



Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council

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"A consumer-controlled council committed to ensuring quality rehabilitation services."

SRC Meeting Minutes

Tuesday, May 6th, 2025

10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

The meeting minutes of the State Rehabilitation Council commenced at 10:04 a.m. by Christine Gaspari.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jodi Bodnar, Gloria Eddins, Jana Egan, Sharron Elliot, Christine Gaspari, Jason Gieschen, Matthew Kaslon, Lisa Kent-Scheer, Todd Ludwig, Paulette Monthei, Scott Parrill, Lindy Foley, Tobias Orr, Janel Sweley

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ashley Altman, Jordyn Brummund, Michael Bursaw, Alvin Parker, Terri Ridder

NEBRASKA VR STAFF PRESENT: Angela Fujan, Michael Enriquez, Alexa Krueger

NEBRASKA VR STAFF ABSENT: Holly Enriquez, Lupe Stevens

VISITORS: Kyle Miers, Ben Sparks, Margie Propp

VISITORS NOT ATTENDING: NONE

I. Pledge of Allegiance (Jason Gieschen)

Jason Gieschen led the Council in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

II. Approval of agenda (Chair)

Christine called for a motion to approve the agenda. Gloria moved to approve the agenda. Paulette seconded the motion.

III. Approval of prior meeting minutes (Chair)

Christine called for a motion to approve the prior meeting minutes. Gloria moved to approve the agenda. Jana seconded the motion.

IV. Robert's Rules, meeting etiquette, and short break hourly (Chair)

Christine mentioned to Council members the SRC follows Robert's Rules. There were no questions.

V. Introductions (Chair)

All members introduced themselves.

VI. Council membership (Chair)

A. Potential members: Tracy Wimmer (Alliance of the Midlands)

B. New Members: Janel Sweley (VR Counselor), Michael Enriquez (VR Program Director of Employment)

C. 2025 Terms ending:

- First term ending: None
- Second term ending: None
- Recruitment reminder: Individuals with a disability needed to maintain the 51% Council Majority

Christine asked Janel and Michael to introduce themselves to the Council and invited them to share a little about themselves.

Janel told the Council she has a background working in Social Work for many years and shared her work history. She has been with Nebraska VR for two 2 years.

Michael told the Council he has 15 plus years working in Social Services and shared his work history with members.

Christine reminded members if they know anyone who would be a good candidate to join the Council to encourage them to apply.

Angela said the Transition Committee is slim. She asked members if they know of anyone who would be a good candidate, to encourage them to apply. Paulette offered to move to the Transition Committee. She informed the Council her son is currently receiving Pre-ETS Services.

The Roster will be updated to reflect this change.

VII. Action

Follow-up to action items from last meeting:

- TO DO: Executive Committee to discuss fall SRC conference attendance (Angela Fujan)

Angela explained to members this is something the Executive Committee will be discussing prior to the next SRC Meeting. Angela told members she would reach out within the next few weeks to determine their interest.

Lindy informed the Council the conference is in San Diego this year. It runs from October 31st into the first week of November. She explained its essentially two conferences in one. The SRC portion would be at the beginning.

- Senator Outreach Discussion and Activity (Angela Fujan & Sarah Chapin)

Sarah checked with the Council to see if members were able to reach out to any Senators. She asked if any members needed the Constant Contact information that was sent to them before the February 2025 SRC meeting.

Paulette told the Council she reached out to 21 Senators. She received 5 responses.

Christine told Sarah she would like to receive the information again. Sarah told members she will send out the information again. Todd asked if this could be completed at any time. Sarah informed him it could.

Angela reminded the Council the current legislative session ends later this month, so now would be a great time to contact them.

The Council was reminded they could send the letter to all Senators, not just the one in their district.

- October 2025 Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards for employers and self-employment history and request to broaden this to include Special Education Staff (Angela Fujan)

As discussed last meeting, there was a request to possibly broaden the Awards Ceremony to include a Special Education Staff Award.

Angela told the Council in the past these awards have always been given to self-employed clients and businesses who have partnered with Nebraska VR. Angela told members she felt if we were able to broaden the scope of this award, we might lose focus of employment and who the award is originally intended for.

Tobias shared his agreement.

Sarah explained to members the name defines the award. Paulette also agreed with keeping reserved for employers because that is the purpose of Nebraska VR.

Sarah asked members to entertain if SRC could find way to collect stories from staff who were included with Pre-ETS plans. This would include work Nebraska VR does in the school system. It could be distributed to SPED Teachers to hand out. She reminded the Council about Transition Tuesday newsletters that are currently emailed out.

It was decided by members this award will stay the same and not changed in any way.

VIII. Discussion

A. Member Feedback on Written Reports

1. ATP (Tobias Orr) – see written report.

Tobias reports the DHHS Program is a bit behind on referrals due to longer wait times for assessment services. He informed them they also purchased new drafting software in December.

He reported the Education Program is seeing continued growth, and teachers are reaching out to the team for training.

He shared a new staff member, Hunter Ludwig, is starting as an Education Specialist, and will be based out of the ATP Kearney office.

Tobias shared the iCanConnect Program spent all their funds last year.

He said on the Nebraska VR side of things; requests have gone up.

ATP just finished up their fourth and final Resue event. At the event 199 items were donated by 57 people. 142 items were then rehomed to 38 people in the Omaha area. Items given away included 2 hospital beds, 5 power wheelchairs, dozens of walkers, and a variety of other equipment.

Tobias reported it was a great event. In the future, ATP will be looking into doing these events on a smaller scale.

He also informed the Council that ATP lost a staff member, Brent, in the Scottsbluff office. His loss will be felt greatly among all ATP Staff Members.

2. CAP (Jodi Bodnar) – see written report

Jodi shared a CAP Case closure summary with Council members.

The client's main complaint was a delay in accessing job retention services.

After reading her written report, Jodi shared there were some good take aways from this case. She said it's important for staff to remember to take the mentality of the client into account. As the client's attitude and mental state played a huge role in remediating this case and providing a successful outcome for the client. This was also an opportunity to see that more conversation needs to be happening with Supportive Employment Staff. Jodi shared it's also important to provide a clear understanding of VR and SE staff roles.

She noted staff can use visual marketing materials as well as verbal explanations to help clients understand how Nebraska VR works.

3. Deaf & Hard of Hearing (Ashley Altman)

No report.

4. NESILC (Christine Gaspari) – see written report

Christine told the Council the last few months have been very busy at NESILC. Since the last SRC meeting, NESILC's Director and Vice Chair both submitted their resignations.

Christine reported NESILC has been through an audit as well. Christine told the Council she provided a link at the bottom of her report for anyone to view who is interested.

NESILC is continuing to look for new members. Since all the recent changes Christine is looking at this transition as a time of rebuilding and moving forward in a positive way. She told members if they had any questions please to contact her, Jodi, or Tobias.

Christine said they are currently looking for new Director and working to get their finances back in order. In the meantime, volunteer members have been filling in the gaps and shining a light on areas that can be improved.

There were lots of things called into question after the audit. As a result, there will be a great deal of updates and bylaws that will be changed.

Christine told the Council NESLIC is committed to staying on top of things and making sure their current and new leadership will follow the strict policies and procedures that will be set in place. They are looking forward to getting things back on track.

5. Ombudsman (report only) - see written report

- No comments

6. Youth Leadership Council (report only) - see written report

Paulette mentioned she recently helped pass out flyers for NYLC. They will be doing more events in the future and will be focusing on networking. She said Kathy will also be doing more outreach to teachers.

B. Member Feedback on VR (Christine Gaspari)

Christine told the Council she has not been provided with any member feedback since the last SRC meeting.

C. Director Report (Lindy Foley)

Lindy thanked members for being in the SRC and said hearing from members is always valued.

She told the Council she is currently in the middle of Team Tours with Holly and Cathy. They have been visiting all 12 field offices.

While visiting with staff, they have been breaking down information at the National, State, and Local level.

National Update: Lindy is pleased to share things are looking positive at the federal level. RSA has made it through some drastic changes with very few changes. A few senior leaders at RSA have taken the buy-out offered to them. The current Interim Commissioner is Chris Pope. He is very well respected, and there has been lots of excitement around his appointment. We are in very good shape for both staffing and funding. Nebraska VR will be receiving an increase in funding for next few years. It is clear the messaging is positive at the national level for these services.

Lindy told the Council there has been some concern expressed from staff about the US Department of Education becoming dismantled. She continues to remind staff Nebraska is located within the State Department of Education, and we are not at the Federal level. Also, other steps would need to happen before Nebraska VR would move to a different agency.

Lindy told members she is very open with all staff if they have any questions. She explained there is an "Ask the Director" App available to staff members. If a question is asked, she publishes for all staff members to see the question along with the answer.

State Update: Lindy has been making sure staff understand Nebraska VR's story. She said it's powerful to client share success stories and explain how the program makes a lot of financial sense to Legislators. She said the SRC, and businesses can help tell this story. This will also help promote good branding for Nebraska VR at all levels.

Lindy also shared the About Nebraska VR handout she recently shared with the State Board of Education.

This worksheet will be shared with members and included in the meeting minutes.

One key takeaway from this worksheet included sharing 5,167 students with disabilities were referred to Nebraska VR for Pre-Employment Transition Services.

Lindy also gave a shout-out to Nebraska VR's partnerships businesses and with ATP.

Lindy said this worksheet allows our numbers to be readily available to stakeholders.

She is also sharing information with WIOA. This allows us to see if we are held accountable for our metrics. This information shows how long clients remain employed after their case is closed. We want to make sure we are helping put clients on a career path and not just a job.

During fall Team Tours, Lindy, Cathy, and Holly will be breaking down each field office's performance level and making it available for staff to see.

Local Update: Lindy told the Council they have been focused on daily housekeeping items such as authorizations, billings, and staying on top of caseloads.

She also told the Council some things to keep on their radar such as the Olmstead Plan. She said Tobias is also involved in this plan. She explained the Olmstead Plan help insures people have access to housing, transportation, employment, and education. They are currently working on developing new goals in 2025 for the next 6 years.

Tobias said his work group has been working on LR 86, which is doing a study on accessible housing. This resolution has been picked up by Senator Roundtree.

Lindy encouraged members to learn more about this plan if they are not already familiar with it.

Lindy also told members about Transform Nebraska. The primary focus is reentry success for people with criminal records. Transform 2030 is a national initiative, and they are looking at this as a guide on how they can implement this on a state level.

IX. Committee meetings and reports:

A. Client Services Committee (Lisa Kent-Scheer)

The Committee reviewed the most recent survey results. Overall, they reported the numbers look good. They noted client satisfaction scores are great.

They also focused on talking about what's next. They did some brainstorming and talked about how Nebraska VR can better engage and help clients facing behavioral

and mental health challenges.

They asked if Nebraska VR had a staff member or mental health practitioner on sight to help deal with these complex issues and cases when needed.

Jodi told the Council State Staff will be in July. She thinks this will be a good opportunity for staff to possibly participate in conference sessions that address this topic.

B. Employer Services Committee (Todd Ludwig)

The Committee discussed the Awards Ceremony taking place in October. It was decided they will be inviting the Governor again. If he cannot attend, they will be sending an email to the Commissioner and Senators. They are also going to be rephrasing a question on the nomination card that is sent out to Nebraska VR's Employment Specialists. Each field office will be required to submit at least two businesses. The Committee will be meeting on July 10th to pick the nominees.

C. Transition Services Committee (Gloria Eddins)

The Committee talked about the Senator Outreach as well as the numbers coming out of the state surveys. They will be talking about this in greater detail at the next meeting.

There was also discussion around how this survey is given out to former clients. The Council was informed clients are called directly.

D. Executive Committee (Christine Gaspari)

No meeting or report.

X. Public Comment/Announcements

Gloria reminded members about Disability Pride taking place on July 26th at Antelope Park. NYLC and ATP are having booths at this event too.

Christine called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Gloria motioned to adjourn. Matt seconded.