value of vocational rehabilitation services.

The SRC serves as a valuable advisory resource for IVRS operations. The members are committed and passionate regarding their service and their efforts are greatly appreciated. They approach their service with energy and contribute their time to helping makes sure IVRS maximizes services for individuals with disabilities.

Thanks to each Council member for their time and effort!

Respectfully, David L. Mitchell, Administrator

Working in Partnership

“Empowering individuals with disabilities to maximize employment, economic self-sufficiency, independence, inclusion and integration into society.”

Photo of Jill Crosser, SRC Chair

Fiscal year 2017 was another eventful year for IVRS and the State Rehabilitation Council! The SRC reviewed its bylaws and used the opportunity to implement changes to the committee structure. The committees were strengthened by splitting members between two committees rather than three thus allowing us to focus our input and align the work with the needs of the agency and the intent of the legislation governing us.

Some of the highlights of this year include the revision of several policies related to the provision of services impacting lowans with disabilities. As Section 511 of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) was fully implemented, the SRC provided guidance to the agency based on feedback from consumers and partners. Pre-employment transition services continues to be a major focus and IVRS successfully met their spending requirements while serving more transition-age youth than ever in history– how great is that!

Additional feedback was gathered through a survey of partners of IVRS including community-based organizations, service providers, and state agency partners. The response was vast and provided us with a framework to advise IVRS in a more purposeful way, inclusive of a variety of stakeholders impacted by the work of IVRS.

The State Rehabilitation Council welcomed several new members and utilized this as an opportunity to revise the new member orientation materials. By educating ourselves about our important role, we are a stronger SRC with a solid mission. As we move into the next fiscal year, council members are energized and confident that the valuable work of IVRS will continue to have a key role in the lives of lowans with disabilities.

Jill Crosser, SRC Chair

SRC Membership

- Sherri Clark, Community Rehabilitation Program
- Nicole Cleveland, Advocacy
- Jill Crosser, Disability Advocacy Group
- Randell Davis, Advocacy
- Kim Drew, Iowa Department of Education
- Page Eastin, Iowa Client Assistance Program
- Pamala Fitzsimmons, Business, Labor and Industry
- Gary McDermott, Statewide Independent Living Center
- Lori Moore, ASK Resource Center/Parent, Training & Info Center of Iowa
- Rosemary Thierer, Disability Advocacy Group
- Scott Turczynski, Business, Labor & Industry
- Brian Warner, Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
- Alex Watters, VR Recipient

SRC Committees

2017 brought a change to the SRC Committee Structure. The SRC felt it was important that the entire membership be involved in understanding and providing educational information to interested parties, including legislators and policy makers, in IVRS fiscal issues. In addition, all members are working to recruit new members to the Council.

Photo of Lori Moore, Chair of SRC Outreach Committee

Outreach Standing Committee

The Outreach Committee gathers input and recommendations on the State Plan and annual State Plan amendments, coordinates the legislative reception, position papers and talking points as it relates to the State Plan implementation.

Photo of Page Eastin, Chair of VR Service Delivery Committee

VR Service Delivery Standing Committee

The VR Service Delivery Committee is responsible for the customer satisfaction survey, SRC Annual Report and reviewing and making recommendations regarding agency policy issues.

Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Photo of Iowa Department of Human Rights Seal

The Client Assistance Program (CAP) is a federally mandated program designated to assist individuals who encounter conflicts with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services, Iowa Department for the Blind and Centers for Independent Living. CAP helps people with disabilities receive quality services by advocating for their interests and helping them identify resources, understand procedures, resolve problems; and protect their rights in the rehabilitation process, employment and home services. The CAP advocate uses mediation, negotiation, conflict

resolution, and at times, legal means to help resolve issues. A CAP representative is a required member of the State Rehabilitation Council.

About IVRS

IVRS is the largest division of the Department of Education. The division employs nearly 400 people in Des Moines and 43 locations throughout the state. Employees work within three bureaus and a Planning and Development Team.

The majority of staff are professionally trained rehabilitation counselors and disability examiners. Ninety-seven percent of the counselors have Master's degrees in Counseling or a closely-related field.

With the exception of a few administrative personnel and the West Central Area Office, most of the Rehabilitation Services Bureau (RSB) employees are geographically dispersed outside Des Moines to cover all 99 counties and every high school in the state.

As stewards of the public trust, IVRS maintains an efficient workforce by assigning staff to multiple locations so that every secondary school, community college and regent's institution have access to an IVRS staff person.

IVRS job candidates are individuals with disabilities who need vocational or other assistance to help meet their goals for vocational or personal independence.

Our Guiding Principles

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.

What services are available?

- Job placement
- Job coaching
- Supported employment
- Business services
- Technological assessment
- Vocational assessment
- Counseling and guidance
- Transition services for students
- Physical and/or mental restoration services that may include therapy, wheelchairs, hearing aids, etc.

- Special adaptive equipment or devices
- Medical and psychological assessment
- Training for employment
- Occupational tools, equipment or licenses
- Planning for Self-Employment
- Personal Assistants
- Follow-up after placement to assist with work and employer satisfaction

Services may be provided after employment if needed.

Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services is an Investment in Iowans

Governor's Goals	IVRS Achievements
200,000 new jobs	A total of 2,080 VR eligible job candidates obtained employment in FFY 2017.
15% Reduction in government	A total of 107 individuals receiving public support at the time of their VR application are now supporting themselves. This results in a savings of \$918,026 annually for the state.
25% Increase in family incomes	Iowans with disabilities served by IVRS in FFY 2017 have an estimated income of \$41.8 million annually.
#1 Schools in the nation	28% of IVRS referrals come from Iowa school districts for youth in transition. More than \$6.1 million was spent on tuition assistance for students in post-secondary education to become better prepared for the Future Ready Iowa workforce

Agency Statistics

FFY	Potentially Eligible Students Served	Job Candidates Served	Total Job Candidates Served	Closed, Rehabilitated	Hours Worked per Week	Average Hourly Wage
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	Not Served	16,144	16,144	2,321	32	\$11.72
2014	Not Served	15,709	15,709	2,205	32	\$11.88

Top 10 Accomplishments for 2017

#10: IVRS established and maintained 33 Occupational Skill Training Programs and 11 Project Searches across the State of Iowa to assist individuals with disabilities in acquiring necessary employment skills.

#9: IVRS coordinated five reverse job fairs in an innovative attempt to get individuals with the most significant disabilities in front of businesses in a different way.

#8: IVRS was the state lead for the Office of Disability and Employment Policy's Employment First effort, promoting competitive integrated community, employment for all Iowans with disabilities.

#7: IVRS was represented in the Future Ready Iowa Alliance, partnering with many, to make recommendations to positively prepare our workforce to meet the needs of our business partners and stakeholders.

#6: IVRS aligned with Iowa Workforce Development in coordinating regional disability access committees focusing on physical and program accessibility for Iowans utilizing our One Stop Centers.

#5: IVRS partnered with our community rehabilitation providers resulting in a 15.35% percent increase from the previous year for the number of individuals served, and spent approximately \$1.75 million dollars in support of supported employment services.

#4: IVRS successfully met our federal requirement for allocating resources to provide pre-employment transition Services. We are serving an increase of more than 2,000 students from the previous year in the potentially eligible category!

#3: IVRS is a co-sponsor of the Microsoft Academy. We have had 32 referrals to the Imagine Academy in a program beginning May 2017 who have registered for over 115 courses. Fifteen individuals have received certificates of completion. Students can obtain a recognized workforce credential as a Microsoft Office Specialist or Microsoft Technology Associate, in addition to digital literacy.

#2: Our IVRS training coordinator has traveled across the state in meeting with area offices to also implement an innovative financial literacy program which is being integrated into pre-employment transition efforts.

#1: IVRS is able to demonstrate a positive return on investment for the taxpayers of Iowa; for every one dollar invested, approximately three dollars are returned in taxes and reduced public benefits.

A Different Perspective on the Value of VR Services

Obtaining a Cat, a Job and a Voice

Photo of job candidate, "Sean," cradling a cat.

Sean is a 33-year-old man who is on the Autism Spectrum with Selective Mutism. This means that he can talk, but at some point in his life, he has chosen not to talk. He came to Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) in 2011 at age 26, referred by his case manager as she wanted him to do more with his life than continue to live at home, unemployed. He had dropped out in high school, and had not gone back to obtain his GED.

With his mutism, Sean has become accustomed to using nonverbal cues to communicate but it is challenging to know what he really wants when all he does is shrug his shoulders. He will definitely shake his head NO when he does not like something, but most often is unsure and just shrugs his shoulders. He relies on his mom a lot to come to appointments and help him communicate. Once eligible for IVRS, a plan was developed, for him to complete his GED to go to school and complete a degree at the local college.

Sean needed transportation to get him to school and IVRS assisted him in obtaining his driver's license. Then he was able to complete his GED in a short amount of time and excel in the college. With minimal speaking communication, a word here or there once in a while, he was able to successfully complete a degree in lab technology with almost all A's in May 2016.

Over the years of working with Sean, his IVRS counselor Jami Schwickerath tried many different approaches to get him to try to verbally communicate.

Jami would not give up and researched Autism through books of Temple Grandin to see of other ways to communicate with Sean and make a connection for him to talk. What was learned in that research was that having an interest that somebody knew about and would talk about, provided an opportunity to build a relationship with that person. With Sean not talking at all, it was very difficult to know what he was interested in and what he would like.

Jami and Sean searched for employment over the last year. In September, Sean was offered an On- the-Job Employee trial at Viking Mountain Tool.

Shortly thereafter, Jami found a connection she had not known about previously.

There was a stray kitten near the VR building that quickly formed a bond with Sean. Staff in the office had tried to care for this kitten, as it was lost, and gave it milk, food, and a warm box but it wanted nothing to do with people. But when Sean was around, the kitten purred at him and crawled up on his lap, even wrapping himself around Sean like a scarf on his neck. The cat took a very quick liking to him and in turn, he too, started to open up more with nonverbal and verbal cues.

It was absolutely amazing! Sean lit up, he was verbally talking to the kitten in barely audible sounds and they had made a bond. Office staff, and his mom, were in awe. Luckily, Sean's mother saw the connection and allowed him to take the six-week old, abandoned kitten home.

Two weeks later, at the next meeting, he was a whole different person. He had a bounce in his step and a glow in his eyes, as well as cat scratches on his hands. When Jami asked about how the kitten was doing, he verbally shared that he still had it and that they named it Diva. Jami learned that bringing up the kitten named Diva would evolve into a couple words and responses about the kitten, but the rest of the conversation was still shrugs. When referencing the kitten though, he would talk some.

A month into the job and getting the kitten, Jami and the employer were discussing concerns about Sean not talking. Sean, overhearing the conversation, initiated a response, "Extroverts, they want so much from me." He had a whole conversation about his job and Jami was even allowed to ask him with him answering - why he became silent.

Bringing a cat into his world has completely changed Sean's perspective on life and what he's doing. He has a good comforting kitten named Diva, a job and verbal communication with Jami.

It proves that over time, having patience and a willingness to not give up on someone, that trust and a relationship can be built with anyone.

Employment Changes Lives

Due to back pain and mobility issues, Randy had not worked since 1998 and received Social Security Income (SSI) to support his family.

Randy wanted to give back to his community and began volunteering for city projects in Rockford in the summer of 2016. He watered plants, participated in city lighting projects and helped build the GROW shed as part of his volunteer work.

He was featured in a local newspaper article that said Randy "has lived in the town of Rockford for 16 years and he is an avid believer in building a better life, a better family and a better community."

While his volunteer work garnered notice from the community and city employees, it also had a positive impact on his health. He quit smoking, lost 60 pounds and began walking regularly.

Randy takes a lot of pride in his work and wanted to live a purposeful life. He decided to obtain his CDL license so he could drive the city snow plows and IVRS partnered with him by paying for his training, tools, safety boots and a solid winter coat.

The CDL license quickly led to a full-time position as a driver for Jendro's Sanitation Services, Inc.

His employer Dave said, "Randy always does what needs to be done. He has a positive attitude, he's reliable, hard-working and gives it his all. I would like three or four more like him."

Randy is proud to report he is now a tax-paying citizen and no longer receives SSA, AFDC, food stamps or energy assistance and he is entirely self-sufficient!

Business Engagement with MasterBrand Cabinets

This past fiscal year, Masterbrand Cabinets in Waterloo, Iowa successfully employed three Iowans with disabilities. There is so much more to the story than the number though.

Meet Samara. Samara was a student who participated our Project Search Program at Allen Hospital. He also participated in our reverse job fair and made an impression on Masterbrand staff. Samara was hired for a “carved job”. Positions traditionally were part of the line and after analyzing the essential functions were identified as non-value added (because they do not directly contribute to the product). These tasks were pulled off the line to create increase the efficiency of the line because now skilled laborers are not having to bag hardware. This became a full time position for Samara. The associates on the floor have more time to ensure quality, the things that are important to our customers. Kyle, the Human Resources Manager says “Samara adds value because he makes every person’s day brighter that he meets. He is a really positive guy, he makes the work atmosphere fun and he does a great job with the work that he does. He has been a great addition to the team!”

Meet Dimitri. Dimitri was a student with our Transition Alliance Program in Waterloo High School. Kyle, Human Resources Director, states he was at a high school job panel at West High talking about opportunities and Dimitri was sitting right in front, enthralled, asking great questions. He cared. “I saw talent in Dimitri and I said to the VR counselor, get an application filled out on Dimitri and we will have him come in and work for a summer to see if he likes it. He has been there a year now. I am personally happy he is on our team, he always says hi to me with a smile. I am proud to work beside Dimitri.” Dimitri says “Without Masterbrand Cabinets I would not have this opportunity. I want to stay there as long as I can.” Simple accommodations to keep him on task have made Dimitri a very productive part of the team.

Meet Kyle. Kyle is our business partner and Human Resources Director at Masterbrand Cabinets where Samar and Dimitri work. Kyle says, “It's about finding good people and doing the right thing as an employer to help them be successful. It's as simple as that. Doing the right thing pays off- it's amazing to see that because we have objectives. I love the partnership with IVRS that we have created and the interaction with each other. The nice thing is that it pays off and the business results. We get great employees- they are invested in us and we are invested in them. We need to continue to do that in the future to succeed.”

Photo of Samara at work.

Photo of Dimitri

Photo of Kyle, MasterBrand Human Resources Director

From Our Business Partners

Brothers Market

As a small business owner, we partnered with IVRS after various research suggests workplaces inclusive of people with disabilities is “good business.” Our financial resources limit us on how we can effectively recruit, retain and advance such individuals and the resources IVRS provides make this possible. We hired our first applicant in March of 2017 and are excited to say he is still with us today. Our partnership continually evolves from tax incentives questions to a possible vocational “trade skills” partnership.” Megan Grimsrud- Brothers Market Operations Assistant

Omega Cabinetry

“It's about finding good people and doing the right thing as an employer to help them be successful. It's as simple as that. Doing the right thing pays off- it's amazing to see that because we have objectives. I love the partnership with IVRS that we have created and the interaction with each other. The nice thing is that it pays off and the business results. We get great employees- they are invested in us and we are invested in them. We need to continue to do that in the future to succeed.” Kyle D. Roed- Human Resource Manager- Masterbrand Omega Cabinetry

Den Herder Veterinary Hospital

“This has been nothing but a wonderful process. Everybody has different strengths and talents, we didn't need to modify anything. It was a great win for us to work with IVRS.” Kirsten Linney- Supervisor-Den Herder Veterinary Clinic

Winnebago

“After IVRS does their screening process, they are able to place individuals who they know will be successful. They have a very good success rate with us. IVRS is an additional avenue to gain valuable employees. They have less attendance issues, they are very loyal, hardworking, dependable employees.” Gary McCarthy- Human Resources Director- Winnebago Industries

IVRS Area Offices

Map of state of Iowa with area office regions noted

Burlington Area Office

Cynthia Whalen, Supervisor 1000 North Roosevelt, Suite 7 Burlington, Iowa 52601
Phone: 319-753-2231

Cedar Rapids Area Office

Holly Mateer, Supervisor 4444 1st Avenue NE, Suite L-10, Suite 436 Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52402
Phone: 319-294-9308

Council Bluffs Area Office

Sally Rolf, Supervisor 300 W. Broadway, Suite 33 Council Bluffs, Iowa 51503-9030
Phone: 712-328-3821 (Voice/TTY)

Davenport Area Office

Chad Pratz, Supervisor 3827 W. Locust Street Davenport, Iowa 52804
Phone: 563-386-1200 (Voice/TTY)

Dubuque Area Office

Jeanne Helling, Supervisor 2600 Dodge Street, Suite NW2 Dubuque, Iowa 52003
Phone: 563-588-4697

Fort Dodge Area Office

Lori Kolbeck, Supervisor Two Triton Circle Fort Dodge, Iowa 50501
Phone: 515-573-8175

Iowa City Area Office

Monica Brockway, Supervisor 1700 South 1st Avenue, Suite 11-A Iowa City, Iowa 52240
Phone: 319-354-4766

Mason City Area Office

Steve Faulkner, Supervisor 600 South Pierce Avenue Mason City, Iowa 50401-4836
Phone: 641-422-1551

North Central Area Office

Eric Evans, Supervisor 819 Wheeler Street, Suite 6 Ames, Iowa 50010
Phone: 515-233-5753

Ottumwa Area Office

Kelli Hugo, Supervisor 15260 Truman Street, Suite 4 Ottumwa, Iowa 52501-1473
Phone: 641-682-7569 (V/TTY)

Sioux City Area Office

Adam Dahlke, Supervisor 2508 East 4th Street Sioux City, Iowa 51101-2298
Phone: 712-255-8871

Waterloo Area Office

Michael Howell, Supervisor 3420 University Ave., Suite D Waterloo, Iowa 50701-2008
Phone: 319-234-0319 (Voice/TTY)

West Central/Polk Area Office

Leslie McCarthy, Supervisor 510 East 12th Street Des Moines, Iowa 50319
Phone: 515-281-4211 WATS 1-800-532-1486 (Voice/TTY)