

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
500 S. 84th St., 2nd Floor
P.O. Box 94987
Lincoln, NE 68509

Call:

Angela Fujan
402.679.6298
877.637.3422

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402.471.0788

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State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education

December 7, 2021

As another challenging year draws to a close, I would like to begin my annual report by expressing gratitude to Nebraska VR staff across the state. In 2021 staff persevered through changes and continued concerns with the COVID-19 pandemic to ensure services were provided. Their efforts and dedication make a difference in the lives of individuals with disabilities everyday.

I am pleased to present a report that summarizes the accomplishments of the SRC during fiscal year 2021. At each quarterly meeting, the SRC membership and visitors were presented with reports from the Transition Services Committee, the Employer Services Committee, the Client Services Committee, Client Assistance Program (CAP), as well as reports from the Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP), Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Project SEARCH, Nebraska Youth Leadership Council (NYLC), and the Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH). These reports allow us to maintain a strong understanding of current events and enable us to advocate for and provide input to Nebraska VR.

Additionally, the Nebraska VR Director provided reports on the status of VR programs and services to include amendments to the Nebraska VR portion of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan to open Priority Group 1 in Order of Selection.

The SRC was asked for and provided feedback on numerous issues including:

- Order of Selection
- Senator Outreach at the Nebraska State Capital
- Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards

This year continued to be a challenge. The COVID-19 pandemic has created an uncertain environment that has stressed individuals and businesses alike. Overcoming these challenges, clients, staff, and businesses were able to succeed utilizing past proven as well as new innovative ideas and technology. The emergence of a unique labor market has provided new opportunities for Nebraska VR and highlights the value, not only to individuals, but to businesses as well.

Finally, I would like to recognize the work of the SRC, a group of individuals with unrivaled passion for helping to ensure access to meaningful and quality supports and services.

Sincerely,

Michael Bursaw

Michael Bursaw
Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council



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

Crystal Booker–Lincoln



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

Michael Bursaw–Ravenna



Gloria is the State of Nebraska ADA Coordinator who serves on the Client Services committee.

Gloria Eddins–Lincoln



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

Christine Gaspari–Kearney



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

Gayle Hahn–Hastings



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

Deanna Henke–Lincoln

SRC Committee Reports

Transition Services Committee

Members: Theresa Hayes (chair), Cody McEvoy, and Michael Tufte with Brigid Griffin and Lupe Stevens as Nebraska VR Advisors.

Transition Services Committee Chairperson – Theresa Hayes



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

Theresa Hayes–Lincoln

Highlights from the Transition Services Committee discussions include:

- Project SEARCH had 14 sites that operated in 2020-2021 and 13 offered in-person programs.
- A school satisfaction survey of educators and school administrators was completed by 291 respondents. On a scale of 0-5, schools scored 4.4 overall satisfaction with the Pre-Employment Transition Services they received and 4.6 in satisfaction with the communication with Nebraska VR staff members.
- 19 Summer Transition Programs were offered by the Nebraska Department of Education in the Summer of 2021.
- Nebraska VR supported a Job Expo in 5 different regions across the state. The Job Expo included job skills exploration, work readiness, assistive technology, a business meet and greet, and mock interviews for transition students.
- The Nebraska Youth Leadership Council (NYLC) met virtually throughout the year on Thursdays for what they called a Thursday Thread. They were able to get together in-person in July.
- An in-person meeting was held in August for in the West region and in September in-person meetings were held in the Central and Northeast regions.

Client Services Committee

Members:

Jerry Bryan (chair), Gloria Eddins, Gayle Hahn, Diane Owen-Downs, and Angela Fujan, Nebraska VR Advisor

Client Services Committee Chairperson – Jerry Bryan



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

Jerry Bryan–Lincoln

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 Nebraska 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 agreed with Nebraska VR’s suggestion on reaching out to past clients who were unsuccessful in the VR process for the purpose of seeking feedback about changes to policy and procedures.

Employer Services Committee

Members:

Lonnie Berger (chair), Crystal Booker, Michael Bursaw, Chris Gaspari, Susan Madsen, 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

The COVID-19 pandemic has continued to impact the manner in which we meet, communicate, and conduct business as the Employer Services Committee. Each meeting always included a mix of those who could meet in-person and those who could only meet virtually due to the pandemic’s impact.

The February 9 meeting was preceded by our annual effort to reach out to Nebraska State Senators to share the work and success stories of Nebraska VR. This year’s event included client testimonials and a panel discussion including clients served by Nebraska VR. This online event was a creative way to continue to do the work of Nebraska VR despite many challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The May 9 and August 10 meetings were held via Zoom with participants from across the state.

The October 12 meeting was our second in-person meeting of the year. Thank you to the State Rehabilitation Council member, Susan Madsen, and the Lincoln Cornhusker Marriott for hosting this meeting. The Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards were held that same afternoon at the Cornhusker Marriott. The awards ceremony was a “hybrid” meeting that included award recipients attending both in-person and via Zoom.

I would personally like to thank all those who have been able to participate and make an intentional effort to ensure quality rehabilitation services for individuals with disabilities in our communities through the work of the State Rehabilitation Council.



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.



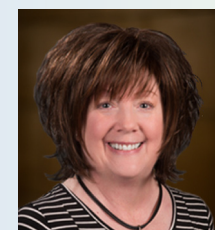
Cody McEvoy–Lincoln

Cody is the representative of the Nebraska Coalition for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.



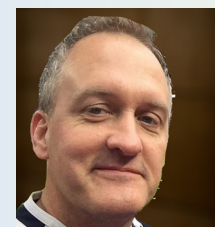
Tobias Orr–Lincoln

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.



Michael Tufte–Omaha

Michael works for the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI). PTI Nebraska is a required member of the council.

Director's Message



Lindy Foley—Director
Nebraska VR

2021 has been another exciting and productive year for Nebraska VR! I am proud of the agency's focused efforts to meet the evolving needs of our students, clients, and business partners - especially during such an unprecedented time.

Though there are many innovative activities happening within Nebraska VR on a daily, weekly, and monthly basis, I will highlight statewide initiatives which either started or were enhanced during this past fiscal year:

- **Expanding Services in a Hybrid Environment** - Staff were equipped with a variety of tools to assist with planning and job seeking for both in-person and remote service delivery. All VR staff were issued laptops and cell phones to ensure a continuum of services are available to clients considering their preference of meeting in-person or working with Employment Specialists remotely. Nebraska VR is dedicated to meeting the individual needs of clients and this is one major way we've put this promise to practice.
- **Innovation and Responsiveness Achieved to Serve Meeting the Immediate Needs of our Clients and Business Partners** - In early spring, Nebraska VR held a public meeting to discuss the opening of Priority Group 1. In summary, this allowed Nebraska VR to serve all individuals with significant disabilities immediately versus being placed on a wait list. Since closing all three priority groups and implementing an Order of Selection in December 2017, over 5,000 clients have been removed from the wait list. There's more work to be done to end Order of Selection but 2021 was a productive year for decreasing the number of people waiting for employment services.
- **Commitment to Continuous Improvement** - We recognize team member skill refinement is critical to stay innovative and positions us to be at our best for serving students, clients, and businesses. In 2021, all Nebraska VR staff participated in a statewide videoconference training with national, state, and local presenters. Timely and critical topics related to the field of vocational rehabilitation were highlighted including: diversity, equity and inclusion; effective communication and social media use; national and state level performance data; progress with implementing research based practices (e.g., Progressive Employment, Pre-Employment Transition Services); and engaging panel presentations from business partners and staff regarding the successes and challenges of a hybrid service delivery model. Though the conference was organized and hosted by Nebraska VR, the SRC, State Board of Education, Department of Labor, and other agency partners were invited to learn with us. Ongoing professional development opportunities continue for team members and I'm inspired by the dedication they have to being continuous learners!

Reflecting on this past year, I am energized about the exciting opportunities before us and with the continued support and consultation of the SRC, it is certain 2022 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:	\$31,925.68
Average Annual Earnings after Nebraska VR Services:	\$21,860.76
Estimated Annual Taxes on Earnings:	
Federal Income Tax	\$946.00
State Income Tax	\$482.00
State/Local Sales Tax	\$0
Social Security Tax	\$1,672.00
Average Total Taxes per Year	\$3,100.00
Average Return to Taxpayers over 30 Remaining Years of Employment	\$93,000.00

On average, a successfully employed person **Returns \$2.91** to the taxpayers for every **\$1 Spent** through Nebraska VR services.

Annual Program Costs

	Cost of Program
Administration	\$ 1,421,038
Client Services	
	Cost of Program
Provided by VR Staff	\$ 10,113,854
Purchased from Community Rehab Programs	\$ 1,344,168
Purchased from Other Vendors	\$ 2,690,558
Total	\$ 14,148,581
Purchased for Clients	
	Cost of Program
Assessment	\$ 479,187
Diagnosis & Treatment of Impairments	\$ 3,938
Graduate College or University Training	\$ 60,274
Four-Year College or University Training	\$ 314,376
Junior or Community College Training	\$ 68,880
On-the-Job Training	\$ 3,141
Apprenticeship Training	\$ 8,347
Job Readiness Training	\$ 0
Miscellaneous Training	\$ 19,884
On-the-Job Supports-Time Limited	\$ 448,268
On-the-Job Supports-Supp. Employment	\$ 1,596,000
Transportation	\$ 25,913
Maintenance	\$ 19,567
Rehabilitation Technology	\$ 661,621
Reader	\$ 0
Interpreter	\$ 8,304
Technical Assistance	\$ 850
Benefits Counseling	\$ 118,030
Customized Employment	\$ 187,000
All Other Services	\$ 11,145
Total	\$ 4,034,726

Individuals Served by Nebraska VR

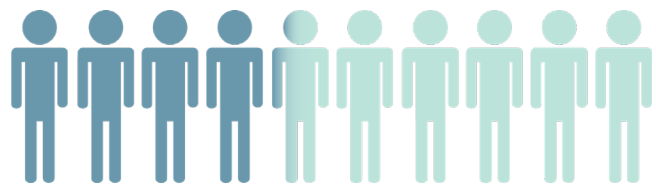
2021 Nebraska VR Employment Program

Clients Served by County

County.....Total	County.....Total
Adams.....78	Jefferson.....9
Antelope.....2	Johnson.....0
Arthur.....0	Kearney.....6
Banner.....1	Keith.....3
Blaine.....1	Keya Paha.....0
Boone.....6	Kimball.....3
Box Butte.....19	Knox.....7
Boyd.....2	Lancaster.....455
Brown.....3	Lincoln.....76
Buffalo.....83	Logan.....0
Burt.....12	Loup.....1
Butler.....23	Madison.....99
Cass.....19	McPherson.....1
Cedar.....10	Merrick.....8
Chase.....2	Morrill.....3
Cherry.....2	Nance.....2
Cheyenne.....10	Nemaha.....12
Clay.....9	Nuckolls.....5
Colfax.....3	Otoe.....21
Cuming.....8	Pawnee.....0
Custer.....9	Perkins.....2
Dakota.....4	Phelps.....10
Dawes.....8	Pierce.....14
Dawson.....48	Platte.....81
Deuel.....1	Polk.....10
Dixon.....3	Red Willow.....35
Dodge.....40	Richardson.....5
Douglas.....547	Rock.....2
Dundy.....1	Saline.....19
Fillmore.....3	Sarpy.....142
Franklin.....4	Saunders.....22
Frontier.....1	Scotts Bluff.....71
Furnas.....2	Seward.....11
Gage.....26	Sheridan.....5
Garden.....1	Sherman.....3
Garfield.....2	Sioux.....0
Gosper.....5	Stanton.....4
Grant.....2	Thayer.....5
Greeley.....0	Thomas.....1
Hall.....141	Thurston.....4
Hamilton.....4	Valley.....3
Harlan.....1	Washington.....16
Hayes.....0	Wayne.....16
Hitchcock.....2	Webster.....4
Holt.....17	Wheeler.....0
Hooker.....3	York.....20
Howard.....3	Total Served.....2387

Applied for Services	1355
Received Services	2387
Successfully Employed	563

Successfully Employed Nebraska VR Clients



43% of clients are employed full-time.

Average hourly wage for 2021 is **\$14.11**

2021 Occupation & Earnings for Competitively Employed Clients

Occupations	Percent	Average Hourly Earnings
Service	36.06%	\$10.69
Professional	19.18%	\$18.59
Sales	13.32%	\$12.78
Transportation & Material Moving	9.06%	\$13.09
Office Support	7.99%	\$15.36
Production	5.51%	\$14.09
Management, Business, & Finance	4.97%	\$20.71
Construction & Extraction	1.60%	\$25.03
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	1.42%	\$14.53
Installation, Maintenance, & Repairs	0.89%	\$18.14

Career Pathway Advancement Project (CPAP)

CPAP, a five-year grant awarded to Nebraska VR in 2015 from the United States Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA), came to an end in June 2021. The grant allowed adults and youth with disabilities to acquire skills and credentials necessary to advance in high-demand industries. The strategy advanced incumbent workers, opened job opportunities for job seekers, and benefited business partners by cultivating workforce development through educational advancement and training.

The grant sought to upskill/backfill positions within the high demand industries of Architecture and Construction, Healthcare, Information Technology, Manufacturing and Transportation, Distribution and Logistics (TDL). Nebraska VR's vision was to promote autonomy, stability, and economic self-sufficiency, achieved by assistance to obtain a single, stable, well-paying job with benefits to replace the one (or more) entry-level jobs currently held to make ends meet.

In 2021, 86 CPAP clients achieved successful employment which was nearly double the number of successful outcomes from the previous year. Some clients completed non-degree certifications such as Commercial Driver's License, Certified Medical Aid, and Electrical Journeyman Certification. Other clients completed Associate's degrees, Bachelor's degrees, Master's degrees, and one pursued a Doctorate degree in Pharmacy.

To learn more about the grant, listen to podcasts, and watch the success story videos of Dave Kelly, Sara Stewart, Chris Olson, and Arnulfo Gama, go to vr.nebraska.gov/pathways.

Going Forward: CPAP 2.0

The United States Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has funded Nebraska VR's Career Pathway Advancement Project through September 30, 2026 with a \$8,469,796 Grant Award. The Disability Innovation Fund - Career Advancement Initiative Model Demonstration Project Grant will be used to advance careers and open new opportunities to advance or enter a career pathway for eligible individuals with disabilities. A proven upskill/backfill business model will be used to meet the needs of both businesses seeking skilled employees and individuals with disabilities beginning January 2022.

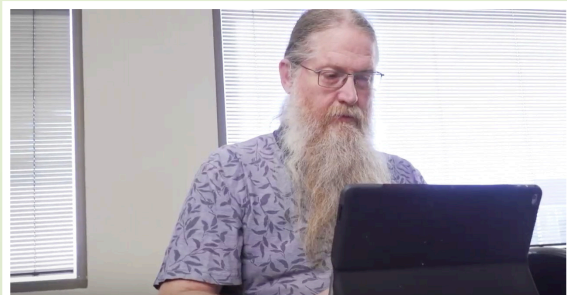
Eligible individuals with disabilities, including previously served Nebraska VR clients, will be provided with the tools to advance in high-demand, high-quality careers, such as science, technology, engineering, math, computer science, construction, healthcare, manufacturing and transportation, distribution, and logistics (TDL) careers through apprenticeship and training programs. The goal of the grant is to improve and maximize competitive integrated employment outcomes, economic self-sufficiency, independence, and inclusion in both work and the community while reducing reliance on public benefits.



Operations Manager Dave Kelly



Truck Driver Sara Stewart



Information Systems Manager Chris Olson



Auto Mechanic Arnulfo Gama

Nebraska VR Successful People

The Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) honored four Nebraska VR partners for their role in creating inclusive workplaces and advocacy for disability employment during October 2020 Disability Employment and Inclusion Award Ceremony.

Entrepreneur Award—

Sierra Bahm, Lone Wolf Farrier Services – Kearney, Nebraska

Sierra Bahm is motivated, customer-oriented, and wanted to turn her love of horses into one of the most sought-after farrier businesses in central Nebraska. She worked with Nebraska VR employment specialist Marcia Haynes to coordinate a feasibility study, create a business plan, and train. The self-employment services she received were a critical support to Sierra's strengths, skills, and abilities. Her success is attributed to her hard work and business savvy.



Lone Wolf Farrier Services owner Sierra Bahm and Spur the Horse



Ramona Vaughn of Western Pathology Consultants, Inc. (WPCI)

New Business Partner Recognition Award—

Western Pathology Consultants, Inc. (WPCI) – Scottsbluff, Nebraska

WPCI incorporated in 1994 and has provided drug testing services to companies in Nebraska and across the United States. They have been partnering with Nebraska VR for over a year and have provided several on-the-job evaluations and trainings. The corporate office in Scottsbluff employs twenty-four staff and has hired three clients over the past year.

Small Business Recognition— Excel Cleaning Solutions – Papillion, Nebraska

Excel Cleaning Solutions offers a wide variety of indoor and outdoor cleaning and maintenance. They have hired four clients and communicate their job openings to find qualified candidates. They have also provided several opportunities for clients to succeed by modifying their interview processes and aligning work schedules to coordinate with public transportation.



Excel Cleaning Solutions owners Ron and Diana Martina



Michelle Meyer of Columbus Community Hospital

Large Business Recognition—

Columbus Community Hospital – Columbus, Nebraska

Columbus Community Hospital, a not-for-profit acute care facility, employs over 670 staff. They have a commitment to promoting diversity and inclusion through hiring practices to build a workplace reflecting their entire community. As a ten-year Project SEARCH business host, Columbus Community Hospital has demonstrated their commitment to providing students with disabilities the work-based learning experiences to be successful employees.

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

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State Rehabilitation Council

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