

UTAH  
STATE

# REHABILITATION COUNCIL REPORT

2017



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SERVICES**  
REHABILITATION

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UTAH STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

1595 WEST 500 SOUTH

SALT LAKE CITY, UT 84104

JANUARY 2018

*Equal Opportunity Employer/Program*

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## **MISSION**

The mission of the State Rehabilitation Council, in partnership with the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation and in collaboration with disability groups, is to ensure quality vocational rehabilitation services for eligible individuals as they make informed choices to achieve employment.

We accomplish this mission by reviewing programs, analyzing service delivery processes, and advising on policies and procedures.

# REHABILITATION COUNCIL MEMBERS

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## EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE:

- Melissa Freigang, Business, Industry and Labor, Chair
- James Harvey, Business, Industry and Labor, Vice Chair
- Past Chair (Vacant)
- Rob Ferris, Utah State Independent Living Council Rep., Member-at-Large

## MEMBERS:

- Cherissa Alldredge, Business, Industry and Labor
- Kelly Boehmer, Division of Services for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (DSDHH) Representative
- Lindsey Boerens, Client Assistance Program
- Eliza Detherage, Community Rehabilitation Provider
- Glenn Fitzpatrick, Community Rehabilitation Provider
- Ken Gourdin, Consumer
- Lavinia Gripentrog, Special Education
- Piper Leon, Consumer
- Susan Loving, Special Education
- Helen Post, Utah Parent Center
- Helen Saaed, Business, Industry and Labor
- Paula Seanez, Title 121, Navajo Nation
- Amberley Snyder, Consumer
- Sandy Terry, Department of Workforce Services
- Mark Turley, Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DSBVI) Representative
- Rylee Williams, VR Counselor Representative
- Tammy Wood, Consumer



## MESSAGE FROM THE COUNCIL CHAIR



**IT IS MY HONOR** to have served as Chair of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) this past year, and what a year it has been! 2017 saw the first year of the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation's (USOR) transition to the Department of Workforce Services (DWS), an additional transition in the Division Director leadership, implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) plan all while operating under an "order of selection" or waiting list.

As Chairman, my goal was to use my time to maintain the best practices developed through the long history of the SRC, to ensure a thoughtful and thorough review process of the policies and procedures directly affecting consumers of vocational rehabilitation services, and increase capacity of the SRC.

Members of the SRC began the year in reflection on where we have been and where are we going - and to meet this year's theme of "Rigor & Re-Alignment." Through an intensive strategic planning process, we renewed our commitment to the SRC's mission.

In addition, we decided to add the following actionable goals to catalyze support for USOR, engagement of SRC members and propel the SRC into the next era:

1. The SRC will assist and advise USOR to preserve and improve services to clients
2. Review data and relevant information
3. Increase the visibility and value of the SRC

As a result, the SRC has ushered in a host of accomplishments alongside the great work and many achievements of USOR. Namely, the SRC is operating with a new infrastructure and implemented multiple vehicles to represent the voice of the disability community. Through the great partnership with USOR, the SRC reviewed a customized dashboard, multiple WIOA programs, Pre-Employment Transition Services for Youth with Disabilities, service delivery and implemented reporting structures and advocacy impact initiatives.

I hope you enjoy reading through the SRC Annual Report. I applaud and thank Darin Brush for his leadership at the beginning of this journey and welcome the new Division Director, Sarah Brenna, who has already made an immediate and positive impact. I am in humble appreciation and gratitude for the opportunity to serve with the incredible members of the SRC and dedicated team at USOR.

Respectfully,

Melissa Freigang  
Council Chair 2017



## MESSAGE FROM THE USOR DIRECTOR



**IN THE SHORT FOUR MONTHS** I have been with the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR), I have learned so much about the work we do and I am continually impressed with the support and commitment shown by our State Rehabilitation Council (SRC).

The past year was an important one for us. We celebrated our one-year anniversary with the Department of Workforce Services (DWS) in October. During the past year, we spent time learning about our new co-workers and how the organization works. We appreciate the additional support we receive related to facilities, information technology, communications and finance. Being one agency facilitates more effective information sharing, which helps us provide increased customer service to our clients. But most importantly, we are enthusiastic about learning how we can better serve the many clients we have in common.

Beyond the agency transition, USOR has focused on the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). We accomplished many goals related to policy updates, case management system enhancements, increasing services to students with disabilities, outreach to individuals employed at subminimum wage and forging strong relationships with community partners.

In the midst of all this work and change, we remained true to our core purpose, serving 18,380 individuals over the course of federal fiscal year 2017. During this time, we completed 5,272 eligibility determinations, brought 4,167 clients off of the Order of Selection (OOS) waitlist, and developed 4,024 new individualized plans for employment. Most importantly, the professional Vocational Rehabilitation services provided by our staff led to 1,913 clients achieving their goals in reaching competitive, integrated and meaningful employment.

As we work together to accomplish the mission of the SRC, I am confident that the vocational rehabilitation program in Utah will remain a leader in the provision of services to individuals with disabilities.

Respectfully,

Sarah Brenna  
USOR Director

# Introduction



## THE UTAH STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL

The Utah State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) is a body of citizens appointed by the Executive Director of the Department of Workforce Services under the authority of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

The Council is composed of consumers, professionals, employers, labor representatives, family and parent advocates, and service providers who promote public awareness, support of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program and advocate for individuals with disabilities. The majority of Council membership consists of individuals with disabilities, many of whom have been involved as participants in the vocational rehabilitation process. Members of the SRC have been chosen for their interest in, specialized knowledge of and expertise with serving the disabled community. The term of office for selected SRC members is three years.

The Council provides direct communication from consumers, rehabilitation professionals, business, industry, labor, service providers and other individuals interested in improving the services provided by the state agency. Collectively, this group reviews, analyzes and advises USOR regarding the VR program in the Division of Rehabilitation Services.

Over the years, the SRC has established strong community relationships among people with disabilities, local businesses, private and public agencies, service providers, community organizations and advocacy groups to promote the objectives of the organization. The Council continues to be an active partner with the VR program to ensure the provision of quality services to eligible consumers. Council members provide critical support to USOR and to individuals with disabilities served by the agency by communicating with legislators on both the state and national level. They promote legislation and funding requests that continue the specialized services provided by the agency.

Council members participate in various functions of the VR program. These include attending USOR statewide administrators meetings, the annual USOR agency meeting, Golden Key employment recognition awards ceremonies, town meetings, focus groups and the Utah Rehabilitation Association annual conference.

The Council has contributed to and continues to be involved in the development and implementation of USOR's Strategic Plan and the State Plan. It has also identified areas of strength within USOR, acknowledged the best practices of the agency and recommended improvements to the VR program. Council members and USOR staff members agree that through appropriate communication and partnerships, vocational rehabilitation services for people with disabilities in Utah will continue to improve.





## PURPOSE—ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The responsibilities of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) are outlined in the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as amended in 1998 and include the following:

- Review, analyze and advise the Utah State Office of Rehabilitation (USOR) regarding the performance of its responsibilities, particularly those related to eligibility (including Order of Selection); the extent, scope and effectiveness of services provided; and the functions of the state rehabilitation agency that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve employment outcomes.
- In partnership with USOR, develop, agree to and evaluate the effectiveness of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program.
- Advise USOR regarding activities authorized to be carried out and assist in the preparation of the State Plan, amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments and evaluations.
- Conduct a review and an analysis of the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services and consumer satisfaction.
- Prepare and submit an annual report to the Department of Workforce Services and the commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) on the status of vocational rehabilitation in the state and make the report available to the public.
- Coordinate the work of the Council with the activities of other disability-related councils within the state.
- Establish working relationships between the VR program, the Statewide Independent Living Council, the Special Education Advisory Panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the State Developmental Disabilities Council and the State Workforce Services Council.
- Perform additional functions that the SRC determines are appropriate and comparable to other functions performed by the Council.

The SRC, in partnership with the USOR VR program, is committed to helping the people of Utah who qualify for services to obtain better jobs with a living wage, health care benefits and better career opportunities, and to become as independent as possible. The Council believes that individuals with disabilities should be full and active partners in the VR process. Members of the SRC seek to work cooperatively with USOR to ensure that the activities of the VR program are carried out in a manner that is respectful of an individual's dignity and recognizes an individual's right to make informed choices.



## 2016–2017 YEAR IN REVIEW

**DIVISION DIRECTOR UPDATES:** The Council was provided with regular reports on state and national issues affecting USOR. In October 2016, USOR Division Director Darin Brush outlined the mission of the VR program: 1) empowerment of clients to achieve suitable, gainful employment consistent with their goals; 2) a focus on the preservation and improvement of the service delivery systems and stewardship of public resources; 3) continuous improvement of the VR system through accurate program information and measurement; and 4) the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA). Other topics discussed by Director Brush included DWS transition updates; the new division compliance officer (Tara Connolly); the CSAVR Spring Conference report; a review of the five advisory councils that are associated with the USOR (e.g. Governor’s Council on People with Disabilities); Legislative Session updates; presented the five goals of the division, including 1) complete a successful transition to DWS; 2) integrate strategies with one another; 3) preserve the integrity of the VR program and service delivery; 4) staff involvement; and 5) balancing the budget. Mr. Brush resigned from his position in June 2016 and a national search for a replacement resulted in the hiring of Ms. Sarah Brenna as the new Division Director. Ms. Brenna was introduced to members of the SRC in August by Deputy Director Greg Paras. A series of office visits were scheduled throughout the state for the new division director to meet VR staff.

**SRC ANNUAL MEETING:** At the October 2016 meeting, SRC Chair Melissa Freigang was introduced by then-Division Director Darin Brush. Melissa introduced the theme for the coming year: Rigor and Realignment, and led a Council discussion on the elements of a great SRC meeting, the agenda and meeting structure, committee roles, and how to promote participation from

Council members. Three strategic planning goals were developed by the Council: 1) the SRC will assist and advise the USOR to preserve and improve services to clients; 2) review data and relevant information; and 3) increase visibility and value of the SRC. The September 2017 annual training meeting included the election of a new executive committee: James Harvey (Chair), Rob Ferris (Vice Chair), and Eliza Detherage (Secretary). A review of the updated by-laws was provided by Council member Rob Ferris and a review of the Council’s goals were discussed by Council member James Harvey.

**VR PROGRAM UPDATES:** Assistant Director Aaron Thompson provided the Council monthly reports and information on a number of VR program-related topics. Included were VR program outcomes, Order of Selection updates, personnel updates, CSAVR meeting reports, WIOA updates, an overview of the Application process, monthly reviews of the division Dashboard report and outcomes, and budget and audit reports. The Dashboard reports were helpful for Council members to understand performance and outcomes measures tracked by VR.

**POLICY UPDATES:** DRS Policy Director Emily Stirling presented at several SRC meetings on new regulations, policies and practices, and was a resource to Council members with VR program questions. Emily provided training on a variety of topics including financial needs assessment, legislative audits, the WIOA Section 511 and sub-minimum wage mandates, improvements to the VR application and Case Service Manual (CSM) Chapter 8 (Financial Needs). Emily also made a presentation on the Administrative Appeals Process at the February meeting.

**ORDER OF SELECTION:** In November 2015, the Individuals with Most Significant Disabilities

(MSD) waitlist category had been opened for VR services. During the past fiscal year, Assistant Director Aaron Thompson provided Council members with the encouraging news that the entire Significantly Disabled (SD) category had been opened and that progress was being made with the third category, Disabled (D). The efforts of the DRS administration, field staff and others significantly impacted the Utah VR program's successful reduction of the waitlists under the Order of Selection.

**WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITIES ACT (WIOA):** At the March 2017 meeting, Assistant Director Aaron Thompson provided an overview to Council members on WIOA. He discussed the intent of Congress under the law in terms of systems alignment and integration to assist individuals in terms of employment, education and training. The core programs under the law (including VR, the Youth and Wagner Peyser programs, adult and dislocated worker programs). Aaron discussed the concepts of employment barrier removal, partner collaboration, career pathways and the alignment of workforce investment, education and economic efforts. Key changes to the VR program (under WIOA) include increased services for students with disabilities (including employment); Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) development; Section 511 subminimum wage usage, supported employment, services to employers, and lower standards for the Comprehensive System for Personnel Development (CSPD). Periodic reviews on the Unified State Plan established by the Core Partners under WIOA were provided to SRC members. In addition, Aaron provided training on the Common Performance Measures data that will be collected quarterly for performance purposes under the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The first comprehensive one-stop, also known as an American Job Center, to include all core partners under WIOA was established at the Price, Utah DWS office.

**ADULT EDUCATION PRESENTATION:** Marty Kelly from the State Board of Education made a presentation in February to Council members on adult

education services and the changes under WIOA to their programs. These changes empower adult education, VR and DWS to partner together to provide services to shared clients and consumers. Marty discussed the Unified State Plan and the common measures across the six core partners and other required partners statewide, including engagement with employers. The current focus under WIOA is to bridge programs and career pathways moving clients to post-secondary training and employment and access to partner services.

**DISABILITY LAW CENTER PRESENTATION:** At the April meeting, Laura Henrie and Nate Crippes from the Disability Law Center (DLC) presented to the Council on their services. The DLC is a private, non-profit organization designated by the governor as Utah's Protection and Advocacy agency. Their mission is to enforce and strengthen laws that protect the opportunities, choices and legal rights of Utahns with disabilities in areas of Accessibility, Assistive Technology, Civil Rights, Community Living, Education, Housing, Medicaid and Medicare Appeals and Transportation. A longer discussion on Medicaid and possible impacts to the program and the Affordable Health Care Act (AHCA) and risks to Utah as a non-expansion state under Medicaid (including cuts) generated a great deal of questions and concerns from Council members.

**TRANSITION SERVICES AND CUSTOMIZED EMPLOYMENT:** In May, Aimee Langone, Transition and Supported Employment Coordinator, presented to the Council. She provided a brief history of supported employment, including the principles of competitive work in integrated settings, serving the Most Significantly Disabled (MSD), job coaching support, and the involvement of Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) to increase employment milestones such as job development, job placement, job coach intervention and successful employment. Aimee discussed the Employment First Initiative for Utah and the role of both VR and the Division of Services for People with Disabilities (DSPD). Additionally, Aimee spoke on the topic of Customized Employment as well as current

initiatives (including school-to-work pilots, partnership in employment (PIE), Discovery assessments, and staff training for technical assistance.

**TICKET TO WORK UPDATE:** At the May meeting, Employment Initiatives Director Noreen Roeca presented on the history of the Ticket to Work (TTW) program and the Employment Network approval process through the Social Security Administration. The goals of the TTW program include: a) expanded choices for beneficiaries with disabilities to enter, re-enter, or maintain employment through services and supports; and b) to increase the financial independence and self-sufficiency of beneficiaries and eliminate reliance on disability benefits. The TTW program offers expansion of Medicare and expedited reinstatement of Social Security benefits through Utah Work Incentives Planning Services (UWIPS) benefits specialists. Noreen also discussed the Partnership Plus program, a mechanism to ensure the sequential provision of services through approved community rehabilitation providers.

**GOVERNOR'S COMMITTEE/BUSINESS RELATIONS PRESENTATION:** Governor's Committee/Business Relations Director Leah Lobato presented to the Council in May. She provided information on the Golden Key Awards event, including the types of awards given at the event (Small, Medium, and Large Employer; the ACE award; Freedom Award, and the new Alternative State Application Program (ASAP) award. The reasons for each award and the nomination process were included for Council members. Leah also discussed the roles of the Governor's Committee, assistance to 503 federal contractors and hiring requirements of people with disabilities (including outreach and education), and the Utah Business Leadership Network (UTBLN) mentoring events scheduled for the year.

**ASPIRE UPDATE:** ASPIRE Director Carol Ruddell gave an overview of the six Federal Promise Projects under the U.S. Departments of Education, Labor, Health and Human Services, and the Social Security

Administration. Carol discussed the goals of ASPIRE, including improved education, increased employment and self-sufficiency, and reduced dependency on public benefits. The ASPIRE youth control group in each of the six ASPIRE grant states are provided with enhanced services and interventions for long-term outcomes, including: paid employment experiences during high school; parent education and training; self-determination training for both youth and family; benefits counseling through a UWIPS specialist; financial education and capability training; community conversations; and comprehensive case management.

**UCAT UPDATE:** The Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT) State Advisory Council (a committee under the SRC) met quarterly to discuss the specialized services offered through the UCAT program at the Judy Ann Buffmire Rehabilitation Service Center. Mike Wollenzien, DRS Director of Specialized Services, presented to the SRC in June on the services of UCAT, including introducing Council members to the UCAT team, and the community outreach, occupational therapy, independent living, and specialized services provided through UCAT. The annual UCAT Open House was held in October 2016 and was well-attended by participants, the media and the DWS administration.

**CENTER FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES PRESENTATION:** Eduardo Ortiz, a researcher from Utah State University, presented to the Council in August on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment under the VR program's federal regulations. The assessment is to enhance VR services and is completed every three years by an outside research organization in coordination with the SRC. Pre-employment Services (PETS) are a new part of the assessment under the Unified State Plan, as well as under-served populations including ethnic racial minorities, low income, veterans and targeted geographic areas. Utah State University will use a Participatory Evaluation Approach which includes: a) small focus groups/interviews with key providers, agencies and consumer representatives; b) survey development, distribution and analysis of responses;

and c) sharing those results with key stakeholders. The Council's participation in this process was also discussed.

### **UNIVERSITY OF UTAH RESEARCH STUDY**

**REPORT:** At the August meeting, Cathy Chambless, Senior Research Associate from the Kem C. Gardner Policy Institute, presented her research on the "Master's Level Counselor and Client Outcomes." Cathy provided a brief history of VR counselor education programs, the lowered minimum requirements under the current WIOA regulations, anticipated VR counselor projects through 2024, and the expertise critical to the VR counselor in terms of disability knowledge, the world of work and the needs of employers. Her research on working counselor/client alliances, client job satisfaction, and employment outcomes showed a strong correlation between the attainment of a Master's Degree and the provision of VR services and successful employment for clients with disabilities.

**511 PROGRAM UPDATE:** Jeff Pitts, DRS Program Coordinator, presented at the September meeting on the 511 section of the WIOA. He discussed subminimum wage standards under the regulations for employers and the employer application and certification process for hiring someone in a subminimum wage position. Clients who work for subminimum wage require career counseling, have pre-employment services documented in either Individualized Education Plan (IEP) or Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE), and be closed successful or unsuccessful by the VR program. Council members learned that one third of the clients receiving career counseling during the fiscal year chose to pursue VR services. Employers are required to meet the certification requirements under WIOA to utilize this option.

**COUNCIL ADVOCACY TRAINING:** At the September SRC training meeting, Dr. Tim Chambless, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Utah, and the Academic Outreach Coordinator at the Hinckley Institute of Politics, presented to the Council on effective advocacy at the community and legislative

levels. Dr. Chambless appealed to the Council members to become familiar with their local House and Senate Districts and representatives and best practices for advocacy of the VR program in Utah. He provided data on voter involvement in the political system and the critical need for education of those in the political system who impact funding for individuals with disabilities.

**SRC BY-LAWS CHANGES:** A few minor changes and corrections were made to the by-laws since the last SRC Annual Report. The Council approved those improvements to the by-laws following review.

# ATTACHMENT 4.2 (C)



Attachment 4.2 (C): Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), Response of the Designated State Unit and Explanations for Rejection of Input or Recommendations.

In addition to the review, analysis and recommendations covered above, the SRC made recommendations to the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) portion of the Unified State Plan, and as required by section 101(a) of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) of 2014.

The following is a summary of SRC recommendations made from October 2016 to September 2017, and USOR's response and actions taken with regards to these recommendations:

## **SRC RECOMMENDATION 1:**

Following a two-month strategic planning process, the SRC recommended that the minutes of meetings be shortened and summarized for easier reading, as well as roster changes being reflected in an improved format for the Council.

## **USOR RESPONSE 1:**

Liaison staff assigned to the Council made the suggested changes and the improved documents were reviewed and approved at the next Council meeting.

## **SRC RECOMMENDATION 2:**

Following a review of the VR agency Dashboard report (current data tracking, performance outcomes by district and statewide, etc.) by Assistant Director Aaron Thompson in November 2016, the Council requested that a Dashboard report be provided on a monthly basis to update the Council on current case management and performance processes.

## **USOR RESPONSE 2:**

Monthly reports have continued by Assistant Director Aaron Thompson and are distributed in advance of the meetings by the agency liaison secretary Sylvia Gines.

## **SRC RECOMMENDATION 3:**

Council members requested training and update reports from several VR programs and services throughout the year. They included presentations described in the FY2016-2017 Year-in-Review section of this annual report.

## **USOR RESPONSE 3:**

The USOR provided a timely response for presentations requested by the SRC and provided relevant PowerPoint presentations and other materials before the scheduled SRC meetings for review by Council members. Questions and concerns about VR programs and services were addressed in person by program specialists and assigned staff with subject matter expertise.

#### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 4:**

Because of new processes for the nomination for Council membership and the approval of recommended members by the Executive Director of DWS, the SRC requested that Administration develop a process for such approvals.

#### **USOR RESPONSE 4:**

Administrative liaison staff members put together the requested process and documents (including the recommendations of Council members and related information) to facilitate the approval process at the Executive Director level.

#### **SRC RECOMMENDATION 5:**

At the June 2017 meeting, Council members requested that USOR administrative liaison Gordon Swensen send an email statewide to VR district staff members to request nominations for the SRC. Gordon was also asked to work with the DWS Communications division on getting the Nomination Application on the SRC website and to email all Council members to assess confidentially whether they have a disability (per the federal mandate of 51 percent required membership on the SRC to be individuals with disabilities).

#### **USOR RESPONSE 5:**

The email to VR districts and staff was completed following the meeting (as requested) and the Nomination Application has been added to the SRC page of the DWS website. A separate email requesting confidential disability information (a “yes” or “no” statement only) was sent to Council members who all responded.



# COMMITTEES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

SRC committees included the Nominating and Interviewing Committee and the UCAT Standing Committee. A summary report for each committee follows:

## NOMINATING AND INTERVIEWING COMMITTEES

Resignations and the expiration of terms for a few members created openings on the Council. A few members chose to be nominated to serve a second term. There were few vacancies that needed to be filled with required members as outlined in the Rehabilitation Act. However, there is a mandated position for a Division of Services for the Blind and Visually Impaired (DSBVI) that is currently recruiting applicants. The 121 Native American program for the Ute Mountain Ute Tribe SRC member position was vacated and may not be filled soon due to tribal personnel concerns. A new representative for the Navajo Nation has now been identified and is attending the SRC meetings.

## UCAT COMMITTEE

The UCAT advisory committee was established consisting of both Ken Gourdin (SRC consumer representative) and Glenn Fitzpatrick (SRC Community Provider representative). The committee met quarterly and included Kent Remund of the Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT); Alma Burgess of the Utah Assistive Technology Program; Helen Post, SRC member and Executive Director of the Utah Parent Center; Brian Carroll (UCAT); Janis McCullough (Utah Independent Living Center); Crystal Thomas (State Board of Education); Tom England (Independent Living); and Lauren Ayala (University of Utah Physical Therapy). The committee members met quarterly. Recommendations were made and implemented regarding UCAT services, budgets, reports and outreach.

## CSAVR Meetings

SRC Chair Melissa Freigang attended the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) meetings with former USOR Division Director Darin Brush, Assistant Director Aaron Thompson, and Policy Director Emily Stirling. They reported on updates on national VR and disability issues. Melissa reported on the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) meetings and the differences between states in terms of SRC support. She discussed what makes a great Annual Report, including the new leveraged services as part of DWS.

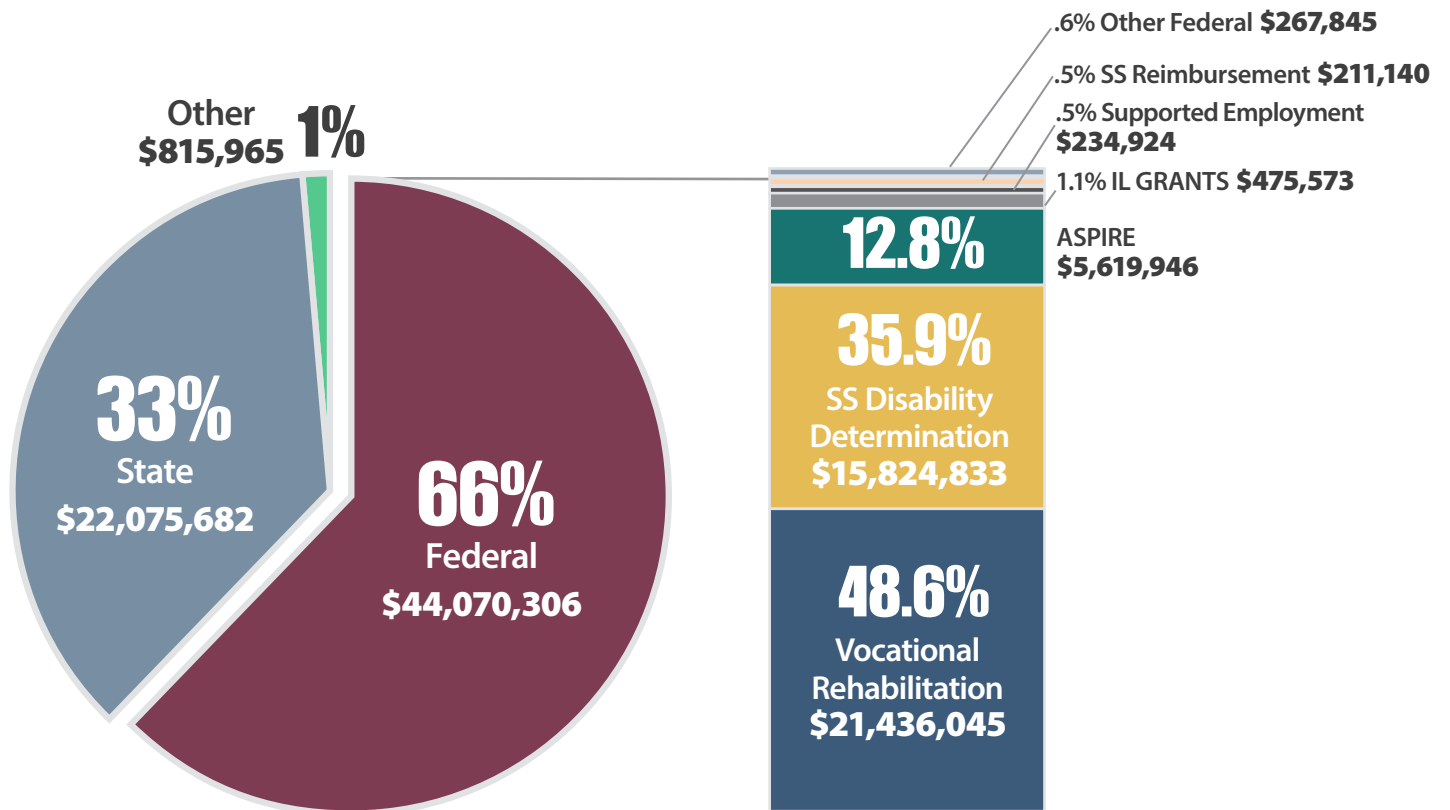
## SRC STRATEGIC PLANNING

The executive committee considered needs and strategies to be implemented during the coming year. The meetings in both October and November 2016 were dedicated to looking at the SRC priorities, goals, and mission by all members of the Council. Through interactive whiteboard sessions and small group discussion, SRC was able to formalize specific goals for the next two years of the Council. Those three goals include: 1) The SRC will assist and advise the USOR to preserve and improved services to clients; 2) Review data and relevant information; and 3) Increase visibility and value of the SRC.





# USOR SFY 2017 FUNDING



# USOR VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION 2017 PROGRAM HIGHLIGHTS



The following information reflects the individual and program successes of the Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) program during the past year.

- 1,920 individuals with disabilities were successfully employed.
- 709% was the increase in weekly earnings of the 1,920 individuals successfully employed.
- 96% of those employed were significantly disabled or most significantly disabled.
- 528 public assistance recipients successfully exited the VR program as employed.
- 525 Social Security Disability recipients successfully gained employment.
- 116 individuals successfully gained employment through Supported Employment Services.
- 36% of individuals served were transition-age youth with disabilities.
- 19 trainings and outreach events for 1,837 individuals were provided by the Utah Center for Assistive Technology (UCAT).
- 720 new clients were served, and 652 benefits summaries presented, by the Work Incentive and Planning Services (UWIPS) unit.



## SUCCESS STORIES



# Alexis Martinez



OCCUPATION:  
Customer Service Representative

VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Vocational Counseling and Guidance
- Individualized Plan for Employment
- Coordination of Medical Treatment Services
- Job Placement and Coaching Services

**I**n April 2012, Alexis Martinez, wanting to become more independent, applied for Vocational Rehabilitation services. To enhance her independence, she aspired to finish school, develop her skills and obtain a job.

As a student, Alexis received vocational guidance and counseling from her Vocational Rehabilitation counselor, Amanda Salmon, and was able to successfully complete her Individualized Education Program goals and graduate from the Ogden Adult Transition Program with a high school diploma.

After graduation, Alexis completed a work strategy assessment to determine what assistance she needed for her job search and on-the-job support. It was agreed that she would benefit the most from participating in Supported Job Based Training.

Alexis set a vocational goal and started to search, apply and interview for positions. Initially, she wanted to explore her artistic interests and work at a craft store. That later changed to searching for a job where she could be sociable with customers.

Throughout the search, it was important to Alexis to also find a position close to home, so she could walk to and from work.

With the help of a job coach, she was able to find a position that matched her wish list. Alexis started a new job as a customer service representative at Hug-Hes Café where her tasks involve serving customers and cleaning the dining area.

She quickly excelled at her responsibilities and was soon given more to do—including decorating the café's cookies—allowing her to use her creative talents to the benefit of her employer. Her employer has also been helpful in providing support to help Alexis stay focused and manage her time effectively.

Through Vocational Rehabilitation's assistance, Alexis was able to meet her goal of becoming more independent and is enjoying her new job responsibilities.



# Karen Nelson



OCCUPATION:  
Grocery Bagger/Customer Service

## VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Vocational Counseling and Guidance
- Individualized Plan for Employment
- Job Development and Placement
- Supported Employment Job Coaching
- Utah Work Incentive Planning Services (UWIPS)

In March 2016, Karen Nelson was found eligible for Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services by her counselor Lora Flanigan. Karen had been involved in the RITES, Inc. Day Program for several years and had developed pre-employment skills as a volunteer that could now be utilized in competitive employment.

Through a coordinated effort between Karen, her VR counselor, and an employment specialist from RITES, Inc. Karen was able to secure an interview with the Harmon's grocery store in Roy, Utah. Once hired, it didn't take her long to become a favorite of management, co-workers, and customers with her friendly personality.

The employment specialist noticed that Karen would need her height accommodated to perform the job functions of a bagger. Karen was unable to reach the conveyor belt, see into, and/or place the grocery bags into a shopping cart. Working with the district manager at Harmon's a platform was constructed to give Karen more height near the register.

A platform used to display products was equipped with grip tape on the top of the platform and holes drilled into the platform sides to place handlebars. The platform was now the size of the checkout stand and allowed Karen the ability to place grocery bags into the shopping carts. In addition, Karen can move the platform from one checkout stand to another, giving her the ability to go where she is needed.

Karen has been successfully employed with Harmon's for one year and loves her job. She uses her earnings to buy herself what she wants and gifts for her nieces and nephews—which gives Karen the motivation to continue to work.



# Sidney Smith



OCCUPATION:  
Hotel Manager / Triathlete

VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Vocational Counseling and Guidance
- Individualized Plan for Employment
- Assistance with physical therapy and transportation
- Prosthetic devices for mobility

In 2015, Sidney Smith became a double amputee from his battle with Charcot-Marie-Tooth, a disease that damaged nerves in his legs. A lot of fear came over him when he was told his feet needed to be amputated below the knee. Not only was he worried about how his new disability would affect his job as a hotel manager, but he was also concerned about the financial burden of medical expenses.

Prior to the surgery, Sidney learned about Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) from an amputee he met at his doctor's office. He applied and was approved and was set up with his first VR counselor, Jason. After surgery, he received assistance with physical therapy and transportation to travel from his home in Vernal to Utah County to see his doctor and get fitted for prosthetic legs.

Another VR counselor, Sharon, continued Sidney's case and played a big part during the final stages of his prosthetic fittings. After he was denied by his insurance coverage for a vacuum suction he needed for limb suspension, Sharon worked to acquire the part for him to ensure he'd have the correct suspension in his prosthetics.

"I am truly grateful for the support of vocational rehabilitation in being a crucial moving part in the journey of getting my prosthetics and working as hotel manager," said Sidney. "I am so thankful for my excellent counselors and helping me not only financially, but being there emotionally as they were a huge motivation to getting back onto feet!"

Today, Sidney owns prosthetic running legs, walking legs, and cycling legs. He hikes mountains, does sprints and Olympic triathlons, and is currently training for an Ironman. In addition, he gained strength so he could continue working and perform his job duties well. At work, he can easily move around the lobby, go upstairs, in and out of rooms, and run around town to get supplies for the hotel without any issues.

"With my prosthetics I am able to do my job better physically than I could when I had my feet," said Sidney.

Through counseling and assistance, Vocational Rehabilitation is able to help clients such as Sidney alleviate the concerns that can come with a new disability and help them maintain independence.



# Diana “Deedee” Young



OCCUPATION:  
Customer Service

VR PROVIDED ASSISTANCE:

- Vocational Counseling and Guidance
- Individualized Plan for Employment
- Coordination of Restoration Services
- Coordination of Workplace Accommodations
- Job Development, Placement and Coaching Services

Diana applied for Vocational Rehabilitation services in March of 2016 in order to help her obtain and maintain permanent, part-time employment. She applied for services through a pilot program in the Northern District to increase collaboration between VR and Bear River Mental Health. When she applied, she was working at an internship and wanted to find permanent employment either as a receptionist or working in customer service.

She developed her Individual Plan for Employment with her Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Teresa Hardman and started working with Dan Kroc, the Choose to Work specialist in the Northern District. While working with Dan, Diana worked on interview preparation, updated her resume and referrals, developed a cover letter and applied for many positions. Dan also focused on Diana's comparable benefits of Cache Valley Transit District and their “Call-A-Ride” program for transportation and benefits counseling to allow her to maintain her necessary benefits while still being employed.

Diana and her VR counselor later decided that she needed more assistance in her job search and job placement, and so she was referred to a Community Rehabilitation Program and assigned a job coach to assist in her search to find employment. While working with her job coach, Diana engaged in a Work Strategy Assessment and participated in a Workplace Accommodation Assessment with Utah State University's Assistive Technology program. She soon became employed at Wal-Mart and benefits from her individualized workplace accommodations in order to continue being successful in her position.

Diana was able to meet her goal of obtaining and maintaining permanent, part-time employment through Vocational Rehabilitation's services. She continues to enjoy her new job and looks forward to working there for many years.

# FY 2017–2018 MEETING SCHEDULE



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FULL COUNCIL MEETINGS  
9:00 A.M. TO 1:00 P.M.  
(LAST WEDNESDAY OF EACH MONTH)

October 25, 2017

November 29, 2017

December (No Meeting)

January 31, 2018

February 28, 2018

March 28, 2018

April 25, 2018

May 30, 2018

June 27, 2018

July (No Meeting)

August 29, 2018

September 26, 2018

Annual and Final 2018 Meeting

Individual committees may meet following the full Council meeting.

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Meeting location:

Judy Ann Buffmire Rehabilitation Service Center • Conference Room  
1595 West 500 South • Salt Lake City, UT 84104

**For more information:**

**Phone: (801) 887-9505 or (866) 435-7414 (toll-free)**

**Website: <http://www.usor.utah.gov/councils/src>**



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Utah State Office of Rehabilitation  
A Division of the Department of Workforce Services

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