

**NEVADA STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (N.S.R.C.)
MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, May 7, 2024, at 1:00 pm
Rehabilitation Administration
751 Basque Way, Carson City, NV 89706
&
Vocational Rehabilitation
3016 West Charleston Blvd. Suite 200, Las Vegas, NV 89102

COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT:

Raquel O'Neill
Robin Kincaid
David Nuestro
Judy Swain
Jack Mayes
Jenny Casselman
Dawn Lyons
Cyndy Gustafson
Drazen Elez, VR Administrator – Non-Voting

COUNCIL MEMBERS ABSENT:

Austin Olson
Dr. Rebecca Rogers
Sandra Sinicrope

GUESTS/PUBLIC:

Kate Osti, Acting Executive Director of the Nevada Disability Advocacy & Law Center
Dawn Lyons, Executive Director of the Nevada State Independent Living Council

STAFF:

Chricy Harris, Deputy Attorney General
Mechelle Merrill, VR Deputy Administrator of Programs
Brett Martinez, VR Deputy Administrator of Operations
David Fisher, Rehab Counselor III
Jenny Richter Livia, N.S.R.C. Liaison
Mat Dorangricchia, VR Northern District Manager
Trina Bourke, VR Southern District Manager
Sertram Harris, VR Administrative Assistant III
Mary Zeniou, Statewide Transition Coordinator

1. CALL TO ORDER, INTRODUCTIONS, AND VERIFY TIMELY POSTING OF AGENDA

Raquel O'Neill, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm. Jenny Richter Livia, N.S.R.C. Liaison called the role.

Ms. Richter determined a quorum was present and verified that the posting was completed on time in accordance with Open Meeting Law.

2. FIRST PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor to public comment.
No Public Comments were provided.

3. APPROVAL OF THE February 6, 2024, MEETING MINUTES

Ms. O'Neill asked the council for any modifications, changes, corrections to the February 6, 2024, N.S.R.C Meeting Minutes.

Robin Kincaid, NSRC Councilmember, wanted to make typo corrections in the February 6, 2024, minutes. She proposed changes to correct spelling on page 1 (correction spelling William instead of Bill Heaivilin) on page 22 (job shadowing instead of job shading) on page 27 (lower case hoping) on page 28 (correct spelling of Diana Thorkildson).

Chricy Harris, Deputy Attorney General, stated that if there's any changes to the minutes that are purposed it must be reflected in the motion.

Robin Kincaid, NSRC Councilmember made a motion to make those edits and accept the minutes with those corrections. Judy Swain seconded the motion. All in favor, none opposed, none abstained, motion carried.

4. ELECTION OF THE NSRC CHAIR & VICE-CHAIR FOR TERM JULY 1, 2024, THROUGH JUNE 30, 2025

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor to Drazen Elez, VR Administrator, to go over the Election of the NSRC Chair & Vice-Chair for terms July 1, 2024, through June 30, 2025

Robin Kincaid, NSRC Councilmember, nominated Raquel O'Neill for Chairperson of the NSRC. Raquel O'Neill accepted the nomination for Chairperson of the NSRC. All in favor, none opposed, none abstained, nomination carried.

Robin Kincaid, NSRC Councilmember, nominated Jack Mayes for Vice-Chairperson of the NSRC. Jack Mayes accepted the nomination for Vice-Chairperson of the NSRC. All in favor, none opposed, none abstained, nomination carried.

5. SUGGESTIONS FROM THE COUNCIL FOR THE 2024 NSRC ANNUAL REPORT

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor to Drazen Elez, VR Administrator, for discussion on the 2024 NSRC Annual Report.

Jack Mayes would like to see the results of any improvements that the legislative action may have impacted on what Vocational Rehabilitation has been doing highlighted, regarding employment. He was excited about the benefits101 website.

Drazen Elez, VR Administrator, stated that Troy Jordan, Deputy Director, gave a legislative summary of what took place. The report will be released at the end of this year or at the beginning of 2025. We really won't have any additional legislative action to be presented unless it's during the interim financial committee, except if between now and the end of the year some new thing takes place, in which case we will include them.

Robin Kincaid said the format of the annual report is great. She wanted to include a "did you know" section that includes 10 fast facts or section that takes away the myths. Highlight the Nevada Trip project, talk about the timeline, and give them information on what the future is going to look like; also, give them a preview of the terminology.

Mr. Elez said that we'll have a page that highlights the Nevada Trip with some of the technology, graphics, and what people can expect. We'll look at the original page; that would be a great way to get some basic review and/or quick snippets of who and what we are all about that would educate the legislators and anybody else who we share the report with.

The other item we're probably looking at depends on what our funding looks like is the NSRC report changing the look of it from a couple of years ago. We wanted to change it from a long document that individual wouldn't want to read; we wanted to include graphics, data, and include stories that in a way didn't take up a lot of space, using summaries of the stories with a QR code that leads to the full stories on our website. Also, depending on the budget we want to take it from a printed document to a digital PDF format like a digital magazine.

Raquel O'Neill, Chair, said that if you look at other reports put out from VR programs and councils across the country, the council typically provide some recommendations to their Vocational Rehabilitation perhaps looking forward into the future, seeing the trends and what's happening in the state, putting together all the information that has been presented over the year, and making some recommendations for the future.

We have room to put this information in the report if the council is interested, although we've historically not put this information in our report. She would like to see our council participate on a level that is equal to our counterparts within the

country. It also can be utilized to leverage to support Vocational Rehabilitation. She asked would the council like to see this as a future agenda item.

Jenny Casselman, NSRC Councilmember, agrees that this would be a good future agenda item.

Mechelle Merrill, VR Deputy Administrator of Programs, informed the council that the color scheme is going to stay the same with blue and green.

6. Membership updates

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor to Mechelle Merrill, VR Deputy Administrator of Programs, to introduce the new members of the NSRC council.

Cyndy Gustafson is a native Nevadan; she has a master's degree in Policial Science with an emphasis in Public Law. Founder of Strategic Progress.

Jenny Casselman lives in Carson City, NV. Former Deputy Director of DETR. Volunteer in a variety of capacities as an ABLA Account Ambassador.

7. OTHER REPORTS

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor for an update presented by Kate Osti, Acting Executive Director of the Nevada Disability Advocacy & Law Center on the Client Assistance Programs.

Ms. Osti, NDALC, Last fiscal year, from October 1, 2023, to the end of April 30, 2024, Client Assistance Program (CAP) had 41 information referrals; 23 were related to Vocational Rehabilitation, and 13 were information to Title 2 of the American with Disabilities Act, employment section of the ADA. 4 people wanted information about CAP and 1 person inquired about Services for the Visually Impaired. Zero inquiries about the independent programs.

Informational call regarding CAP

- 5 related to IPE development.
- 2 for early closure of case.
- 4 associated with communication issues with counselors.
- 4 questions about services in general.
- 7 referrals and eligibility questions.
- 1 conflict with counselor over services.
- 1 case at the hearing level under services.

Ms. Kincaid questioned whether mediation could be used to solve some concerns with clients in lieu of going to a hearing. Ms. Osti mentioned a current case is at hearing and is currently in mediation. Mrs. Merrill answered, once the client has a

CAP case we go to mediation or, with CAP assistance, we try to meet the needs of the individual within the guidelines of the program.

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor for update presented by Dawn Lyons, Executive Director of the Nevada State Independent Living Council on the Nevada State Independent Living Representatives.

Ms. Lyons, NSILC, stated they are in the process of working on a 3-year state plan agreement. Currently under staffing changes.

8. Summer Youth Internship Program (SYIP) updates 2024

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor to Mary Zeniou, Statewide Transition Coordinator, to present an overview and updates on the SYIP program and Agency Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) Plans for 2024.

Ms. Zeniou spoke on the Pre-ETS programs. She said that the SYIP is a paid summer work experience for youth and young adults with an IEP, 504, or documented disability. The program provides training for internships and allows interns to work 4-6 weeks in a field aligning with their career interests.

Benefits of the SYIP for Interns

- Develop important soft skills & financial literacy skills.
- Write their first cover letter.
- Gain 4-6 weeks of work experience.
- Paid Nevada minimum wage
- Job coaching for internship.

Benefits of the SYIP for Employers

- Gain knowledge about different disabilities & how to accommodate them.
- Receive a decal for completing the employer disability training.
- Practice working with youth and young adults with disabilities.
- Support from the Pre-ETS team.

New Elements for SYIP in 2024

- Youth & young adults' orientation
 - Tailored soft skills for entering the workforce.
 - New financial literacy training
- New Parent orientation
 - Parent disability advocacy training
 - How to support youth & young adults in their internship
 - Financial literacy training

Summer Youth Internship 2024

- SYIP total statewide: 90 participants

- Northern Nevada: 37 participants
- Rural Nevada: 7 participants
- Southern Nevada: 51 participants

Ms. O'Neill asked if, in the financial literacy training, are the individuals talked to about SSI SSDI. Ms. Zeniou said they are planning on talking about that with them.

9. Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) Grant Update

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor to Mechelle Merrill, VR Deputy Administrator of Programs.

Mechelle Merrill, VR Deputy Administrator of Programs, is calling the Disability Innovation Fund (DIF) the Nevada TRIP or TRIP of a lifetime. She's closely working with Jennifer Kane and Ashley Price from the Department of Education on the development of the website skeleton.

The Rehabilitation Services Administration put out an opportunity for a DIF grant for all states, and Nevada was one of ten states awarded the grant. It is a program that addresses a national issue with transitioning. Transitioning is confusing to the youth, young adults, and parents going from elementary, middle school, and high school to what comes afterwards. Considering education experiences prior to graduation is an entitlement program, where Vocational Rehabilitation is an eligibility program.

Vocational Rehabilitation is trying to bridge the gap between youth, young adults, and parents to understand the process of transitioning. Vocational Rehabilitation is working in association with Diane Thorkildson from the University of Nevada Reno to create a parent academy, which is a series of in-person trainings that will be captured in a video format to be shared across the state to help answer these questions. Ms. Merrill sees the DIF website as a clearing house of information for any partners or partnership having access to the grant to navigate through the transitioning stages in the life of a young person.

Jenny Casselman, NSRC Councilmember, asked how does this work with supportive decision making in terms of the relationship between the parent and the young person when they're receiving VR services?

Ms. Merrill explained, when it comes to the VR confines of our program, the individual is their own guardian and signature. It is in their best interest to have someone included in the decision-making process.

When it comes to the DIF grant this is a great example of information that we will have on the website. It's part of the individual who is learning to make that healthy transition from a young person who isn't working, to a young adult who

might be thinking about working, continuing their education, vocational training, or volunteer work.

10. Vocational Rehabilitation Success Stories

Mechelle Merrill, VR Deputy Administrator of Programs opened the floor to the new member of the council, Ms. Cynthia Gustafson.

Ms. Cynthia Gustafson, NSRC Councilmember, tells a story about her son AJ, and the gratitude she has for the support she has received from VR. AJ is a remarkable young man that was going to be born blind and wouldn't speak. He was nonverbal until age four and can see and speak. When he was young, she thought he would never work due to his hyperactivity and his inability to concentrate. When he was school age, she was nervous for him. When they moved to Reno, he started attending Billingshurst middle school and McQueen high school.

Once he started getting involved with the Pre-ETS classes, taking the VR summer courses and camps at Amplified Life, he started coming home shocking Ms. Gustafson. He wanted to work, have a truck, get a dog and a girlfriend. He learned self-advocacy, different job skills, and got to work at Café Canteen at Amplified Life. His teachers at McQueen and Mechelle were telling her that AJ was going to work despite him not being able to read or write. He graduated from McQueen High School with her having a huge amount of anxiety regarding his future.

She was terrified about AJ being sent out into the workforce without any structure. Mechelle suggested that Ms. Gustafson come and get involved with all the VR programs. David Fisher was AJ's counselor and had to help her get over her fears of the larger world. AJ had an assessment at United Cerebral Palsy which he liked. Once the assessment came back, David had a conversation with her stating that AJ is on the border and maybe needed more of a supported situation, but maybe he can make it in the world. David asked AJ what his dream job would be, and AJ said he wanted to work at Home Depot.

An employee Diana Madrigal at Home Depot said that they were excited to have AJ. This is part of our company's culture, and we want to make sure he's successful. VR assigned him a job coach, Debbie, who was amazing at introducing him to everyone at Home Depot. He started out watering the plants which didn't work and instead someone gave him a broom, he started cleaning the entire outdoors area.

Every time she takes him to Home Depot everyone says hello to him. Several workers told Ms. Gustafson that she doesn't have to worry about dropping AJ off, because everyone looks out for him. One of AJ's classmates has also been hired

by Home Depot. AJ just received a raise and has been hired on Full-time and has passed his one-year anniversary. Having seen how AJ has flourished has changed the way she views the larger public. It has taken away a lot of the cynicism she had about employers really wanting to engage with our young people, and it has changed not only my son's life but my life as a mom.

Mechelle Merrill expressed that she wishes to share at least one Success Story at every NSRC Meeting, if agreeable to the members of the council. Ms. O'Neill, Ms. Lyons, and Ms. Kincaid concurred on the importance of hearing such stories about our clients.

11. Rehabilitation Division State and Federal Audit Reports

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor for Drazen Elez, VR Administrator, to provide an overview of the following:

Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2023 Monitoring Report.

Mr. Elez mentioned that the RSA sent out the Monitoring Report on March 27, 2024. The report was based on the workload that took place 2019-2021. There were four findings that didn't lead to significant changes in our policies or procedures. The first two findings were Insufficient internal controls to manage the provision of Pre-ETS, and Insufficient Policies and Procedures.

Finding 2.1 Insufficient Internal Controls to Manage the Provision of Pre-employment Transition Services

The RSA concluded that we must implement policies and procedures to ensure proper and efficient administration of the VR programs, including necessary functions for which the VR agencies are responsible. It doesn't necessarily mean that we didn't have some of these internal controls policies in place. It means that we didn't have a minute format and it wasn't written in a way to RSA's liking.

The pandemic had a significant impact on our Pre-ETS services that revolved around third party cooperative arrangements with different school districts and colleges. Those TPC arrangements went away due to a huge lack of funding. We had to reduce our funding by about 19% and with having the TPC arrangements go away, it made it difficult for us to reach students with disabilities in order for us to provide Pre-ETS services.

We definitely had to completely revamp our Pre-ETS program to make it more sustainable and for us to be less dependent on other agencies, to find different ways to service students and provide them with a variety of different options.

One finding was updating policy and procedures and internal controls, monitoring components to ensure correct coding, tracking and reporting of Pre-ETS. The

second finding was updating set aside determination relating to provision of Pre-ETS. RSA was asking VR, as we are required to set aside 15% of our funding for the sake provision of Pre-ETS services, the way that we were setting aside the money or calculation, what that 15% was going to be. They didn't find, in their view, that it was in compliance with the federal regulations. We've written a new policy which they've reviewed and haven't had any negative feedback.

The next finding was to update the Pre-employment transition policy to be consistent with RAS notice of information on Pre-ETS services in connection with the Pre-ETS letter. When it comes to the first element of the provision of the Pre-ETS services, updating all the internal policies, procedures and internal controls.

We've started correcting these even prior to RSA conducting their monitoring. We've identified internally the changes we needed to make for us to better track expenses. We created internally different types of coding data and overlaying different coding in order for multiple services to be categorized in multiple different ways to satisfy federal requirements. When we receive federal funds to provide services, it is not necessarily that we get cash and they say, "ok go ahead and spend this money." A lot of the time those funds and grants come with very stringent rules as to what the money can be spent on. At the time of the expense, we must identify what the expense is for, and if you try to go back after the fact and identify the service, it might be similarly named for various things, which makes it difficult to monitor.

We've created Pre-ETS monthly expense reports that are reviewed continuously by our internal staff and created Pre-ETS internal monitoring reports which staff do random sampling of Pre-ETS services and authorization and payments to ensure that we are in compliance with federal regulations and the RSA requirements. As an ongoing effort to ensure that we are continuously in compliance, our quality assurance team will not just do counselor case monitoring but will expand their role to do internal audits over various agencies within VR and different programs. That way we can continuously stay on top of the regulations and stay on top of what is going on within those programs and help them adjust their processes so that we're never surprised when somebody comes to conduct a monitoring.

The first monitored program was the Pre-ETS program, conducted by our quality assurance team, who provided significant feedback so they could adjust their policies and procedures to be in federal compliance. We've set up a set aside determination report, which includes different types of reports: the amount of the federal awards; how much funding we'll be able to draw down by the end of the year; what the 15% of that estimate looks like; and estimates of the number of clients served and cost per client. We feel we've met all their requirements and that our findings have been resolved. We're waiting for their feedback on whether they agree or if there's any additional elements that we need to address for us to resolve the findings.

Finding 2.2 Insufficient Policies and Procedures

The second finding was insufficient policies and procedures with four different subparts. One request is that we update our policy manual and desk guide to match each other. In some of our public policies we had some language and additional explanations for our counselors that were in our internal desk guide. RSA pointed out that they wanted some specific language to still be included in our public policy and to have a number of those policies updated.

They also wanted us to provide training for our staff on the policy manual and VR guide, which we've done. RSA wanted documentation of when and how the training took place, and what the discussions were during the training. We made several efforts to document the information. When it comes to staff training, we have a platform called YES LMS which works with other smaller state VR programs to collaborate and have all the training available in one place to share with other VR agencies/programs.

We feel that we are 90% complete with addressing all the findings. We've rolled out Data Integrity Day; once a month we set aside a day for all counselors and technicians to take a moment to update and catch up on necessary data that needs to be included in each individual client case to satisfy the RSA requirements. We must collect 565 data points that have-to-have backup documentation, whether it's different invoices, narrative, and reports from various providers. Data Integrity Day is part of an ongoing training process where specific data points are focused on each month, providing training to counselors and staff on how to best capture in our system to ensure that it's in compliance with federal regulations. Sheena Childers and Sheila Rasor will review different reports to find where some of those red flags are and will provide training on capturing that information and helping the counselors with the recordings.

In 2019, we changed our case management system from Raison to AWARE, which is a different system, and it took some time for the staff and internal analysts to learn how to properly record information and how to understand the best way to send the information to the RSA. It had been a struggle during the years 2020-2021 due to tenured staff loss. VR chose to focus on the client instead of focusing on capturing data during those years.

Finding 2.3 Insufficient Internal Controls for Management of the Federal Award, Data Accuracy and Validity, and Supporting Documentation

This finding had five subparts. Development of implementation of internal controls when it comes to 911 reports. 911 report is the report we send to RSA on a quarterly basis. Then, they publish them about twice a year regarding how many clients we served, what type of disabilities the clients had that we served, what type of jobs have they found, and what types of employment. We've developed some of those

internal controls and procedures that we didn't have in place, so that we can ensure that all the RSA policy directives are met.

This next finding is for developing and implementing internal controls for the employment rate, second quarter after exit, the fourth quarter after exit, and the median earnings credential attainments. This data comes from the employment security division, which we didn't properly capture; so, we've developed the policies. The subsequent finding develops mechanisms to collect, aggregate, process, and retool necessary training and evaluation of staff. Our QA team continuously trains and provides different sets of training. QA meets with supervisors annually with the different counseling teams to review their case results, patterns, and trends to identify what type of trainings different individuals need.

Finding 3.1 Insufficient Internal Controls

This finding is to the fiscal aspects of insufficient vendor payment and insufficient vendor invoice review and approval processes. We did have an internal process when it came to reviewing vendor invoices; it was elements we were reviewing. RSA wanted us to be more nuanced and be more specific, and they gave us pointers on what they specifically wanted us to review. They also identified that we needed to set up a policy regarding the governing rate of payments for purchased services.

RSA specifically wanted us to have a policy in place that says how we would conduct that. Additionally, proper maintenance of effort tracking and monitoring when the state agency receives federal grants. If there's any requirement in the grant for there to be state participation, the state general fund would be required for effort of tracking. We've developed policies regarding how we would track this. This essentially wasn't necessarily pining for the VR program, but for DETR in general as part of our financial monitoring, which is done through financial management so that they understand our grants and what needs to be done. They've helped us develop policies that RSA requires.

Another finding was facilities rental payments that did not meet the period of performance requirements. RSA requires that rent for the facilities are paid at the end of the month. Our rents are negotiated with the lenders, so we pay every quarter coming forward not necessarily paying it at the end. We found a nuanced solution only to use state funds to pay for this particular expense. That way we are not in violation of the federal regulation.

The last finding was Incomplete fraud reporting procedures. The internal control or policy that we had in place in DETR when it comes to fraud reporting wasn't up to RSA's standards, so we updated it to make sure we meet that standard.

Ms. Kincaid was wondering if Mr. Elez could walk us through just the timing of the RSA report and the technical assistance (TA) piece of it.

Mr. Elez stated that the RSA conducts the monitoring, then there will be a few months before they submit the report to the agency. Then, once the agency sees the report, the work on the solution will begin. In this case, the RSA started monitoring in February of 2013, requesting particular information, documents, different reports, policies, and procedures. Once they received everything, they would review all those documents. Meetings took place and they started interviewing different staff members virtually or different stakeholders within VR. Then, in May, was in-person and they conducted in-person monitoring, subsequently having additional questions and we had some additional meetings which probably concluded by June of 2023. The draft report was in mid-January 2024; we were asked to provide feedback. Once feedback was received, they finalized the report by March of 2024. The reason we were able to respond quickly to the draft report was that we already knew what needed to be fixed within the agency. The TA part is RSA specifically referring to them giving us some direction as to how they want things to be completed.

Ms. Kincaid asked for clarification on the TA portion of the RSA report.

Mr. Elez said that since they just finalized the report in mid-January of this year, and the way he understands the RSA process of writing these reports, once the monitoring was concluded in June of 2023, then our team that oversees Nevada would start writing their reports. Once they're finished writing the report, it goes to the finance chief and the program chief over at RSA who supervises and manages our team. Then those groups take about a month to review the report and then send it to the next person. Once all of them have reviewed the report, then it goes to their attorneys to review. Then, it comes back to our team to make any adjustments that each of those groups would need. The technical assistance talks about the experience of working with RSA. In dealing with the RSA, we are trying to be in compliance.

Ms. Kincaid questioned if VR is going to request technical assistance on the proper reporting of data elements that show up as errors on RSA 911? Is this going to happen in the future or is this already happening?

Mr. Elez answered that we have provided them with our policies and procedures when it comes to data elements to 911. We're waiting for them to respond to whether those policies are appropriate.

Ms. Kincaid asked do you need to notify them when you've completed all the training regarding the VR desk guide?

Mr. Elez responded that the answer is both when you have new staff starting; we have ongoing training. He wouldn't say the policies were opposite to each other.

Our desk guide explains more technically to our staff how to implement the public facing policy. The RSA wanted us to ensure that there's some additional information that we have in the desk guide and is also put into the policy. All the training is completed; our training officer, Dale McWilliams, continuously conducts different types of training on different policies and procedures for staff along with our QA team. We do training in two ways: one is by having ongoing training with just general classes for staff when it comes to policies and procedures; we also have our QA team do more specific training that's more tailored to individuals.

Ms. Kincaid was referring to the desk guide and how it had counselors working in one direction and the policies didn't line up. She would like to see the desk guide and the policies be in sync with each other. Moving forward, she wants to know if any changes in policy would be reflected in the desk guide.

Mr. Elez agreed and said when RSA reviewed our procedures, we just separated our policies and procedures and were just starting to do some new training. The RSA was looking at records from 2019-2021, which would be under the old, combined policy and procedure documents. Our new process started in October 2022 after RSA approved for us to separate our policies from the procedures. We have a process in place that any policy changes the QA team makes once it's approved either by the council or management of the program, they are provided training for all the staff. Once the training is completed, our QA team monitors those policies for implementation and then provide additional training as necessary.

Ms. Kincaid had no further questions.

Ms. O'Neill agreed with the distinction the agency has made between the desk manual and the policies and procedures. She asked if any further topics under this section of the meeting needed to be covered.

Mr. Elez reiterated and expanded upon his previous statements regarding Pre-ETS and the loss of third-party cooperative agreements during the COVID-19 Pandemic. RSA wished to know how VR would make up for the loss of all those clients and students that we were serving. As they were concerned with low numbers of students with disabilities that were being served by Pre-ETS during the COVID period. It is also something that we, as an agency struggled with, rebuilding the Pre-ETS program during that time, as dedicated staff was limited. In order to meet RSA requirements, VR put a plan in place starting in 2021 to increase dedicated staff working on Pre-ETS and meet the 15% spending that is required by RSA for the program. We also had to develop the services and tools that would be best to deliver our Pre-ETS services in order to meet our agency goals. We worked with the Nevada Department of Education on this. Also, where before we had a single Statewide Transition Coordinator who reports to the Bureau Chief, we've created a Statewide District for Pre-ETS, managed by Marshal Hernandez, so that we have a District Manager who oversees Pre-ETS as well as Blind

Services. This elevates the Pre-ETS program to have more of a Statewide “feel” and provides greater support to the Transition Coordinator. This has allowed us to focus work more regionally and establish a relationship with every school district in the state and have on-site services available. Our biggest focus this year has been on Clark County, where we need to develop our services the most. We are currently on track to meet federal spending requirements for Pre-ETS. Additionally, we have a record 18 camps coming up for the Summer Youth Internship Program this year. We have camps focused on different types of work and career opportunities as well as students with different disabilities.

12. Divisions Report

Ms. O’Neill opened the floor for the Divisions Reports.

Mechelle Merrill, VR Deputy Administrator of Programs, reviewed the staff vacancies and reported a BSBVI vacancy rate of 11.11%. There are 2 positions vacant. VR reports a 12.10% vacancy rate while having 15 vacancies. We have 124 FTE compared to 18 in BSBVI. VR is receiving close to an average of 400 applications month to month. Caseload size is about 77. The average number of months that a case is open is about 15 months and there are 3,681 open cases.

NSRC Goals and Indicators. Time indicators from October 1, 2023, through March 31, 2024, second quarter of the Federal Fiscal Year 2024. These are the newly established Goals and Indicators.

Goal #1 Increase Number of Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes. FFY 2024, Clients Closed with an Employment Outcome is 240, Goal is 550. We are moving along, however down a little bit in this quarter.

Goal #2 Increase Participation of Students with a Disability in Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Including Outreach activities to provide Pre-ETS to students with disabilities.

FFY 2024, Potentially Eligible & Eligible Transition Students that receive Pre-ETS Services is 502. Goal To Be Determined. We’re on track to exceed last year’s goal of 750.

Goal #3 Increase Participation of Potentially Eligible Students with A Disability in VR Services. This is a look at our conversion rate. They are students known to the VR program but have not applied for services to become VR clients. FFY 2024, Total Transition Student Applications 478, Goal is 250.

Goal #4 Increase Participation of Supported Employment (SE) Consumers in VR.

FFY 2024, Total Open Supported Employment consumers is 553, Supported Employment Consumers Closed with an Employment Outcome is 58, Goal is 475.

Goal #5 Increase Participation of Targeted Disability Groups in VR Services.
How we are servicing different disability groups with services and employment outcomes.

FFY 2024, Clients with a Mental Health Disability Who Closed with An Employment Outcome is 41, Clients Who Are Blind or Visually Impaired Who Closed with An Employment Outcome is 13, Clients Who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing Who Closed with An Employment Outcome is 32.

Indicator #1 Average Caseload size of Bureau

FFY 2024, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation (BVR) is 77, Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired (BSBVI) is 61.

Indicator #2 700 Hour Program

FFY 2024, Number of active participants in the 700-hour program is 9, Number of participants completed the 700-hour program and achieved competitive integrated employment is 25.

Fair Hearings. Ms. Merrill mentioned a fair hearing that is from January and should be closing soon.

VR Strategic Planning for calendar year 2024. Ms. Merrill stated that for the last four years we've held the strategic planning in December in Las Vegas.

Social media and the press release for the iBill Currency Reader program with the Bureau of Services to the Blind and Visually Impaired (BSBVI). Ms. Merrill mentioned Nevada is one of the states in agreement with the Federal Bureau of Engraving to distribute their US currency readers. Vivian Turner was representing the agency as she made a video for March Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month which is posted on our social media accounts.

Ms. Merrill brought forth additionally the average amount of time that a VR case is open, for reference. This period is currently 15 months. 3,681 cases are currently open. Ms. Merrill made clarifications on her presented information for members of the council who had questions.

13. COMMENTS BY THE COUNCIL

Ms. O'Neill opened the floor for comments or future agenda items.

Ms. Kincaid requested a summary on the Corrective Action Letter for the Pre-ETS, an update on the Maintenance of Effort Letter, update on the LCB Audit Report and the Monitoring of Determination Letter if available.

Ms. Casselman requested a future agenda item for the next legislative session. Information to be provided whenever VR is testifying before the legislature.

Mr. Elez said that VR will provide those updates as well as informing on bills that VR will be putting forward.

14. SECOND PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. O'Neil opened the floor for public comment.
No public comments were received.

15. ADJOURNMENT

Ms. O'Neil asked to adjourn the meeting.
The meeting adjourned at 3:04 PM.

Minutes submitted by: Sertram Harris
Edited By: Jenny Richter Livia

Jenny Richter Livia, N.S.R.C. Liaison

Approved By:

Rachel O'Neal, Chair