**VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION**

**Program-Specific Requirements for State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program**

The Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Services Portion of the Unified or Combined State Plan must include the following descriptions and estimates, as required by sections 101(a) and 606 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended by title IV of WIOA.

# (a) State Rehabilitation Council.

**All VR agencies, except for those that have an independent consumer-controlled commission, must have a State Rehabilitation Council (Council or SRC) that meets the criteria in section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. The designated State agency or designated State unit, as applicable, has (select A or B):**

**🞎** (A) is an independent State commission.

🗹 (B) has established a State Rehabilitation Council.

**In accordance with Assurance 3(b), please provide information on the current composition of the Council by representative type, including the term number of the representative, as applicable, and any vacancies, as well as the beginning dates of each representative’s term.**

| **Council Representative** | **Current Term**  **Number/**  **Vacant** | **Beginning Date of Term**  **Mo./Yr.** |
| --- | --- | --- |
| Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) | Vacant |  |
| Parent Training and Information Center | 2 | Sept 2022 |
| Client Assistance Program | 1 | October 2021 |
| Qualified Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselor (Ex Officio if Employed by the VR Agency) |  |  |
| Community Rehabilitation Program Service Provider | 2 | Sept 2022 |
| Business, Industry, and Labor | 1 | Feb 2023 |
| Business, Industry, and Labor | 1 | March 22 |
| Business, Industry, and Labor | 1 | Sept 2022 |
| Business, Industry, and Labor | Vacant |  |
| Disability Advocacy Groups | 1 | Sept 2022 |
| Current or Former Applicants for, or Recipients of, VR services | 1 | Sept 2023 |
| Section 121 Project Directors in the State (as applicable) | Vacant |  |
| State Educational Agency Responsible for Students with Disabilities Eligible to Receive Services under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) | Vacant |  |
| State Workforce Development Board | 1 | Oct 2023 |
| VR Agency Director (Ex Officio) | 4 | Sept 2022 |

**If the SRC is not meeting the composition requirements in section 105(b) of the Rehabilitation Act and/or is not meeting quarterly as required in section 105(f) of the Rehabilitation Act, provide the steps that the VR agency is taking to ensure it meets those requirements.**

The California SRC is comprised of active, diverse, and dedicated members. The SRC has a proven track record of holding consistent quarterly meetings and subcommittee meetings. Throughout the year, CDOR leadership and the SRC Executive Officer engage in ongoing, broad recruitment efforts, which include (but are not limited to):

* Soliciting recommendations from DOR leadership, business specialists, and other subject matter expert staff.
* Networking and speaking at disability related conferences and trainings.
* Recruiting at local workforce meetings.
* Following up on recommendations and referrals received from individuals who are active in governmental affairs.
* Communicating with fellow advisory bodies including the California State Independent Living Council, California State Council on Developmental Disabilities, and the California Association of Local Behavioral Health Boards and Commissions.
* Connecting with leaders from state departments like the California Department of Education, the California Workforce Development Board, and California Department of Developmental Services.
* Asking current SRC members to share recruitment information with their networks and stakeholder communities.
* Providing SRC membership information in the SRC’s Annual Report and on the SRC webpage.

To support the appointments process, the CDOR has an effective and active relationship with the California Health and Human Services Agency, and the Governor’s Office. The SRC looks forward to welcoming several new members throughout 2024 – 2028.

**In accordance with the requirements in section 101(a)(21)(A)(ii)(III) of the Rehabilitation Act, include a summary of the Council’s input (including how it was obtained) into the State Plan and any State Plan revisions, including recommendations from the Council's annual reports, the review and analysis of consumer satisfaction and other Council reports.**

The SRC and CDOR partner together to carry out the Rehabilitation Act, to maximize the employment and independence for individuals with disabilities. The ongoing collaboration between the SRC and CDOR on the VR Services Portion of the State Plan is an essential component and a result of this partnership. The SRC and CDOR’s Planning Unit meet regularly to review, discuss, and evaluate CDOR’s progress in meeting the State Plan and movement towards achieving the goals and priorities. Together, the SRC and CDOR jointly developed, reviewed, and agreed to the priorities and goals for the VR Services Portion of the 2024–2028 Unified State Plan as listed in Description C.

To better assess consumer satisfaction and evaluate the effectiveness of the VR Program, the SRC and CDOR finalized and implemented modifications of the Consumer Satisfaction Survey (CSS) instrument in 2020. The new survey was distributed annually since 2021 and the SRC is using the results to look at how to improve VR services for Californians with disabilities. In 2022, the results were separated and reported out for both VR consumers and Potentially Eligible (PE) participants. In 2023, the PE survey questions were changed and tailored to the experiences of student. The CDOR presented the results of the 2021 and 2022 CSS to the SRC in Spring 2022, and Summer 2023, respectively, and will present the final results of the 2023 survey showing the three-year trend perspective with the SRC by Summer 2024.The SRC and CDOR continue to develop and conduct the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) together. In Spring 2021 the SRC and CDOR developed a plan for the 2021-2023 CSNA. In Winter of 2022 SRC and CDOR finalized the qualitative data collection instruments for the CSNA. In Summer of 2023 SRC and CDOR identified and developed findings for the CSNA. By January 2024, CDOR will publish the final 2021-2023 CSNA report, including the findings and recommendations for CDOR’s consideration. Moving forward to 2024, the SRC and CDOR will jointly conduct the new triennial CSNA to determine the rehabilitation needs of individuals with disabilities in California. The SRC meets with CDOR’s Planning Unit regularly and has provided feedback on the areas of focus for the CSNA topic areas and research goals.

The SRC Annual Report (posted on CDOR’s website) provides additional details on the SRC’s perspectives and accomplishments. Since the submission of the 2022 Modification to the VR Services Portion of the Unified State Plan, the SRC adopted five recommendations, provided in the section below. These recommendations were the result of many productive and active discussions between the SRC, CDOR, and other stakeholders, and reflect the SRC’s efforts to review, analyze, and advise CDOR on the performance and effectiveness of California’s VR program.

**Provide the VR agency’s response to the Council’s input and recommendations, including an explanation for the rejection of any input and recommendations.**

SRC Recommendation 2021.4 – Work Incentive Planning Information

Work Incentive Planning Information

The SRC recommends DOR expand consumers’ access to Work Incentive Planning (WIP) information and services by providing WIP information and services so the consumer can make an informed choice. WIP services should be consistent throughout California in the following ways:

1. Before, during and after the consumer’s individualized plan for employment is written
2. Virtually through on-line materials and a recorded video that provides an overview of work incentive information and explanation of DOR WIP services. (Materials and video must meet website accessibility requirements)
3. Provide WIP information to family members of consumers (who may be impacted)

CDOR Response to SRC Recommendation 2021.4

The DOR appreciates the SRC’s recommendations to expand consumers’ access to DOR’s WIP information and services. Currently, DOR Districts provide this service to Potentially Eligible (PE) and Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) consumers receiving Supplemental Security Income and/or Social Security Disability Insurance. PE consumers receive DOR WIP services either in a group setting to learn financial literacy skills or on an individual basis if they are planning for or participating in paid work experience as part of their DOR Student Services. VR consumers receive DOR WIP services either in Service-J status, Employed status or Service status or in their final quarter or semester of training. Some benefits planning services may also be provided during other stages of the VR process through the Work Incentive Planning and Assistance Programs sponsored by Social Security.

DOR staff will examine currently provided WIP services and assess whether resources, including staff resources, are available, can be identified, obtained or redirected to expand WIP services, including providing these services earlier in the consumer’s case. Following this examination, the DOR commits to working with the SRC regarding the development or implementation of possible changes to the provision of this important VR service.

Regarding the SRC’s recommendation on providing WIP information to family members, currently, at any meeting with DOR staff, including meetings with Work Incentive Planners, all PE and VR consumers have the right to include family members, other representatives, or advocates. The DOR will ensure that WIPs and other DOR staff know and inform participants and their families and representatives that family members can be and are encouraged to participate.

With respect to online resources, DOR will review currently available online information regarding WIP services and access to and availability of that information to participants. DOR will ensure that online information is in plain-language and consumer-focused, that WIP website materials are accessible to consumers, family members, representatives, stakeholders, and partners, and provides an accurate explanation of DOR WIP services. DOR would appreciate the SRC’s sharing of resources or examples that are representative of what the SRC recommends as potential on-line materials and recorded videos that they feel provide a good overview of and delivers effective work incentive information.

DOR looks forward to future conversations with the SRC on this recommendation and sharing the results of the analysis, steps that have been or will be taken, and potential next steps the DOR will take in support of the delivery of effective and timely WIP services.

SRC Recommendation 2022.1 – Transportation Regulations

To address consumers’ transportation challenges, DOR should review their transportation regulations to determine what areas should be retained, modified, or removed. Areas for consideration include:

* Increasing the consumer-owned vehicle usage paid amount of fifteen cents ($0.15) per mile, or at twenty cents ($0.20) for adapted vans.
* Ensuring consumers can financially assume the cost of transportation before closing their record of service.
* Adding ridesharing methods such as Uber or Lyft as a form of reimbursable transportation.

CDOR Response to SRC Recommendation 2022.1

The DOR thanks the SRC for the recommendation to review the transportation regulations in respect to the consumer-owned vehicle usage paid amount, consumer’s responsibility of financially assuming costs of transportation, and adding alternative modes of transportation such as ridesharing. DOR staff will analyze the feasibility and requirements necessary to update these regulations and discuss if, where, and how to implement changes, and the potential impact to consumers and DOR. DOR welcomes future discussions with the SRC about this recommendation, to include updates on the analysis and any actions the DOR will be considering or pursuing regarding regulatory and or policy changes related to participant transportation. DOR appreciates the SRC’s partnership and is looking forward to these future conversations.

SRC Recommendation 2022.2 - Working with Local Education Agencies to Increase Awareness of DOR Services

Issue: Information on DOR services to students with disabilities should be shared with all teachers, not only teachers in Special Education. There are students with disabilities that may not qualify for Special Education, such as those with 504 plans, that could potentially utilize DOR services.

Recommendation: To increase awareness that all students with disabilities, including those without an Individualized Education Program, are eligible for vocational services, the DOR should partner with local education agencies to increase awareness and information to teachers, administration, counselors, parents, and students.

Strategy: Including additional details about DOR Student Services in secondary transition planning handbooks and resources may be an effective strategy to increase awareness. Examples of these resources include the California Transition Alliance Handbook, the Individualized Education Program template, the universal referral form, and the California Department of Education website.

CDOR Response to SRC Recommendation 2022.2

The DOR appreciates the SRC’s recommendation and strongly agrees that communication, awareness, and outreach is an essential component of ensuring that all students who can benefit from DOR Student Services are aware of - and can effectively access - these services. The DOR conducts ongoing outreach to local education agencies and schools serving potentially eligible students with disabilities ages 16-21. Each California school district has an assigned DOR liaison. DOR Field Leadership ensures that at least annually, all DOR school district liaisons reach out to their contacts which include, but are not limited to superintendents, special education directors, program coordinators, principals, and community college Disabled Student Program directors. The communication from DOR includes information about the pre-employment transition services that DOR offers to students with an identified disability, with or without an Individualized Education Program (IPE) or 504 plan. DOR school district liaisons provide their contact information and offer to meet with the school contact to answer questions, provide additional information, and to present to students, parents, teachers, and staff. In addition, DOR leadership and staff regularly engage with other partners to increase awareness about DOR Student Services. These include agencies who work with youth in foster care, workforce development boards, local partnership agreement partners, regional centers, and other stakeholders who can share information within their own networks.

The DOR welcomes collaboration with the California Transition Alliance and will request that additional information on DOR Student Services be incorporated into their Transition Planning: The Basics handbook. The DOR will connect with the SRC’s California Department of Education (CDE) representative to discuss next steps for adding more information on DOR Student Services to the IPE template, the universal referral form, and the CDE website.

DOR plans to significantly increase the number of youth who receive DOR Student Services by increasing outreach efforts, scaling up existing initiatives, and pursuing cross-system collaboration opportunities. DOR’s vision is that all youth with disabilities leave high school with either a family sustaining wage, are actively engaged in post-secondary education or training, or are receiving employment services through DOR’s VR program.

SRC Recommendation 2022.3 - Expanding Partnerships between Vocational Rehabilitation and Behavioral Health Agencies

Issue**:** Local behavioral health agencies could benefit from a state level partnership model like the Competitive Integrated Employment Blueprint. A formalized process (example: local partnership agreements) could help enhance services and increase opportunities for employment for individuals with behavioral health disabilities.

Recommendation**:** To increase and sustain successful employment outcomes for individuals with mental illness, the SRC recommends that DOR develop a blueprint that:

1. Identifies barriers, challenges, and successful programs;
2. Identifies the key stakeholders and leaders on the state and local level; and,
3. Increases communication, resources and training for agencies and organizations.

DOR Response to SRC Recommendation 2022.3

DOR agrees with the SRC’s recommendation’s overarching goal “to increase and sustain successful employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities” and has already been developing a statewide, locally driven, initiative that includes a framework of strategies, collaborations, and efforts that is largely responsive to the three listed elements within the SRC’s recommendation above.

DOR’s behavioral health services initiative was developed with the understanding that broad reform efforts, led by Governor Newsom and supported by the California Health and Human Services Agency, are underway to align systems, increase coordination, and modernize and expand behavioral health services. DOR’s initiative was informed by the efforts of Governor Newsom’s Behavioral Health Task Force, which has provided DOR with the ability to identify and connect with key stakeholders including people living with behavioral health conditions, family members, advocates, providers, health plans, counties, and state agency leaders.

DOR’s initiative is founded on the understanding that employment serves to support behavioral health prevention, intervention, and recovery. The initiative’s efforts are centered on the DOR’s equity workforce impact goal which specifically focuses on behavioral health and employment. The goal is intended to improve the employment outcomes and earnings for people living with behavioral health conditions, with a focus on equity, with four specific targeted goals for individuals with behavioral health disabilities:

1. Universally increase employment outcomes from 44% to 55%​.
2. Universally increase quarterly median earnings for all to $7,000​.
3. Ensure Black or African American participants also see an increase in quarterly median earnings to $7,000​.
4. Ensure Hispanic participants also see an increase in quarterly median earnings to $7,000.

In support of this initiative and to achieve these equity workforce impact goals DOR’s Regional Directors have been actively connecting with key leaders at the local and regional level to increase partnerships with local behavioral health agencies and service providers.

DOR looks forward to sharing the Department’s framework, which addresses the three elements in this recommendation, for our equity workforce impact goal initiative with the SRC when these are finalized.

SRC Recommendation 2023.1 – Order of Selection

The SRC recommends that during an order of selection with closed categories that DOR support the provision of VR services to individuals who reapply and require services to maintain/retain employment even though the individual would otherwise be assigned to a waiting list.

CDOR Response to SRC Recommendation 2023.1

The DOR appreciates the SRC’s thoughtful deliberation regarding this issue and agrees with the SRC’s recommendation. The DOR has a long-standing history of effectively managing resources and equitability serving eligible individuals with disabilities. Although not necessary at this time, should DOR need to implement an Order of Selection with closed categories in the future, DOR will re-engage with the SRC to discuss how to operationalize this recommendation.