**Questions regarding DOR staffing identified by the SRC Policy Committee on May 8, 2025:**

* Has DOR made efforts to negotiate with AFSCME to change job requirements or language that could make the SVRC-QRP position more appealing?
* Is it a federal requirement for DOR SVRC-QRPs to have a Master’s degree? If it’s not a federal requirement, DOR should consider other options (background, experience, education) to fill the workforce needs.
  + Several California colleges no longer offer vocational rehabilitation as a degree option, and Master’s-level courses such as “Theories of Counseling” (a requirement for the SVRC-QRP position) are becoming increasingly difficult to find. Given these changes, how is DOR adapting its qualification requirements to align with current academic program offerings?
  + Why is a Master’s degree required for the SVRC-QRP positions, but not for the SSM-I Team Manager positions?
  + What loan forgiveness programs and incentives are available to support individuals pursuing a degree in vocational rehabilitation?
* Can anything be done from a legislative perspective to help with the staffing issues?
* A possible staffing solution could be having California’s behavioral health agencies provide vocational rehabilitation services and integrated services for individuals with behavioral health disabilities.
* Is DOR still using the team model to serve consumers? There is a need to increase the administrative staff workforce who support the SVRC-QRPs.
* What upward mobility and promotional opportunities are available to SVRC-QRPs and how are staff made aware of these opportunities?

**SRC questions regarding DOR staffing collected throughout 2024 – April 2025:**

What are the internal and external barriers to attracting and retaining DOR field staff, particularly SVRC-QRPs?

How do staffing shortages impact the ability of DOR to provide quality services and good customer service?

* What is the impact of staffing shortages across different regions in California?
* Receive an update on SVRC-QRP salaries, vacancies, staffing shortages and impacts in high cost-of-living areas. The relatively low salaries for the SVRC-QRP position likely contributes to the difficulty of attracting and retaining qualified personnel.

Questions regarding telework:

* Could increasing virtual services help alleviate the counselor staffing shortage?
* Does working in the office have a financial burden on DOR staff?
* Does working in the office present physical and access barriers for DOR staff?
* Suggestion to increase telework in areas with high vacancy rates to mitigate staffing shortages.
* Suggestion to allow for increased remote work in areas where employees are sector-based.
* Suggestion to allow for increased remote work when a particular vacancy threshold in a region has been reached.

Questions regarding recruitment:

* Does DOR recruit by reaching out to VR Counseling programs at colleges and universities?
* What incentives are available to encourage people to pursue degrees in VR Counseling?
* Promote the mission of VR by conducting more outreach and highlighting consumer and VR Counselor success stories.
* Review Rehabilitation Services Administration technical assistance circulars for ideas.
* Suggestion to increase the pool of candidates - post SVRC-QRP jobs as available statewide, and then the incumbent can work from the DOR office that is located closest to them. Hire SVRC-QRP in any location in California to provide services statewide.
* Is there a shortage of SVRC-QRPs for DOR consumers who are Deaf and Hard of Hearing? How can this be alleviated?

What support and resources are available to SVRC-QRPs who may be feeling overwhelmed?

Suggestion to streamline administrative processes and improve service delivery through technology. Utilize AI and automation for routine approvals, such as transportation reimbursements and financial aid verification, could alleviate the burden on counselors. Many consumers struggle with digital literacy, limiting their ability to use existing online portals effectively. The development of training programs could improve consumers’ ability to navigate digital systems and upload required documentation.

Suggestion to create a virtual hub for certain services to assist in certain job functions to relieve some issues (*suggested by a member of the public).*