

## TITLE IV – VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (VR) PROGRAM

### - General quarterly updates since the last full board meeting in October 2020

VR's 2020 Annual Report, which is a joint report from the VR program and the Nevada State Rehabilitation Council (NSRC), was completed and distributed. A copy of the report is included in your packets, together with an executive summary.

The VR Biennial Report was completed and submitted to Governor Sisolak. A copy of the report is included in your packets.

The Rehabilitation Division has embraced technology in order to continue to serve Nevadans during this pandemic. We are fully utilizing DocuSign for client documents as well as personnel documents and contracts. We are utilizing SARA, our virtual assistant created by The Career Index (TCI), to send texts and/or emails to our VR clients. TCI has also developed a video conference platform on SARA, called ODIN. Through ODIN we can attend virtual meetings with our clients with video, audio and screen sharing, and staff are able to enter case notes into ODIN that appear directly into the case file. We are also utilizing a global scheduler for client appointments that is another product of TCI. (Nevada is a pilot state for TCI). Lastly, we have moved our VR orientation and application online at [www.detr.nv.gov](http://www.detr.nv.gov).

Due to the rise in the numbers of suicides in the nation, and especially in Nevada (ranked 11<sup>th</sup>), all Rehabilitation Division staff have taken Suicide Gatekeeper training so we can recognize warning signs, properly respond and provide resources and assistance. Suicide Prevention Resource lists are included in your packets.

### - Any COVID-related news updates related to your program

We have had several staff members test positive for the COVID-19 virus. Fortunately, with telework and with our offices closed to the public, exposures have been limited.

We have sadly lost 1 counselor in the Vocational Rehabilitation program and 2 of our Blind Licensees in the Blind Business Enterprise of Nevada (BEN) program since the pandemic began. Of those, Bert Hansen passed away from the COVID-19 virus. Bert owned and operated the gift shop at the Hoover Dam. He was a strong advocate for the BEN program, having been a blind licensee for more than 40 years.

We have a "COVID-19 Info." button/link on our web page [www.vrnevada.org](http://www.vrnevada.org)

Furloughs began for all state employees this month. Employees must take one unpaid furlough day (8 hours) per month for the period Jan.-June 2021. This equates to a 2.3% pay cut.

The VR program's general fund budget for SFY21 has been reduced by 19%. On November 6, 2020, the Governor's Finance Office announced that it has sent a memo directing all state agencies to prepare proposed budget reserves of 12 percent for each year of the upcoming 2021-2023 biennium.

The Memo stated that the reserve proposals are for budget planning purposes and will allow the Governor’s Finance Office to provide options for consideration during the development of the Governor’s recommended budget. Data will continue to be examined over the coming weeks as the State receives updated revenue projections from Nevada's Economic Forum and the Executive Budget for the 2021-23 biennium is finalized in preparation for consideration during the 2021 legislative session. As stated in the Memo, despite a responsible reopening of a majority of the State’s economy since May, Nevada continues to face significant revenue shortfalls and a historic economic and fiscal crisis as a result of this pandemic.

It is noteworthy to know that for every \$1 of general fund lost, the VR program also loses approximate \$4 of federal funds that would have been drawn from the general fund match. (Non-federal match requirement is 21.3% to draw 78.7% in federal Section 110 grant funds).

**- Any information on service providers that you can share**

Below are the client services in the most need, denoted by region. Those with asterisks were in need prior to the pandemic and have historically been difficult to provide. VR continues to look for ways to collaborate to ensure clients continue to have access to the services they need in order to achieve successful employment outcomes.

<u>Service</u>	<u>Region</u>
Rehabilitation Teaching (for daily living skills & Braille)	South
Orientation and Mobility Instruction	South
Low Vision Providers	South
Job Developers	Statewide
*Transportation	Rural
*Medical providers	Rural
*Eye Care	North - CC
*Dental	Rural
*Clothing vendors	Rural
*Blind Skills Training	North
*Audiology	North - CC
*Assistive Technology providers	North
*Assessments for clients on the autism spectrum	South

**- Any relevant and recent performance measures that you can share**

Please see attached.

**- Any upcoming initiatives and plans for the program**

Vocational Rehabilitation is pursuing collaborative partnerships in the following areas:

1. The Nevada Department of Education announced in October that Nevada was one of only six states awarded federal funding through the Expanding Access to Well-Rounded Courses Demonstration Grants Program. The \$2.6 million award will be distributed over a five-year period with an award of \$314,305 provided in the first year. This funding will expand access to career and technical education (CTE), Advances Placement, and work-based learning course opportunities to rural school districts where such options were non-existent before. In addition, the grant will provide services to support students with disabilities, including funding to hire additional special education teachers.
2. NVHOPE (Nevada Healthcare Occupations Promoting Employment) – College of Southern Nevada (CSN) is taking over facilitating this program. It connects students to careers in healthcare via a bootcamp that prepares them for Certified Nursing Assistant training.
3. The Governor’s Office of Workforce Innovation (OWINN) announced in October that Nevada is one of 9 states being awarded the Reimagine Workforce Preparation Grant. The \$13.8 million award will be used to support job training efforts such as short-term courses, credentials, and pathways to help prepare unemployed and underemployed Nevadans for in-demand occupations in high-growth, high-wage sectors such as manufacturing, health care, information technology, logistics and skilled trades.
4. Initiative to provide opportunities in higher education for foster care youth - This is an NSHE initiative, in collaboration with the Children’s Cabinet, College of Southern Nevada (CSN) and Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC) to waive tuition and provide supports for qualifying foster care youth up to age 26 to attend college.
5. Nevadaworks Local Workforce Development Board (LWDB) Skillup Nevada provides Skillsoft e-learning, online course catalog with training tracks for 100+ industry certifications. [www.americanjobcenternnv.org](http://www.americanjobcenternnv.org).