

Report of the Nebraska

State Rehabilitation Council

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*A consumer controlled council committed to
ensuring quality rehabilitation services*

Contact information:

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) values the input and involvement of all citizens in Nebraska regarding rehabilitation services. All SRC meetings are open to the public and are a great opportunity for the public to voice concerns and opinions.

Meetings:

Meeting dates, times, and locations are posted on the Nebraska VR website at vr.nebraska.gov

Write:

State Rehabilitation Council Chairperson
Nebraska Department of Education
301 Centennial Mall South
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Letter from the SRC Chairperson.....	1
SRC Committee Reports	2-3
SRC Members.....	2-4
Message from the Nebraska VR Director	4
Nebraska VR Funding.....	5
Return on Investment.....	5
Annual Program Costs.....	5
Individuals Served by Nebraska VR.....	6
Partnerships with Employers & Nebraska VR	7
Nebraska VR Successful People	8



State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education

December 7, 2020

As Past-Chair of the Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) I'd like to express my sincere thanks to the Nebraska VR staff for their continued efforts and capacity to provide supports and services during a very difficult time. The constant steps taken to remediate due to Covid-19 have been remarkable. I'm so very proud of this staff.

I'm very honored to present a report that will summarize the accomplishments of the SRC during the fiscal year 2020. During the quarterly meetings of this past year, the SRC membership and visitors consistently received reports from the Transition Services Committee, the Employer Services Committee, the Client Services Committee (Client Assistance Program), as well as, reports from the Nebraska Assistive Technology Project (ATP), Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Project SEARCH, Nebraska Youth Leadership Council (NYLC), and the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. With these reports, we were able to maintain a strong knowledge base to enable us to advocate for and understand current issues for Nebraska VR.

At each of the quarterly meetings we received a quality report from the Nebraska VR State Director regarding the Combined State Plan (2020-2024) and the five key goals of the plan, our dual customer approach, needs assessments, and the continuity of operations planning team which was able to develop plan for field offices and the state office to work virtually and serve clients virtually. Consistently, the SRC was asked for feedback.

Actions supported by the SRC:

- Order of Selection
- Senator outreach (saying Thank You) at the Nebraska State Capital
- Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards
- Utilization of the Needs Assessment completed in the Fall of 2019
- WIOA State Plan submitted April 2020

This was certainly a year of challenge and new learning. We continue to live within an Order of Selection; although Nebraska VR is making progress toward lessening those numbers. We continue to live with Covid-19 and the requirements of closed offices, remote environments and use of technology. These challenges could have not reflected successful outcomes without the collaboration, advocacy, and support of the members of the Nebraska SRC and Nebraska VR staff. I would like to recognize the work of the SRC, working to ensure access to meaningful and quality supports and services.

Sincerely,

Sandra Peterson

Sandra Peterson
Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council



Crystal Booker–Lincoln

Crystal is a Manager, HR Operations at Ameritas. She represents business, industry, and labor.



Michael Bursaw–Ravenna

HR Director for West Pharmaceutical Services, Michael serves on the SRC as a business, industry, and labor representative.



Christine Gaspari–Kearney

Chris serves as a current or former applicant for or recipient of vocational rehabilitation services



Gayle Hahn–Hastings

As a Community Benefits & Benefits Coordinator for Easterseals Nebraska, Gayle serves as a community rehabilitation program service provider.



Theresa Hayes–Lincoln

Theresa is a Special Education Specialist for the Nebraska Department of Education.



Deanna Henke–Lincoln

Deanna represents the Statewide Independent Living Council. It is a required seat of the SRC.

SRC Committee Reports

Transition Services Committee

Members: Theresa Hayes, Sandra Peterson, Alice Senseney (chair), Cassidy Wall, Cami West, Carly Weyers, and Brigid Griffin, Nebraska VR Advisor.



Alice Senseney–Lincoln

Transition Services Committee Chairperson – Alice Senseney

Alice is an Education Specialist with the Nebraska Department of Education Office of Special Education.

Highlights from the Transition Services Committee discussions include:

- 15 Project SEARCH sites operated in the 2019-2020 school year and switched to virtual learning in the spring; 14 programs are offering in-person programs in 2020-2021 with 13 based at business sites.
- VR satisfaction survey of school personnel was completed by 361 respondents; 98.3% satisfied; VR input in IEP meetings appreciated.
- The NDE Transition Advisory Committee continues to focus on improving transition assessments; NDE hopes to increase responses to their post-school survey by allowing completion through a web-based link.
- Summer Transition Programs offered by NDE in summer 2020 were scaled back to 5 virtual programs; plans discussed for a VR RFP for Summer Transition Programs for 2021 with an RFP release date of 12/1/2020.
- A change in focus of the Nebraska VR supported regional Youth Transition Conferences to offer a Job Expo experience for students was supported by the committee; the new format includes job skills exploration, work readiness & assistive technology mini-sessions, and a business expo in cooperation with ATP and NCBVI.
- The Transition Services Committee discussed guidance regarding virtual delivery of services during the pandemic including the purchase of the Virtual Job Shadow program.
- Collaboration between the offices of Special Education, CTE, and VR continues to flourish while collaboration with school districts continues to be strengthened by implementation of Transition Partnership Planning agreements, completed virtually for 2020-2021.

Client Services Committee

Members: Jerry Bryan, Chair, Gayle Hahn, Deanna Henke, Jonathan Moeller, Diane Owen- Downs, Adriana Springer and Angela Fujan, Nebraska VR Advisor.



Jerry Bryan - Lincoln

Client Services Committee Chairperson – Jerry Bryan

A required council member, Jerry is the Director of the Client Assistance Program.

The Client Services Committee reviewed the Client Satisfaction Survey results. The Committee analyzed the number of surveys completed, percentage still employed, reasons clients are no longer employed, whether jobs met current needs, which VR service was most helpful, and if clients were likely to recommend Nebraska VR to a friend or family member. Recommendations made for the survey included contacting a VR Office Director or the Client Assistance Program with concerns reported during the phone survey and monitoring the number of “Other” answers to identify any possible trends. The Committee also recommended to the Client Assistance Program reactivating the Consumer Input Committee for the purpose of seeking client feedback about changes to policy and procedures.

Employer Services Committee

Members: Lonnie Berger (chair), Crystal Booker, Michael Bursaw, Chris Gaspari, Susan Madsen, John McNally, Vicki Newman, Tobias Orr, David Scott and Mary Matusiak, Nebraska VR Advisor.



Employer Services Committee Chairperson – Lonnie Berger

Lonnie joined the SRC representing business, industry, and labor. He is the franchisee of the Wendy’s in York NE.

Lonnie Berger–York

I had the opportunity to serve on an employers’ panel at the 2020 NDE Transition Conference held in Kearney February 18-19. Although this is not exclusively a VR event or program it certainly is representative of the partnerships that take place within the Nebraska Department of Education to serve those who experience disability in preparing, finding and keeping employment. Employers and businesses benefit from the assistance and input from VR in helping recruit, train and retain those same individuals who experience disability.

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the manner in which we communicate, meet and interact within the group. Our only “in person” meeting when we assembled as a group was in February. Several members participated in the annual legislative outreach event following the February meeting. VR staff and committee members found experienced new and sometimes creative ways to stay connected and continue to provide services to VR clients and employer partners.

The Pre-Employment Transition Services Job Fair scheduled for April had to be cancelled due to COVID. This has been an annual event and we look forward to being able to resume this event after the virus is more under control and would not endanger the health of the clients and employers we serve.

The Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards were presented at the Nebraska State Capitol in October 2019. Please take time to review specific information regarding these awards included as part of the Annual Report of the Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council. I congratulate each of the award recipients.



Susan Madsen–Lincoln

Susan is the General Manager at The Cornhusker, A Marriott Hotel. She represents business, industry, and labor.



John McNally–Lincoln

John, Deputy Director for the Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs, is the State Workforce Investment Board representative.



Jonathan Moeller–Grand Island

Jonathan is a current or former applicant for or recipient of, vocational rehabilitation services.



Vicki Newman–Lincoln

Vicki is on the SRC having been a former recipient of vocational rehabilitation services.



Tobias Orr–Lincoln

In his role as Director of Assitive Technology Partnership, Tobias is a provider of community rehabilitation program services.



Diane Owen–Downs–Norfolk

Diane works at the Norfolk Nebraska VR office. She serves on the SRC as a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor.



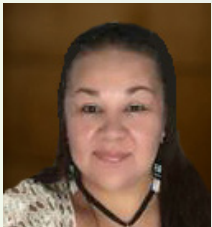
Sandra Peterson—Omaha

Sandra is the SRC Chair. She works for the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI). PTI Nebraska is a required member of the council.



David Scott—LaVista

David served as the SRC Chairperson. He is the Director of Sales & Marketing with The Peregrine Hotel, Curio by Hilton.



Adriana Springer—Macy

Adriana works with the Omaha tribes. She is a community rehabilitation program service provider.



Cassidy Wall—Ashland

Cassidy is an SRC member who is a current or former applicant for or recipient of, vocational rehabilitation services.



Camie West—Elm Creek

Camie is a representative of a disability advocacy group and member at large on the SRC. She is a Senior Lecturer at UNK.



Carly Weyers—Lincoln

Behavioral Health Coordinator with the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing, Carly is a trained disability advocate.

Director's Message



Lindy Foley—Director
Nebraska VR

As the end of year 2020 approaches, I am proud to reflect on the accomplishments and hard work of Nebraska VR. It was a year of dedication and opportunity. There's no doubt the time was also filled with challenges as we navigated the unknowns presented by COVID-19 but I could not be more pleased at the way our agency stayed rooted in our mission and values and found innovation through or in spite of these challenges.

I'd like to specifically highlight several agency accomplishments and express my appreciation for the on-going support of the SRC. The SRC's guidance has been instrumental in the on-going efforts to deliver exceptional service to our job-seeking clients and business partners.

- **Our dedicated staff.** Beginning in 2017, Nebraska VR implemented the Order of Selection and additionally instituted a hiring freeze. This resulted in over 40 vacancies- nearly one third of our agency. Since the fall of 2019, Nebraska VR has been in a position to begin filling those vacancies. This has resulted in over 20 new staff! On-boarding teammates in a virtual environment could have been a significant obstacle but VR found a way and each day we're building back our staffing capacity.
- **The innovation and responsiveness we have achieved to serve students, clients, and businesses.** Nebraska VR began providing services virtually beginning in March 2020, as a result of COVID-19. Not only were staff nimble to creating a new work environment for themselves but we were working together to develop a new way to meet the needs of students, clients, and businesses. Utilizing new technology tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, Virtual Job Shadows and revisiting policy allowing for more efficient exchanges with clients (e.g., electronic signatures) allowed the agency to eliminate obstacles and seek out new opportunity.
- **Managing the Order of Selection Wait List.** To date, Nebraska VR has removed over 3,600 individuals from the wait list! The plan is to eliminate the wait list entirely for Priority Group 1 in 2021.

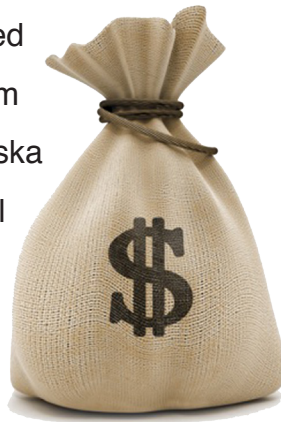
Although 2020 presented a set of unforeseen situations, there was opportunity for celebration. The National VR program turned 100 years old and the Nebraska combined state plan was completed and approved.

Looking ahead, Nebraska VR will learn from its experiences this past year and continue to seek out ways to lead as a workforce partner...anticipating the lasting changes COVID-19 will make on our economy, the needs of students and clients, and the evolving expectations of businesses. Exciting opportunities are before us and with continued SRC consultation, it is certain 2021 will be another productive year!

Lindy Foley
Director, Nebraska VR

Nebraska VR Funding

Every \$1.00 appropriated to Nebraska VR from the State of Nebraska earns \$3.69 in Federal Funding for services to Nebraskans with disabilities.



Return on Investment for the Nebraska VR Program

Average Cost of Nebraska VR Services per Person:	\$49,842.89
Average Annual Earnings after Nebraska VR Services:	\$23,678.00
Estimated Annual Taxes on Earnings:	
Federal Income Tax	\$1,183.00
State Income Tax	\$550.00
State/Local Sales Tax	\$0
Social Security Tax	\$1,811.00
Average Total Taxes per Year	\$3,544.00
Average Return to Taxpayers over 30 Remaining Years of Employment	\$106,320.00

On average, a successfully employed person **Returns \$2.13** to the taxpayers for every **\$1 Spent** through Nebraska VR services.

Annual Program Costs

	Cost of Program
Administration	\$ 1,979,748

Client Services

	Cost of Program
Provided by VR Staff	\$ 11,812,516
Purchased from Community Rehab Programs	\$ 572,744
Purchased from Other Vendors	\$ 2,225,568
Total	\$ 14,610,827

Purchased for Clients

	Cost of Program
Assessment	\$ 381,851
Diagnosis & Treatment of Impairments	\$ 2,135
Graduate College or University Training	\$ 58,566
Four-Year College or University Training	\$ 528,452
Junior or Community College Training	\$ 70,152
On-the-Job Training	\$ 14,461
Apprenticeship Training	\$ 6,488
Job Readiness Training	\$ 240
Miscellaneous Training	\$ 4,097
On-the-Job Supports-Time Limited	\$ 362,763
On-the-Job Supports-Supp. Employment	\$ 814,047
Transportation	\$ 23,532
Maintenance	\$ 13,555
Rehabilitation Technology	\$ 321,348
Reader	\$4,750
Interpreter	\$ 1,994
Technical Assistance	\$ 500
Benefits Counseling	\$ 98,122
Customized Employment	\$ 73,500
All Other Services	\$ 17,759
Total	\$ 2,798,311

Individuals Served by Nebraska VR

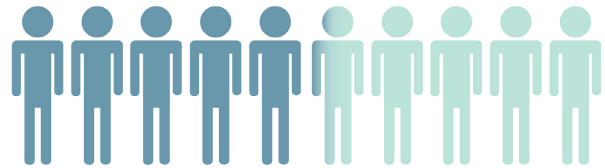
Clients Served by County

County	Total	County	Total
Adams	51	Jefferson.....	10
Antelope	3	Johnson.....	0
Arthur.....	0	Kearney.....	7
Banner	1	Keith	4
Blaine.....	0	Keya Paha.....	0
Boone	5	Kimball.....	2
Box Butte.....	12	Knox.....	2
Boyd	2	Lancaster	423
Brown	2	Lincoln	64
Buffalo	82	Logan.....	0
Burt.....	10	Loup.....	1
Butler.....	19	Madison	65
Cass	17	McPherson	1
Cedar	11	Merrick.....	5
Chase	3	Morrill	5
Cherry	4	Nance.....	1
Cheyenne	10	Nemaha.....	6
Clay	6	Nuckolls	6
Colfax.....	2	Otoe.....	20
Cuming.....	6	Pawnee	2
Custer.....	7	Perkins	1
Dakota	6	Phelps.....	8
Dawes	13	Pierce	11
Dawson.....	37	Platte	49
Deuel	1	Polk.....	11
Dixon	2	Red Willow.....	23
Dodge	36	Richardson	5
Douglas.....	429	Rock.....	2
Dundy	2	Saline.....	19
Fillmore.....	2	Sarpy.....	131
Franklin.....	5	Saunders.....	26
Frontier	5	Scotts Bluff	58
Furnas	2	Seward	12
Gage.....	17	Sheridan	0
Garden	2	Sherman.....	3
Garfield	6	Sioux.....	0
Gosper	2	Stanton	5
Grant	1	Thayer.....	4
Greeley.....	0	Thomas	1
Hall	103	Thurston	2
Hamilton	9	Valley	5
Harlan	0	Washington.....	8
Hayes.....	0	Wayne	15
Hitchcock	2	Webster.....	8
Holt	14	Wheeler.....	0
Hooker	3	York.....	25
Howard	4	Out of State	23
		Total Served..... 2035	

2020 Nebraska VR Employment Program

Applied for Services	1595
Received Services	2035
Successfully Employed	389

Successfully Employed Nebraska VR Clients



52% of clients are employed full-time.

Average hourly wage for 2020 is **\$14.42**

2020 Occupation & Earnings for Competitively Employed Clients

Occupations	Percent	Average Hourly Earnings
Service	32.90%	\$10.55
Professional	24.42%	\$19.73
Office Support	10.80%	\$12.86
Sales	6.68%	\$11.56
Transportation & Material Moving	5.40%	\$12.12
Production	4.88%	\$13.60
Installation, Maintenance, & Repairs	4.37%	\$16.78
Management, Business, & Finance	4.11%	\$22.19
Construction & Extraction	3.34%	\$17.30
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	3.08%	\$13.88

Partnerships with Employers & Nebraska VR

Project SEARCH is a partnership between Nebraska VR, a business, area school system/ESU, the Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired, Assistive Technology Partnership, and Division of Developmental Disabilities. This one year school-to-work program is business-led and takes place entirely in the workplace. The experience includes a combination of classroom instruction, job exploration, and hands-on training through work site rotations. For the 2020 school year Project SEARCH sites in Nebraska were located at the following business locations:

- CHI Health Good Samaritan — Kearney, Nebraska
- CHI Health Saint Francis — Grand Island, Nebraska
- Children's Hospital & Medical Center — Omaha, Nebraska
- Columbus Community Hospital — Columbus, Nebraska
- Cornhusker Marriott — Lincoln, Nebraska
- Embassy Suites LaVista/Omaha & Papillion — LaVista and Omaha
- Embassy Suites/Lincoln — Lincoln
- Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital — Omaha
- Mary Lanning Healthcare — Hastings
- Nebraska Medicine (Main Campus) — Omaha
- Nebraska Medicine Bellevue — Bellevue
- The Heritage at Sterling Ridge — Omaha
- Walmart Distribution Center — North Platte
- York General Hospital — York



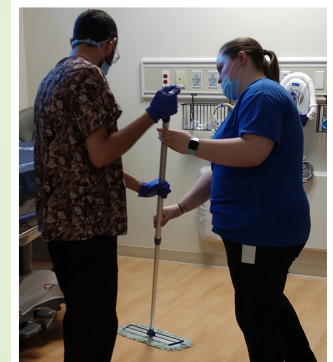
The Heritage at Sterling Ridge



Walmart Distribution Center



Columbus Community Hospital



York General Hospital



Madonna Rehabilitation Hospital



Embassy Suites Omaha - La Vista



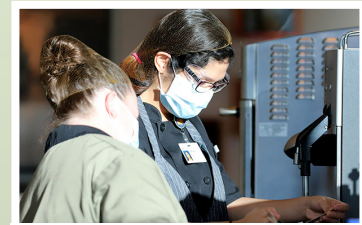
Nebraska Medicine - Bellevue



Lincoln Marriott Cornhusker



CHI Health Good Samaritan



CHI Health Saint Francis

Nebraska VR Successful People

The Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) honored five Nebraska VR partners for their role in creating inclusive workplaces and advocacy for disability employment during an October 8, 2019 ceremony at the Nebraska State Capitol.

Entrepreneur Award— Janie York, Hear Now, Mobile Hearing Solutions

The Entrepreneur Award for Disability Employment and Inclusion was presented to Janie York, owner of Hear Now, Mobile Hearing Solutions in Omaha Nebraska.



Entrepreneur Janie York, Hear Now, Mobile Hearing Solutions



Black Cow Fat Pig Pub & Steak owner Amber Behrens with SRC Chairperson Sandra Peterson

New Business Partner Recognition Award— Black Cow Fat Pig Pub & Steak

The Small Business Recognition Award for Disability Employment and Inclusion recognized business owners Michael and Amber Behrens in Norfolk Nebraska.

Large Business Recognition— Middleton Electric, Inc

The Large Business Recognition Award for Disability Employment and Inclusion was presented to representatives of Middleton Electric, Inc. in Grand Island Nebraska.



Middleton Electric, Inc. General Manager Matt Treffer and Vice-President Matt Middleton with SRC Chairperson Sandra Peterson



Matthew L. Blomstedt, Commissioner of Education with Matt and Shelley Sehnert

Small Business Recognition— Sehnert's Bakery & The Bieroc Café

The Small Business Recognition Award for Disability Employment and Inclusion was given to Matt and Shelley Sehnert owners of Sehnert's Bakery & Bieroc Café in McCook Nebraska.

Individual Champion—David Scott

The Individual Champion for Disability Employment and Inclusion Award was presented to David Scott, Director of Sales and Marketing for The Peregrine Hotel Omaha, Curio Collection by Hilton, in recognition of his many efforts in creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities.



David Scott and NE VR Director Lindy Foley

Office Locations

Columbus serves counties:

Butler, Colfax, Nance, Platte and Polk
3100 23rd Street, Ste. 5, Columbus, NE 68601
(402) 562-8065, (877) 505-0866
VR.InfoColumbus@nebraska.gov

Fremont serves counties:

Dodge and Washington
827 North D St , Fremont, NE 68025
(402) 727-2900, (888) 585-5439
VR.InfoFremont@nebraska.gov

Grand Island serves counties:

Fillmore, Greeley, Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick,
Nuckolls, Thayer and York
203 E Stolley Park Rd, Ste. B
Grand Island, NE 68801
(308) 385-6200, (800) 862-3382
VR.InfoGrandIsland@nebraska.gov

Hastings serves counties:

Adams, Clay and Webster
2727 W. 2nd Street, Ste 326
Hastings, NE 68901-4683
402-462-0160, 800-852-3382
VR.InfoHastings@nebraska.gov

Kearney serves counties:

Blaine, Buffalo, Custer, Franklin, Furnas, Garfield,
Harlan, Kearney, Loup, Phelps, Sherman and Valley
315 W 60th Street, Ste 400, Kearney, NE 68845
(308) 865-5343, (800) 262-3382
VR.InfoKearney@nebraska.gov

Lincoln serves counties:

Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Lancaster, Nemaha, Otoe,
Pawnee, Richardson, Saline, Saunders and Seward
3901 N 27th Street, Ste 6, Lincoln, NE 68521
(402) 471-3231
(800) 472-3382
VR.InfoLincoln@nebraska.gov

Norfolk serves counties:

Antelope, Boone, Boyd, Brown, Burt, Cedar, Cuming,
Dixon, Holt, Keya Paha, Knox, Madison, Pierce, Rock,

Stanton, Wayne and Wheeler

1212 W. Benjamin Avenue, Norfolk, NE 68701
(402) 370-3200, (800) 442-3382
VR.InfoNorfolk@nebraska.gov

North Platte serves counties:

Arthur, Chase, Cherry, Dawson, Dundy, Frontier, Gosper,
Grant, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan,
McPherson, Perkins, Red Willow and Thomas
200 South Silber, Bldg. #2, North Platte, NE 69101
(308) 535-8100, (800) 272-3382
VR.InfoNorthPlatte@nebraska.gov

Omaha-Downtown serves counties:

Cass, Douglas and Sarpy
1313 Farnam on the Mall, Omaha, NE 68102
(402) 595-2100, (402) 595-2107
(800) 554-3382
VR.InfoOmahaDowntown@nebraska.gov

Omaha-West serves counties:

Douglas
12011 Q Street, Omaha, NE 68137
(402) 595-1212, (877) 240-4445
VR.InfoOmahaWest@nebraska.gov

Scottsbluff serves counties:

Banner, Box Butte, Cheyenne, Dawes, Deuel, Garden,
Kimball, Morrill, Scotts Bluff, Sheridan and Sioux
505A Broadway, Ste 500, Scottsbluff, NE 69361
(308) 632-1321, (800) 292-3382
VR.InfoScottsbluff@nebraska.gov

South Sioux City serves counties:

Dakota and Thurston
510 W. 13th Street, Suite C
South Sioux City, NE 68776
(402) 494-2265, (877) 659-7899
VR.InfoSouthSiouxCity@nebraska.gov

State Office (located in Lincoln):

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State Rehabilitation Council

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