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DISABILITY INCLUSION
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INNOVATION

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

CSAVR National News Brief

April 2, 2023

CSAVR National News Brief is a regular series covering national news, research initiatives, webinars, conferences, and national advocacy activities of interest to member state VR agencies.

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NATIONAL NEWS

Cries of “Play ball” were heard at many major league ball parks this past week. Football is over for the season and basketball is wrapping up so bring on the baseball!

This past week the NCRE Board announced that the legal and financial liability they have incurred has exceeded their resources and they have begun the process to **dissolve the organization** formally. Their specific plans are not clear yet and updates will be provided as they move through the dissolution process.

We appreciate that the Board has been focused on the connectedness, energy, and influence of the rehabilitation counselor educator (RCE) community and current challenges—like funding to the state VR system, lack of qualified professionals to provide services to people with disabilities, minimal influence in legislative reauthorizations, and inequity in licensure and recognition for the VRC scope of practice. In keeping with this focus and while recognizing that individuals can choose to seek membership in any organization including multiple ones, the Board encouraged **members of the RCE community to seek (or continue) membership in the American Rehabilitation Counseling Association (ARCA)**, division of the American Counseling Association (ACA).

I am working with the Officers to stay on top of this matter. More will be coming as things continue to develop.

The State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED) has announced the launch of the [Mental Health Matters Online Dialogue Series \[epolicyworks.com\]](http://epolicyworks.com). We encourage you to consider participating in this USDOL-hosted online crowdsourcing event and to help spread the word to others. The information gathered in this dialogue series will be used to help inform the SEED Mental Health Matters Task Force and the broader policy frameworks that they will be developing. The dialogues close on April 7th. Your thoughtful ideas and comments related to mental health and employment through the lens of the vocational rehabilitation program will be very relevant to the conversation. USDOL published a news release about the series [here \[dol.gov\]](http://dol.gov).

This past week the Social Security and Medicare Trustees released their annual reports on the state of the trust funds. The Trustees project that Medicare’s Hospital Insurance trust fund will be insolvent by 2031, Social Security’s Old-Age

and Survivors Insurance trust fund will run out of reserves by 2033, and the theoretically combined Social Security trust funds will be insolvent by 2034. Upon insolvency, Social Security benefits will be reduced across the board by 20 percent under current law, while Medicare Hospital Insurance payments will be cut by 11 percent. Those reductions will grow to 27 percent and 19 percent, respectively.

We all need to continue to grow our computer skills. From 2000 to 2021, the number of executive secretaries and executive assistants plummeted 63 percent to 508,000 according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Another 20 percent decline is forecast by 2031 as apps manage calendars and AI programs draft messages.

Not great news for us Boomers. According to a *Washington Post* article an estimated 18 M middle-income Boomers will require care for moderate to severe needs but be unable to pay for it according to a Boston College analysis. Assisted living facilities start at \$60,000 a year on average, and costs go up as residents age and need more care.

CSAVR, ASPIRE AND WESTAT

CSAVR has been collaborating with Westat in a grant project funded by ODEP to support and expand [competitive integrated employment](#) for people with mental health conditions. In response to this need, ODEP has launched the Advancing State Policy Integration for Recovery and Employment (ASPIRE) initiative to provide selected states tailored and targeted technical assistance to integrate state policy, program, and funding infrastructures to expand evidence-based employment services for people with a disability resulting from mental health conditions. Particular emphasis is placed on expanding best practices such as the Individual Placement and Support (IPS) model of Supported Employment. Lessons from ASPIRE will help other states, federal agencies, and service providers adopt proven methods to increase gainful employment for this underserved population. Seven VR agencies are participating in state level discussions and planning as a part of this effort. If you wish to learn more about this effort, feel free to contact CSAVR contractor Ron Vessell at rwvessell@gmail.com.

CSAVR 2023 SPRING CONFERENCE AND RELATED EVENTS

Hopefully, you all enjoyed our first round of virtual sessions this past month. Thanks to all our presenters and YesLMS. The new updates to Zoom created a few technology hiccups and think we now have the bugs worked out for the sessions coming up this week on Monday, Wednesday, and Thursday from 1:30 to 3 pm ET each day. If you have not registered for these, there is still time so contact Theresa Hamrick at thamrick@csavr.org. Remember if you have registered for the Bethesda conference, you are automatically registered for these virtual sessions.

Wow, the conference is just a little over two weeks away. It is going to be great! We appreciated your patience as we worked through the hotel capacity and registration challenges. We think we have it all worked out so many thanks to all, especially Theresa.

Good news about Bethesda. The Metro station stop at the hotel is now open (Red Line). You may remember that due to construction of which there is still some that stop was closed for many months. We look forward to seeing you all soon.

RSA NEWS

Recently, RSA issued an email concerning an upcoming Grant Award Notification (GAN) administrative action and to respond to questions the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has received regarding implementation of the Build America, Buy America Act (BABAA) (Pub. L. 117-58). RSA will shortly issue new VR GAN supplements with the required BABAA language. The inclusion of the BABAA language will be the only change to the GAN. Per the usual process, VR agencies will be notified via G5 that a new GAN has been issued. The FFY 2022 VR carryover funds remain not subject to the BABAA requirements.

The notice addresses BABAA's application to home modification services and states, **"When the VR agency engages in home modification to provide rehabilitation technology services to eligible VR program participants under an approved IPE, RSA wants to make clear the VR agencies must satisfy BABAA requirements."** The notice also includes sample language for including BABAA requirements into your contracts.

RECRUITMENT & RETENTION

Recruitment and retention of staff continues to be a challenge for many agencies and several vendors. Hopefully, you were able to tune in to the webinar this past week where researchers from Penn. State shared their findings on this topic including effective strategies that various agencies are using to tackle these challenges. Thanks to our Operations & Personnel Committee co-chaired by Cynthia Speight (NC-B) and Kristen Mackey (AZ-C) for supporting the study and webinar.

Also, the Committee along with TAC QM staff worked with four state VR agencies; Oklahoma Combined, Iowa General, Arkansas DSB, and Connecticut General, on a pilot project to test a tool that agencies can use to learn more about their recruitment and retention issues and strategies and develop plans to address them. Some of the pilot agencies have completed their assessment and plans, while others are beginning to implement their individual plan.

The environmental scans or assessment found needs that closely matched the findings of Penn. State's recently released research presented in the webinar noted above. Generally, states are addressing issues in the recruitment process within their own agencies, which sometimes includes the DSA human resources office. Also, some assessments found a need for a dedicated focus on recruitment and were addressed by designating staff for the recruitment effort. Pay, education requirements and work location policies are being addressed in some states. Regarding retention, in addition to pay schedules in a couple of the states, the agencies are working on post pandemic issues through employee engagement surveys, organization change training, and perhaps implementing stay interviews later in the year. CSAVR QM contractor Ron Vessell worked on the project with John Walsh, Melissa Diehl and others. If you are interested in learning more about it, please contact them. We are certain they would be glad to talk with you.

NENA NEWS

Planning for the 13th Annual NENA Training Conference is underway and they are seeking presenters. This year's conference will be held in Baltimore, Maryland and will run from September 12th-14th, 2023.

NENA welcomes presentation proposals for the 2023 conference. Please see additional information listed here, [2023 Proposal Submission Guidelines](#), prior to

submitting your proposal. Proposal should be received by April 14, 2023 to be considered.

REPORTS, TRAINING, NEWSLETTERS AND CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES

Understanding persons with disabilities' reasons for not seeking employment. *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin (RCB)*. Volume 66(1), Pgs. 3-12. NARIC Accession Number: J90458.

New to the NARIC collection, this NIDILRR-funded study identified the reasons reported by people living with disabilities in the United States for not seeking employment, categorized by demographic, socioeconomic, and disability characteristics. Using data from the 2015 Kessler Foundation National Employment and Disability Survey (KFNEDS), the authors identified nine meaningful reasons why people with disabilities may not seek employment. Overall, medical conditions, functional limitations, or their disability were more likely to be reported as reasons for not seeking work, rather than situational reasons associated with workplace engagement such as “lack of job opportunities.” The authors noted variability in reasons reported by respondents by sex, race/ethnicity, age, household income, and disability. These findings provide an understanding of diverse reasons for not seeking employment, which can inform programs and policies that promote labor force participation of people with disabilities. [Access the full abstract and ordering information in REHABDATA.](#)

The [Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)](#) will host a webinar series, [Improving and Expanding Community Living Options for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(IDD\)](#), on community-based housing options for people with IDD. The webinars will explore barriers people with IDD face in securing housing; highlight the limited range of housing options; and feature innovative strategies, resources, partners, and funding streams to help create more housing options for people with IDD. The first session, Community Living Housing Options for People with IDD: Perspective on Barriers and Solutions, aired March 29th, 3 – 4:15 pm.

Join the Committee for a Responsible Federal budget on **Tuesday, April 4 at 2:00pm** for a virtual event that will explore the Social Security and Medicare trust funds' status and hear from a panel of policy experts on potential policy options to extend their solvency. The panelists will take audience questions as well. **Tuesday, April 4, 2023 at 2:00pm EDT on Zoom**

On April 6th from 2 to 3:30 PST, 4 to 5:30 CDT, and 5 to 6:30 ET the **California Transition Alliance** (non-profit organization of youth-serving professionals dedicated to helping youth make positive transitions to adult life) in collaboration with the **California Department of Rehabilitation** and the **National Organization of Nurses with Disabilities** will present an educational roundtable webinar on career development. ASL and CART captions will be provided. If interested go to the following link to register:https://us06web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_TLLSgeGDSHqOfQStXDqkkA

The [Great Lakes ADA Regional Center](#) will host a webinar, [Ask an ADA Professional Questions RE: Reasonable Modification of Policies, Practices, and Procedures in Health Care Settings](#), April 12th, 2 – 3 pm ET. Presenters will discuss the obligation of health care facilities covered under the ADA to provide necessary reasonable modifications to patients with disabilities. Registration is free and required. Continuing education credits are available upon request.

The Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth ([CAPE-Youth](#)) is holding its third convening of the **National Working Group on Youth Transitions** taking place **June 22-23** at the **Chicago Marriott Downtown Magnificent Mile**. Please register [here](#) by **April 28** to confirm your participation. CAPE-Youth will send participants a detailed agenda before the event. If you have any questions, **please contact Abeer Sikder by email at asikder@csg.org or by phone at (859) 244-8166.**

Starting April 12th and into May TransCen is offering a three part webinar series on supporting neurodiverse students. You should have received a flyer concerning this series with registration information this past week.

The [Rehabilitation Research and Training Center \(RRTC\) on Community Living and Participation](#) published a journal edition, [Frontline Initiative: Direct Support Professionals \(DSPs\) Supporting People's Employment](#). This edition of Frontline Initiative explores the history, challenges, and opportunities in supported employment for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities.

The [Research and Training Center on Home and Community-Based Services \(HCBS\) Outcome Measurement](#) is conducting [interviews with people with](#)

[disabilities about their experiences with HCBS and the important areas of their lives \(e.g., social connectedness, meaningful activities\)](#). Participants must be at least 18 years old, have a disability, and receive services or supports for their disability. For information or to volunteer, contact Matt Roberts at robe0290@umn.edu.

The NIDILRR-funded project [Increasing Adaptive Babycare Resources and Intervention Supports with Parents and Caregivers with Physical or Vision Disabilities](#) is conducting surveys about assessments and interventions for parents and caregivers with physical or visual disabilities. Separate surveys are available for [individuals with disabilities who are parents of children aged 5 and younger](#), and for [occupational therapists](#) and [assistive technologists/rehabilitation engineers](#) who have provided assessment or intervention services for parents. Knowledge gained from these surveys will be used to enhance an existing web-based resource on services and equipment to support parenting and improve online resources and other educational materials for professionals. Additional information and eligibility criteria are available from the survey websites.

The [Southeast ADA Regional Center](#) posted the latest episode of the ADA Live! Podcast, [Living Well with Kidney Disease](#). Presenters discussed kidney disease and other related health conditions, such as high blood pressure and diabetes, which can be disabilities and can affect an individual's rights under the ADA.

The [Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Home and Community-Based Services Person-Centered Outcomes and Measurements](#) seeks [people with disabilities who use Medicaid-funded home and community-based services \(HCBS\) to test a survey to measure person-centered outcomes](#). Participation is open to people with all disability types. Interested individuals must complete the screening questionnaire. Eligible participants will be contacted for an interview to test whether the survey questions are clear and understandable to all. Participants who complete a 90-minute interview will receive a \$50 gift card for their time. For more information, contact John Abbate at jabbate@sralab.org or 312/238-2802.

The [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Autism and Developmental Disabilities Monitoring \(ADDM\)](#) published the [2023 Community Report on Autism](#), with new key findings about the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder (ASD)

and the need for timely and equitable access to early identification and support services. Data collected by the ADDM Network show that ASD continues to increase, with 1 in 36 8-year-old children identified with ASD in 2020, up from 1 in 44 in 2018. The community report includes a snapshot of key findings on ASD, spotlight on patterns in racial and ethnic differences in ASD identification, and information about the ADDM Network.

COVID NEWS

Three years after the COVID-19 pandemic wiped out millions of jobs, a historic labor market recovery continues to pull in workers from all corners of the economy and workers with disabilities are benefiting. are among the biggest beneficiaries. At 7.3% last month, the [unemployment rate among disabled workers](#) is down from 8.8% a year ago. However, that figure remains higher than both the national unemployment rate of 3.6% for all workers and the 3.7% rate among workers without disabilities. Cheung, Brian, and J.J. McCorvey. “[Disabled Workforce Expands Thanks to the Job Boom — and Long Covid](#).” NBC News

[A study](#) by The Brookings Institution found that as many as [683,000 workers may have had to leave the labor force](#) due to long Covid as of October 2022. Pandemic issues and budget cuts at the Social Security Administration have resulted in the lowest staffing levels in 25 years, according to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. This has contributed to a long Covid cases backlog. Stephens, Morgan. “[Long Covid Disabled Them. Then They Met a ‘Broken’ Social Security Disability Process.](#)” CNN

RECENT ARTICLES

Boyens, Chantel, and Jack Smalligan. “[Raising the Alarm on the Unintended Consequences of Social Security’s Return to Work Policies.](#)” Social Security Advisory Board, pp. 1–28.

Bromley, Lauren E., Kara A. Hirano, and Lauren E. Lindstrom. “[Still Stuck: An Examination of the Early Paid Employment Experiences of Young Women With Disabilities.](#)” *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, online ahead of print.

Farrants, Kristin, Jenny Head, and Kristina Alexanderson. "[Trends in Associations Between Sickness Absence Before the Age of 65 and Being in Paid Work After the Age of 65: Prospective Study of Three Total Population Cohorts.](#)" *Journal of Aging & Social Policy*, vol. 35, no. 2, 2023, pp. 197–220.

Newman, Lynn A., Audrey A. Trainor, and Lindsay Romano. "[Factors Related to Accessing Postsecondary School Supports by English Learners With Disabilities.](#)" *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, online ahead of print.

Worm, M.S., J.B. Valentin, S.P. Johnsen, J.F. Nielsen, and S.W. Svendsen. "[Vocational/Educational Prognosis in Adolescents and Young Adults with Acquired Brain Injury: A Nationwide Cohort Study](#)" *Brain Injury*, vol. 37, no. 3, 2023, pp. 171–178.

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