



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

QUESTIONS AS OF AUGUST 24, 2016

Q1 – Do Voc Rehab workers receive pay increases when they obtain a Master's degree? Does this apply to DWS employees?

A – There are three levels of classification for Voc Rehab counselors. They may be reclassified based on education and experience. As required by their state plan, a counselor qualifies for a higher classification if they have a master's degree and becomes eligible to obtain state licensure within five years of hire.

Nothing changes in the DWS policy for DWS employees in this regard.

QUESTIONS AS OF MAY 19, 2016

[View the retirement benefits decisions here.](#)

Q2 – Currently, the Utah State Independent Living Council (USILC) members are appointed by the Utah State Board of Education. How does that change with the transition?

A – The USILC is an independent entity outside of USOR, and is self-governing. Because the new law is silent on USILC member appointments, the USILC, in its three-year plan, which was approved by USILC in May and will be submitted to the federal government in June, adopts the federal guidance on this subject. It requires that members of USILC be appointed by the governor or his/her designee. Thus, once officially accepted by the federal government, the plan requires appointments to USILC to be made by the governor/governor's designee.

QUESTIONS AS OF MAY 13, 2016

Q3 – How will USOR leadership fit into the DWS structure?

A – As outlined in HB 325, when USOR transitions to DWS it will become a division. This is to align with the current structure of DWS and its other divisions. With the move, the executive director of USOR will become a division director and will report to the Executive Director's Office. Overseen by a DWS deputy director, management of the division will continue by the division director. In addition, the deputy director of USOR will become an assistant director and current USOR division director titles will change to



assistant directors. These job title changes align with other DWS Divisions and will not result in actual salary rate changes.

Q4 – Will Voc Rehab counselors move out of offices and into cubicles?

A – There are no current plans to change office settings for Voc Rehab counselors. However, as office leases expire, many factors such as budget and space will go into evaluating opportunities for co-location or relocation. We're aware of the concerns for privacy and confidentiality for client interaction as well as supporting the professional work by the Voc Rehab and DWS staff alike. We will keep these concerns in mind and will do our best to accommodate space as office leases expire in the future.

QUESTIONS AS OF MAY 2, 2016

Q5 – How will DWS become more accessible for those experiencing disabilities?

A – DWS is very committed to ensure accessibility in all of our employment centers and on our website, and want to continuously improve how we serve those with disabilities. We plan to work closely with USOR community partners and advocates to ensure we provide the best service possible.

If someone comes across any challenges with accessibility we ask that they inform Carolyn Parsons, the DWS ADA/504 officer, who can assist with accommodations for those with disabilities. DWS and USOR staff may also contact Carolyn with any questions or concerns. She can be reached at cparsons@utah.gov or 801-526-9445.

Q6 – What is the future role of USOR's advisory councils?

A – DWS has a long track record of working with a number of advisory councils and values them greatly. We intend to work closely with the councils already established and see this as a great opportunity to make them more meaningful.

With the new law, it requires that at least 50 percent of the members of the advisory council for services to individuals who are blind and visually impaired themselves are blind or have visual impairments. Similarly, at least 50 percent of the members of the advisory council for services to the deaf and hard of hearing must be deaf or hard of hearing. This change reflects current and past practice, where more than half of the councils include representatives of the people served. It further helps to ensure that stakeholders have a voice in the services that are provided.



QUESTIONS AS OF APRIL 5, 2016

Q7 – It is believed that vocational rehabilitation employees earn more per hour than DWS employees. How is pay going to be made equitable?

A – Over the years, there have been quite a number of organizational changes in state agencies that result in equitable pay concerns. The trouble is, there truly isn't a way to make everything fair. However, as part of the transition plan we'll be evaluating all staff positions and pay ranges. We do not plan to make changes any time soon. The focus for the move is more about oversight rather than attempting to make things fair and comparing positions. Every division in this department is unique with different pay structures.

Q8 – Will there still be a Voc Rehab order of selection?

A – Yes. Also known as waiting lists, USOR started waiting lists in February 2015 to slow the flow of clients in the system because we were overextended. It is the only federal tool provided to control the number of clients we move into services. We monitor it very carefully and are able to understand what a client costs and make informed decisions when clients are let off.

Q9 – How many USOR people will be housed at Admin North?

A – In collaboration with Darin Brush and his leadership team, there is a plan to relocate a number of key administrative to Admin North (approximately 14 total staff).

Q10 – When will the physical move take place?

A – July 1 for administrative positions to DWS' administrative building.

Q11 – Will USOR staff fully integrate with DWS staff; meaning will they become WDD, ESD, UI, etc. staff, or will they maintain their specific customers and take only customers with disabilities as new customers?

A – The intent of the legislation is for USOR to come over as a new division fully intact. No offices will be absorbed into another division in DWS.

Q12 – For those USOR employees who are near retirement; how does the transition to DWS affect their retirement benefits? For example: accrued annual leave, pre-2006 and 2014 sick leave hours, years of service, and etc.?



A – Updated May 13, 2016: [View the retirement benefits decision here.](#) Good news: this transition will in no way affect accrued annual leave, pre-2006 and 2014 sick leave balances, or years of service. Both USOR and DWS are participating employers in Utah Retirement Systems (URS) so the change in agency does not affect these pieces of retirement.

However, we are aware USOR has for some time offered some retirement perks in addition to the standard URS retirement benefits. This is one of the more complicated matters because neither Utah Code nor DHRM Rule governs the administration of those additional benefits as they are not standard benefits for state employees. Therefore, what may be decided today could be changed years down the road by a different administration at DWS. This will be a key issue to determine over the coming weeks. We want to make sure we do this right and not make some guarantee that can be changed with future leadership.

Q13 – What do we foresee happening to Choose to Work, since we are a liaison between both agencies, will we transition to USOR, or will the DWS side positions be eliminated?

A – We don't intend to eliminate Choose-to-Work. The program has been very successful. We recognize the benefits of providing individualized job development and support for the CTW participants. If anything, coming together should better align and improve the efforts. We would expect that, over time, our teams would collaborate more, so that Choose-to-Work outcomes would increase.

Q14 – After going through a similar restructuring with Housing and Community Development, have we learned anything that will help us to more completely integrate USOR into the DWS family?

A – We intend to build upon experiences from previous integrations involving the Bureau of Eligibility Services (BES), Housing and Community Development (HCD), and the formation of two recent DWS statewide divisions (Eligibility Services and Workforce Development). We will continue with transparent communication and seek to appropriately integrate support functions such as finance, contracts, data outcomes, etc.

Q15 – What impact do you anticipate this change having on the function of the Disability Determination Services? Specifically:

- Will DDS become more involved in Utah's goal to end chronic homelessness, and give expedited consideration to homeless claimants?
- Will DDS be asked to give expedited consideration to cases where the DWS assistance is ending for time limits?
- Will DWS management look at the processes at DDS, where cases take many months to clear, and suggest improvements through TOS and other improvement processes?



A – The Social Security Administration (SSA) sets the rules for DDS. Applications for disability benefits are received by SSA. If a case is prioritized over others, that is done by SSA and according to its criteria. DDS cannot give expedited consideration to any case unless SSA has flagged it as priority. SSA's definitions for prioritization may be different from DWS definitions, for example homeless.

A few years ago, applications to DDS were very high, but that has slowed and the caseloads are now manageable. Moreover, DDS has implemented effective process improvements. The result is shorter-than-the-national-average wait times. Benefit determination takes approximately 92 days. Checks to eligible recipients arrive in about 118 days.

Part of the ongoing evaluation in this transition relates to identifying opportunities to mutually support customers in common. As we gain a greater understanding of one another's work processes, we may identify opportunities to provide enhanced customer service (in alignment with prescribed rules). Ongoing process improvement is a core expectation of all DWS divisions.

Q16 – Do we anticipate any more specific positions being eliminated before the move or at the time of the move? (Example: Welcome Specialists have been eliminated effective 06/30/16)

A – USOR has eliminated 43 FTE positions in the last 18-24 months. USOR staff knows we're eliminating an additional 14 and we're about halfway to that goal. Some have already transferred to other positions internally and DWS has also made open positions available to them. There are no additional plans to cut jobs or decrease FTEs.

Q17 – Will USOR staff be moving into DWS offices and / or vice versa? If so, do we get a choice in which office we are assigned to?

A – We have a transition group evaluating all DWS and USOR facilities. We are not initially looking to move anyone at this time (other than those who are vacating the Admin Office at USOE). Over time, where it makes sense, we will look for opportunities to co-locate (aligned with expiring leases). The Price Employment Center and Vocational Rehabilitation Services are already co-located and have been for several years.

Q18 – Will there be pay changes upon becoming part of DWS?

A – We don't have any immediate plans to adjust people's pay in USOR or DWS. There is an HR subcommittee that will have membership from both DWS and USOR to analyze pay and see if there's disparity. DWS reviews pay on an annual basis in all of our divisions. If there is budget available then we can try to create some equities. We'll look at the analysis that HR will bring forward to the transition team and then make decisions based on what we learn.



Q19 – DWS does not have many Office Specialist type positions. Will we maintain that position / all staff within that position in the transfer?

A – Actually, DWS does have Office Specialist positions. The plan today is to bring all Office Specialist staff at USOR over in that division on October 1 without a change in title or responsibilities.

Q20 – Will our current operating schedule be the same (Monday - Friday from 8am to 5pm)? Will Flex Schedules still be allowed? Will the holidays and paid time off be the same?

A – Operating schedules, flex schedules, holidays, and paid time off will not change due to the transition.

Q21 – Will there be new educational requirements for any of our positions?

A – No

Q22 – Will Voc Rehab change from supporting 4-6 yr degrees for customers?

A – The transition to DWS will not affect the VR training policy.