

Wisconsin Rehabilitation Council

Full Council Meeting Minutes

February 19, 2026
9:00 A.M. – 2:30 P.M.

Microsoft Teams Meeting

[Meeting Link](#)

Meeting ID: 217 284 445 244 15 Passcode: Hu9oh7VT

To join by phone only, call (608) 571-2209 Phone Conference ID: 203 110 007#

WRC member attendees: Dick Straub, Nelsinia Ramos, Meredith Dressel, Kathy Meisner, Markus Watts, Lydia Hartlaub, Jenny Felty, Natalia Graf, Liz Kennedy, Alicia Reinhard, Jacci Borchardt, Gadeen Taylor-Duke, Dr. Owonifari, Dr. Carter, Lindsey Kreitzman

DVR staff attendees: Kay Olson, Alissa Braatz, Andrea Simon, Allison Gordon, Anna Eggebrecht, Sarah Kuehn, Ashley Hinke, Karla Opatz, Andrzej Walz-Chojnacki, Deanna Krell, Tania Hanford, Jennifer Bscherer, Jenna Fogarty, Christina Tierney

Guests: Heather Laakso (DWD Policy Analyst), Ryan Ruzziconi (Aspirus)

Roll Call and Introductions

- 3 new members introduced themselves. Nelsinia Ramos, Adam Toldt, Dr. Christi Carter, etc.

Announcements

- None

Quorum Check

- At quorum at 10:12 am.

Approval of Minutes – November 2025

- Motion to approve Minutes Dr Owonifari, seconded by Liz - passed.

Committee Updates and Committee Member Approvals:

Council Engagement Committee

- Met on Tuesday February 17th.
- Currently we have several member terms expiring in June 2026. Consulting with Gov's office on how to interpret "2 full terms". We have a few members that have taken over another person's term. We are checking to see if they can stay with the Council to complete their own 2 full terms.
- Kay will reach out to members that have the eligibility to renew their membership for their 2nd term.
- Have a vacancy for Council on Workforce Investment. An application has been submitted, and we are waiting to hear from the Gov's office.

- DVR service consumer position will be open on July 1, 2026.
- Onboarded 3 new members with the help of this committee.
- Created a sample email with a simple explanation of how to apply for the Council to use when a person is interested in applying. This email will be saved on the WRC Sharepoint site.
- Utilize membership as a networking opportunity. Asked DVR leadership about a networking session at the next in-person Council meeting.

Performance Measures and Quality Assurance Committee/Policy Review and Administration Committee

- Met on February 9th.
- Reviewed the DVR State Plan modifications. The entire Council was invited to that meeting and the details from that meeting will be sent out to the full council.

Services to Business Committee

- Met on January 28th.
- What are next steps for the committee to focus on with a better understanding of the businesses that DVR collaborates with.

Executive Committee

- Met on Monday, January 26th.
- Discussed Order of Selection for DVR and the impact that it has on providing services to consumers.
- Discussed membership and vacancies.
- Strategic Planning process and discussed what the two sub-committees have developed.
- New members are invited to join any of the committees that they have interest in. They are encouraged to sit in at meetings to decide which one best fits their interests.
- Lydia asked if the Exec. Committee reviews hearing decisions. Yes, they are reviewed on an annual basis. The Committee is meeting on Monday February 23rd to do the annual review.

Strategic Planning - Heather Laakso, DWD Program & Policy Analyst

- Values Sub-committee
 - Ensure graphic accessibility for screen readers.
 - Reviewed updated value statements
 - Always getting better value – suggestion for language that focuses on trust, accountability, and learning.
 - Remove numbering the values.
 - Shared the thought process behind development of value statements.
- Strategic Plan Sub-committee
 - Priority 1 - Expansion of qualified service providers – shared SWOT outcomes
 - Priority 2 - Training and consistency in service delivery – shared SWOT outcomes

- Strategies were identified and shared for each priority.
 - Potential measurement examples were shared.
- Identify Goals and next steps
 - Which priority does the WRC want to focus on? Expansion of qualified service providers or training and consistency of service providers.
 - WRC voted on training and consistency of service providers.
 - Meredith will share some information on service provider credentialing during the Admin Update that will begin in March. This initiative ties into this goal.
 - Suggestion to develop a tool that consumers would complete annually (IPE annual review) to provide feedback on their service provider and DVR experience.
 - Deanna shared that DVR did a pilot project to get real time feedback from consumers through text messaging on specific points of their DVR experience. That information could be shared with WRC.
 - CSNA also surveys consumers, service providers, and other stakeholders. Could review most recent CSNA.
 - Data on service provider quality could be helpful for the Council to make recommendations.
 - DVR has been working on a tool related to Service Provider quality and compliance.
 - Strategic Planning Goals:
 - Strategic Planning Committee (new members are welcome) does the initial review of data available and draft up to 3 (SMART) goals from the discussion today.
 - Gather and share service provider data and consumer feedback data (CSNA, pilot project, State Plan) with WRC with the goal of creating/identifying training to create consistency of service providers.
 - Potentially add questions identified by this process in the CSNA.
 - Dick suggested the Performance Measures and Quality Assurance Committee/Policy Review and Administration Committee could take on the data analysis portion if that is one of the goals identified.
 - Identify next steps based on the data analysis.

Lunch Break

Public Comment

- No public comments

DVR Administrative Update

Meredith Dressel, DVR Administrator

- Asked about when a DVR case closes, does a consumer automatically come off the waitlist? DVR answered no, this doesn't happen as DVR is required to have a specific amount of savings before we are able to commit to additional cost. Based on most recent budget review, DVR does not have enough savings to allow anyone off the waitlist.
- Even with the waitlist, DVR is still required to reach 15% of spending as services/supports to High School students. DVR had specific training for staff regarding how to reach that requirement under a waitlist.
 - Reviewed Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) spending. DVR noted if they don't meet spending requirement this year, the remainder is carried over to next fiscal year, as additional funds they must spend on students with the 15% for that fiscal year. DVR noted typically they have overspent, but there is a concern the waitlist may have an impact on this spending requirement.
- DVR did submit a 1310 to budget committee, requesting additional state funds. DVR has not heard back on this yet but is hoping to hear back around end of March. This is the projected end of the next legislative session.
- Waitlist was implemented on Dec 2, 2025. DVR is seeing around 1000 individuals going onto the waitlist per month, which is what they projected.
- DVR have seen around 5 consumers bypass the waitlist because of being in immediate risk of losing their job this is allowed by Federal Regulation and Wisconsin State Statute. They are only able to receive services that are to maintain their job. Once consumer's job is stable, their case is closed, and they do not go back on the waitlist.
- Reviewed DVR vacant positions and staff turnover rate. Provided DVR Counselor numbers by Race and WDA.
 - WRC requested Race and WDA chart add a column at the bottom to give a clear picture across categories instead of only in WDA. DVR agreed this was a good idea. DVR also offered to include a slide for DVR VRS positions by Race and WDA.
- Reviewed Caseload distribution.
- Addressed RSA negotiated measures, these are indicators that all work force programs are measured by. These numbers are negotiated with RSA each program year.
 - WRC inquired if that is a true negotiation or does RSA mainly tell DVR what the numbers must be. DVR can and has gone back to RSA with questions and data to address their expected measures. Ultimately, RSA makes the final decision and DVR has minimal negotiation allowance.
 - WRC inquired if goals were national average. DVR address how the numbers are based off each state's demographics, they are unique to each state.
- Reviewed Existing Business numbers.
 - WRC asked about difference in average cost per case between Farm and Non-farm cases. DVR noted that some farm cases have larger rehabilitation technology items, which may be a higher cost.
 - WRC also asked about length of time for existing business cases staying open. DVR said they would follow up with WRC on this question.
- Reviewed top things happening in DVR.

- WRC asked about DVR monitoring cost for existing consumers? DVR continues to stress to staff that they need to provide services to our consumers that are necessary and appropriate. Only added restrictions were to have supervisory review of internship/temporary work (I/TW) experience that are longer than 45 day or cases with multiple I/TWs. And DVR's contract with SVRI is still in place, but because of changes in staff available time due to waitlist, DVR is keeping more cases inhouse instead of sending to SVRI for intake and eligibility.
- WRC voiced concern that some DVR staff seem to be adding restrictions to approval of training or other services. DVR addressed that they have an all staff meeting tomorrow and will stress the importance of providing needed services to the consumers that are necessary and appropriate to reach their job goal. DVR also addressed a couple cases received Independent Living Center (ILC) recommendations for services or devices. DVR is reviewing these on a case-by-case bases, still, approval must be justified that it is necessary and appropriate to meet the consumer's job goal.
- WRC asked about the criteria to get off the waitlist. Is it first on first off, or other criteria. DVR addressed how individuals being released from the waitlist goes by categories, addressed assessment of functional limitation and placement in one of 3 categories.
 - Category 1 is the most significantly disabled consumers with a mental or physical impairment that seriously limits four or more functional limitation areas in terms of an employment outcome and whose vocational rehabilitation requires multiple services, over an extended period of time. They come off the waitlist first.
 - Category 2 is significantly disabled consumers with a mental or physical impairment that seriously limits 1-3 functional limitations in terms of an employment outcome and whose vocational rehabilitation requires multiple services, over an extended period of time They would be next to come off the waitlist.
 - If an individual receives SSI/SSDI benefits due to their own disability, they are presumed to be, at least, an individual with a significant disability.
 - Lastly, Category 3 is for other eligible individuals with a disability but no functional limitation in terms of an employment outcome and do not require multiple services over an extended period of time. They would be the last to come off the waitlist.
 - For each category, individuals come off the waitlist based on application date. First individuals off the waitlist will be all of Category 1 and this means that Category 2 individuals will have a longer wait to come off the waitlist.
- WRC inquired scope of ages and other demographics for individuals applying for DVR. DVR agreed to follow up at May 2026 meeting with some demographic information. It was noted a lot of this information may be in the annual report reviewed earlier in meeting.
- Reviewed business services updates and statewide teams updates.
 - WRC asked if BSC's Lunch and Learn events are recorded. DVR addressed how they are not currently recorded and there are restrictions for the state with regards to recording, storing and making available to the public meetings or events. Also, Lunch and Learn has a social aspect which is important.
- WRC made note about DVR having multiple sources of data that could help with strategic planning. DVR addressed they had in the past brought a review of QA data to WRC for review, they could do this again.

FFY2025 RSA722 Appeals Review

DVR reviewed all the outcomes from appeals for 2025 FFY:

- **Brief Overview of each appeal:**
 - 2 – Funding for post-secondary education. (consumer withdrew & DVRs denial was AFFIRMED)
 - 1 – Denial to cover international patent filing fees (*self-employment case*) (DVRs denial was AFFIRMED)
 - 1 – Eligibility/Category placement (consumer withdrew)
 - 1 – Denial of funding for teeth implants. (resolved prior to hearing)
 - 1 – Denial of case transfer to another WDA. (consumer withdrew)
 - 1 – Self-Employment toolkit BAS score (consumer withdrew)
 - 3 – Related to administrative case management (DVRs motion to dismiss GRANTED for all 3)
- **Decision outcomes:**
 - 4 – consumer withdraws
 - 3 – DVRs motion to dismiss GRANTED
 - 1 – resolved
 - 2 – decisions rendered
- **Duplicate Consumers:**
 - One consumer requested 3 of these cases.
 - Another consumer requested 3 of these cases.
 - Total number of consumers for these 10 cases, is 6.
- **Open Cases vs. Closed Cases**
 - One of the 6 consumers who requested hearings, has a closed case.
 - The other 5 consumers who requested hearings, have open cases.
- WRC inquired about why a consumer would withdraw an appeal before going to hearing? DVR address this could be for personal reasons, other reasons DVR wasn't aware of an issues and agreed to provide the services, or other times consumers get more information about policy and agree they don't need a hearing.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Report

Lydia Hartlaub, Attorney for CAP/Disability Rights Wisconsin

- Lydia reviewed the CAP Presentation.
- Protection and Advocacy for Beneficiaries of Social Security (PABSS) acronym in slides.
- WRC asked about the total cases being up by 67% was total number across all areas. CAP confirmed this is total number across all cases.

Review Action Items and Identify Future Agenda Topics

Action Items

- Two subgroups of strategic planning and value statements.
- Request for more demographic information in presentations.

Future agenda items

- No items addressed

Adjourn

- Liz motioned to adjourn, Nelsinia second. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 1:43pm.