

Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Full Council Meeting Minutes

November 6, 2025

Attendance

Members Present

David Carey

Janette Lopez

Lisa Livesay

Adam Robson

Paula Seanez

Lenny Ovadia

Julie Oliver

Zane Lambros

George Garcia

Jaime Gonzalez

Melissa Wojtak

Martin Appel

Members Absent

Diana Gomez Reyes

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Mathew Nevarez

Crystal Poetz

Stephanie Johnson

Lindsey Stevens

Bryan Gogg

Nicole Guysi

Minutes

Call to Order

David Carey, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:02 pm. Introductions were made, and a quorum was present.

Roll Call

Lindsey Powers conducted a roll call of members, and a quorum was established.

Public Comment

A call to the public was made with no response forthcoming.

Approval of Minutes

Julie Oliver moved to approve the minutes of the August 8, 2025, SRC Full Council meeting. Lisa Livesay seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Member Reports

SRC Chair Report

David Carey stated that he and Janette Lopez attended the RSA staff conference as representatives of the SRC. He noted that Janette Lopez had suggestion cards at the SRC table and collected responses from Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) staff. When asked what businesses could do to be more welcoming and inclusive, staff responded that businesses could have a basic awareness of groups of disabilities, and they could learn the accommodations needed for clients. When asked what partnerships could

open more doors for individuals with disabilities, the responses were employer partnerships that were willing to work with clients, creating work groups to learn about local needs, and medical professionals. When asked what new or creative things VR could try to better support individuals with disabilities the responses were better training for counselors, more activities with VRCs, and paying employees for their worth.

RSA Updates

Lindsey Powers read the update provided by Kristen Mackey. In her update, Kristen Mackey stated that it was announced at the NCSRC meeting that the State Administrator did not support SRC member attendance at the CSAVR conference. Ms. Mackey clarified that she did submit the request to approve a SRC council member to attend both the NCSRC and CSAVR conferences. DES does not currently have a mechanism to purchase or reimburse non-state employees to attend conferences, and she has asked the DES travel and accounting teams to explore opportunities to purchase/reimburse costs for attendance at these conferences. Kristen Mackey stated that she had not forgotten about the CSPD request to clarify. While she had not yet had the opportunity to compare/contrast and look at where the information was pulled from, she reiterated that the data reported at the DOL State Plan page is the final reported data.

Kristen Mackey reported that InFormed was launched on July 1st and RSA was still working through many system challenges including contracts, authorizations, payments and caseload assignments. She added that for reporting, there were difficulties with data transferring from one system to another and RSA was continuing to work with system developers to implement script fixes and manual data fixes. She noted that phase 2 included the Business Enterprise Program (BEP), with a continuation of fixing defects and pursuing enhancements. As far as staffing, there were leadership vacancies. Ms. Mackey noted that Region 1 and 2 managers were continuing to support Region 3 activities. She added the posting for the Region 3 position was pulled due to short timeframe for posting and would be posted again for a longer timeframe. Ms. Mackey stated the Employment Outreach Team had one more person on the team and RSA continued to fill recently vacated positions while being mindful of budget and current government situation

Kristen Mackey stated the state continued to have level funding for VR, while the Independent Living Older Blind (ILOB) had no additional funding. For Federal funding, VR has carryforward dollars that were currently being used. As far as the government shutdown, all reports were still due on regular timeframes. The VR fiscal report was submitted on October 30th, and the

quarterly 911 data report was due 15 calendar days after the end of the program year of September 1st – October 30th. She noted that currently the portal to submit the report was not working and when RSA ED staff returned, the portal would be fixed, and RSA would be provided with a new due date. Ms. Mackey noted there were various bills indicating that when the federal government resumed, VR would be level funded at the 2024 grant level. Kristen Mackey stated that all but 3 federal RSA staff had received a Reduction in Force letter with a last day of employment listed as December 9th, although there was some litigation contesting the allowability of the RIF notice and RSA would continue to monitor. She added that while RSA was confident that the program would have VR grant funds, it was unsure if VR would remain in the Federal Education Department or if it would be moved to Department of Labor.

Kristen Mackey stated the WIOA State Plan revision should be due in 2026, although there was no guidance yet and VR and Title II (Adult Ed) do not typically have any requirements to provide updates in the “update” years. The Office of Economic Opportunity would lead the efforts for State Plan updates and the new State Plan to be submitted in 2027 for the next 4 years beginning in 2028. Ms. Mackey stated the AZ RSA All Staff Conference, held on September 30th at We Ko Pa was a wonderful success, and she thanked everyone that attended. Ms. Mackey stated that RSA was excited to participate in the 2025 Navajo Nation Disability Conference and the celebration of 50 years Tribal VR and Navajo Nation and to be recognized as a State Partner.

Mathew Nevarez provided the Ombudsman report, which indicated 18 informal reviews, 12 mediations, and 4 fair hearings. He noted there was a higher number for closures, although many of the informal reviews had been overturned because they were closures. Mathew Nevarez stated that fair hearings were more complex and required more preparation to have a settlement agreement. Mr. Nevarez stated that some of the highlights were the monthly/quarterly meetings with regional staff and small workshops. He noted that he had not seen any trends and that the cooperation with team members was great. Mathew Nevarez stated the Ombudsman unit was able to meet with staff to help prevent an escalation of complaints.

Stephanie Johnson provided an update regarding the Customized Employment pilot program. Ms. Johnson stated there were 9 participants in the program and that most were in the middle of discovery or beyond. She noted that several resources had been developed such as videos to assist with benefits planning and employer/education engagement. She added that

many resources had been created for staff as well and were continued to be developed. Stephanie Johnson stated that some of the key takeaways were that providers were building new processes and approaches to service delivery and providers and staff were beginning to apply those concepts. She noted that collaboration was essential to the success of clients, especially in customized employment. Ms. Johnson stated the collaboration with tribal VR partners also increased the success of the program. She noted that system changes and patience were keys to success of the program. Stephanie Johnson stated the program highlighted that there was a mind shift and how clients could be matched with the best job. She added that they were slowly changing the complicated state systems, and the program would be launched when it was completed successfully to ensure the success of the program for clients. Janette Lopez inquired whether there was any data the council could review regarding any outcomes. Ms. Lopez noted the Sonoran website included annual reports regarding the pilot program. Stephanie Johnson stated the Sonoran website was updated regularly and included a tracker for the progress of the program. Ms. Johnson inquired regarding the type of data the council would like to see. Janette Lopez stated the council would be interested in seeing data regarding where individuals were in the pilot. Lisa Livesay stated the council would also be interested in any timelines. Stephanie Johnson stated there wasn't a definite timeline, as the program was driven by the clients. Lenny Ovadia inquired whether other states had a customized employment program and if information could be gleaned from those states. Stephanie Johnson stated that Arizona had reached out to other states and that Colorado had created a customized employment program, although all states were experiencing challenges. She noted that Arizona had reviewed what was working and not working with other programs. Lisa Livesay stated the council would be happy to provide any assistance and inquired whether RSA was seeking any technical assistance. Stephanie Johnson stated RSA was collaborating with other states and that most were impressed with Arizona's program. David Carey inquired whether the clients were paired up with a single counselor. Stephanie Johnson stated clients remained with their counselor for the pilot program. Bryan Gogg inquired whether the information regarding the pilot program could be shared. Stephanie Johnson stated that once the contract for the services was open, the information could be shared.

SRC Annual Report

Lindsey Powers presented the SRC Annual Report for council members review and feedback. Lisa Livesay inquired regarding the eligibility statement regarding the VR program and its services. The council inquired regarding the disability breakdown of clients and the category of "no disability". Adam Robson inquired regarding how clients were categorized according to disability and if some clients would have multiple disabilities. Janette Lopez noted that clients would be categorized by their primary disability. Adam Robson suggested the annual report breakdown the client satisfaction survey data by open and closed clients. Janette Lopez suggested that headings be added to the table of contents. Ms. Lopez also suggested the list of council members include a table of core representation. Janette Lopez stated the current table of the breakdown of clients by disability was not needed or could be modified. Janette Lopez suggested a different way to show the RSA offices rather than that office locator weblink, which would not list all RSA offices. Adam Robson motioned to approve the SRC Annual Report with the recommended changes. Lenny Ovadia seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

Committee Reports

Employment Committee

Zane Lambros stated the Employment Committee was in discussions regarding the direction of the committee and had some ideas. Ms. Lambros noted that she was unsure regarding the need for an Employment Committee under the SRC, as VR was taking the lead on many employment items. Janette Lopez noted the Employment Committee was not a required committee under the SRC and that VR worked with employers and providers regarding employment of clients. Adam Robson inquired whether the committee would be able to prepare a report regarding the committee's activities before potentially dissolving the committee. Zane Lambros stated that she would be able to provide a report.

Program Review Committee

Julie Oliver stated the Program Review Committee had reviewed the client satisfaction surveys and recommended a standard practice on how the surveys were distributed and that all disability populations were included. Ms. Oliver stated the committee also recommended that there be an in-office option for clients to complete the surveys and to receive assistance if

needed. Julie Oliver stated the committee also recommended that RSA implement an employee satisfaction survey and establish a method for collecting feedback from staff.

SILC Report

David Carey stated SILC continued to provide emergency preparedness planning for successful outcomes in an emergency. He noted SILC would be holding a Town Hall meeting regarding the impact of the government shutdown on individuals with disabilities and he would share that information with the council.

American Indian VR Project Report

Paula Seanez stated the Navajo Nation held a successful celebration of the 50th year of tribal VR at the NAU Conference Center. She noted that several other tribes attended and there were many great speakers and stories. Ms. Seanez noted they would continue to expand services and overcome challenges. Paula Seanez stated the Consortia on Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) would be held in December and that all tribes would attend. Ms. Seanez stated that Utah would be implementing an Order of Selection (OOS). She added the Navajo Nation was in its 5th and final year of a grant and the Request for Proposals (RFP)s were typically sent out early December although with recent events, she was unsure regarding the application timelines.

CAP Report

Lindsey Stevens stated that Linda Fischer had retired from CAP, and they had a new advocate, Kim Chumley. Ms. Stevens stated that CAP continued to operate as usual. She noted that her team had been reviewing the VR self-employment policy with RSA and would be providing feedback.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Council Meeting Dates and Adjournment

The next meeting of the SRC Full Council will be on February 5, 2026 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.

Adjournment of Meeting

Adam Robson motioned to adjourn the meeting. Zane Lambros seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:55 pm.