

Governor's State Rehabilitation Council (SRC)

Full Council Meeting Minutes

August 8, 2025

Attendance

Members Present

David Carey

Janette Lopez

Lisa Livesay

Adam Robson

Paula Seanez

Lenny Ovadia

Julie Oliver

Zane Lambros

George Garcia

Jaime Gonzalez

Kristen Mackey

Members Absent

Diana Gomez Reyes

Martin Appel

Melissa Wojtak

Staff Present

Lindsey Powers

Guests Present

Mathew Nevarez

Crystal Poetz

Stephanie Johnson

Lindsey Stevens

Bryan Gogg

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

Lenny Ovadia moved to approve the minutes of the May 7, 2025, SRC Full Council meeting. Julie Oliver seconded the motion. The minutes were approved by a unanimous voice vote.

Member Reports

SRC Chair Report

David Carey stated that he received an invitation for the SRC to host a table at the upcoming RSA staff conference if any council member would like to participate.

RSA Updates

Kristen Mackey stated Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) had implemented the new case management system, InFormed and was working

on fixing any problems that had come up. Ms. Mackey noted there were some issues with generating some reports. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA would continue to pursue direct deposits for vendors and a payment card for clients. Ms. Mackey stated InFormed did not use the same numeric codes, but used names for case statuses, which would be easier for staff entering information. Kristen Mackey stated she did hope to offer a client portal, although that would be during phase 2. Janette Lopez stated that one of the Federal findings was that RSA only used 28 codes related to services and inquired whether all services were available. Kristen Mackey stated there were 100s of services and RSA chose to bundle those services to be more nimble when creating authorizations for services. Janette Lopez inquired how often staff were trained on services and service provision as they might not encounter certain services often such as home or vehicle modifications. Kristen Mackey stated that staff received training when hired and annually as well as when there were any new changes such as the new case management system. Kristen Mackey stated RSA created a method for measuring skills gained and sent it to Federal RSA for review.

Ms. Mackey stated the state budget with a line item for VR remained stable. She noted that at the Federal level, there was a proposed bill that could increase the funding twice in one year, in which RSA would have to revert funds. Kristen Mackey stated the funding amount would impact the 15% set aside for Pre-Employment Transition (Pre-ETS) and would be difficult to expend. She added that RSA was watching for a potential Federal appropriation, which could change RSA from a required program to a discretionary program. Paula Seanez stated that in past years, RSA would use third party match agreements and inquired whether RSA still used those. Kristen Mackey stated RSA typically received 11.3 million in third party agreements and DES had been very supportive of the VR program so that RSA did not have to revert to a wait list for VR services. Lenny Ovadia inquired whether RSA would be interested in hearing about ongoing activities and success stories from vendors. Kristen Mackey stated RSA was in the process of developing a form that could be sent to vendors regarding client success stories. Stephanie Johnson stated that she just needed a signed consent form from a client, and then she could get in touch with the individual. She noted that RSA was also finalizing a flyer that would be shared at the RSA staff conference that would offer more information for clients also. Paula Seanez inquired whether CAP had been affected by budget cuts. Bryan Gogg stated that everything remained funded at the local level,

and they had not received any budget cuts yet. David Carey inquired whether any proposed budget items had been approved. Kristen Mackey stated the only proposed budget item was a potential increase in funds for the Independent Living Blind (ILB) program, but it did not make it through Legislation.

Kristen Mackey stated that DES had a RIF due to a significant budget cut. She noted that RSA was not affected as much as other agencies, although the Program Manager and Assistant Program Manager positions for region 3 had been affected. Kristen Mackey stated that Region 1 was currently supported by Region 1 and 2. Ms. Mackey stated RSA recognized the importance of those positions and was seeking to fill them. She added that RSA also hoped to increase the employment outreach specialists to connect with local employers with job seekers.

Mathew Nevarez provided the 722 report, which indicated 17 informal reviews, 10 mediations, and 4 fair hearings. He noted that more informal reviews had been overturned and 8 of the 11 closures had been overturned. Mr. Nevarez stated that mediations continued to be scheduled and conducted timely as well as less fair hearings. He added that Ombudsman staff remained available to staff when undergoing the appeals process and provided check-ins regularly to staff as needed. Mathew Nevarez stated that if the SRC would like to request any other information or data, to let him know and he could prepare that for his report outs.

Lindsey Powers provided the Client Satisfaction Survey report for Quarter 4 of the year. Ms. Powers noted that 73% of open clients answered that they strongly agreed they had been treated with courtesy and respect by VR staff and 58% strongly agreed that they would recommend the VR program to another person. She added that 50% strongly agreed that they had been provided with assistance relevant to their case, and 50% strongly agreed that they had participated in the development of their IPE. Lenny Ovadia stated that the report was positive, and he was excited to see how the client portal could help clients to have more control over their cases. David Carey inquired whether it would be possible to send the survey through text messaging. Kristen Mackey stated DES did not currently have a way to send mass texts.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee

David Carey stated the Executive Committee had discussed who had agreed to participate on the Program Review and Employment and Community Partnerships Committee. He noted that all council members were encouraged to participate on a committee if their schedules allowed. Lindsey Powers stated that the committees could meet as often as needed to perform their activities and to allow for committee members' schedules. Kristen Mackey stated that RSA would appreciate being part of the committee discussions to discuss activities beneficial for RSA and the SRC.

SILC Report

David Carey stated SILC continued to provide emergency preparedness planning for successful outcomes in an emergency. He noted SILC was also providing education regarding available resources for individuals with disabilities to combat the heat during the summer. Kristen Mackey stated that SILC and Arizona had been recognized for their collaboration and had been invited to speak nationally about their partnership.

American Indian VR Project Report

Paula Seanez stated Tohono O'odham recently hired Program Manager, Suzette Soto, who is implementing a new data software to streamline assessment and case management, expand outreach to underserved communities and implementing updated policies. She noted that staff attended the American Indians into Health Professions at the University of Arizona. Ms. Seanez stated the Navajo Nation was in its 4th year of funding and continued to work to review grant outcomes and budgets to meet its goals and objectives. The Navajo Nation continued to provide independent living services based on funds allocated by the Navajo Nation Council and provided ramps, home modification and assistive devices. Paula Seanez stated they continue their partnership with the Sonoran Center for Excellence in Disabilities on Transition initiatives. Paula Seanez stated the Consortia on Administrators for Native American Rehabilitation (CANAR) was held on June 3-5, 2025, in Spokane, WA and was well attended. She noted that AIVRTACC would be conducting a New Directors training on September 3 and 4, 2025 in Salt Lake City, UT. She added the Navajo Nation would be celebrating their 50-year anniversary. The Annual CANAR conference would be held in Phoenix/Chandler, AZ and would be dedicated to the 50-year

anniversary (1975-2025), Our Story: "The Power of Self-Determination in Advancing Tribal Vocational Rehabilitation." Paula Seanez stated the Navajo Nation Advisory Council on Disability would host their own celebration on October 28, 2025, at the Twin Arrows Hotel and Casino near Flagstaff.

CAP Report

Lindsey Stevens stated CAP had recently provided a presentation on what CAP could and could not do. She noted that if anyone would like to request a CAP presentation, they would be pleased to provide information. David Carey inquired whether CAP was taking on new clients. Lindsey Stevens stated that CAP was accepting new clients. Ms. Stevens stated CAP had received some complaints regarding the time it took to obtain VR services as well as the time to go through the self-employment process and to meet with the Self-Employment Committee. Kristen Mackey stated the Self-Employment Committee had not met recently due to a change in staff, although she hoped to identify someone to run that committee. Lindsey Stevens inquired whether there was an update regarding the customized employment pilot. Stephanie Johnson stated the pilot was going well with 9 job seekers in the pilot. She noted that one of the most critical elements was the need for in-person training as well as video resources. Ms. Johnson stated that it was helpful to learn what was helpful during the pilot and to be able to create those resources. Stephanie Johnson stated they also realized the need for staff support and developed a checklist to support every stage of the self-employment process for providers and VRCs. She noted that they were learning a lot, and once it was fully launched, it should be sustainable statewide. Stephanie Johnson stated she was also including VR supervisors in monthly newsletters to give them updates regarding the pilot program as well. Bryan Gogg stated that he knew of an individual that would be interested in self-employment. Kristen Mackey noted that it was a pilot program currently, although it would be a statewide program. Lindsey Stevens stated CAP had also received complaints regarding accommodations as well as other situations involving VR clients. Kristen Mackey stated she would discuss any situations further in a smaller group to protect individuals' privacy.

Announcements

There were no announcements.

Council Meeting Dates and Adjournment

The next meeting of the SRC Full Council will be on November 6, 2025 from 1:00 to 4:00 pm.

Adjournment of Meeting

Paula Seanez motioned to adjourn the meeting. Julie Oliver seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 3:25 pm.