



ADVANCING
DISABILITY INCLUSION
& WORKFORCE
INNOVATION

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

CSAVR National News Brief

April 12, 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.

ANNOUNCEMENTS:

We are looking forward to seeing many of you in Bethesda in a few days. Safe travels to all. Local weather is warm for Friday travelers, rainy through Monday. Might want to throw in an umbrella or light jacket 😊 (channeling my mother's spirit).

We had several items we felt were time sensitive that surfaced this week – and rather than wait until after conference we decided to send out this abbreviated version of the CSAVR National News Brief.

We will return to our weekly schedule post conference.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. [NATIONAL NEWS](#)
 2. [CSAVR, ASPIRE AND WESTAT](#)
 3. [RSA AND OSEP NEWS](#)
 4. [TAC NEWS](#)
 5. [REPORTS, TRAININGS, NEWSLETTERS, AND CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES](#)
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NATIONAL NEWS

Throughout April, organizations in the US and around the world are celebrating [Autism Awareness Month](#) or [Autism Acceptance Month](#). As the White House's proclamation for [World Autism Day](#) noted, there is no one way to be autistic - each individual with autism experiences it differently and neurodiversity should be celebrated in all its forms. The term [neurodiversity](#) emerged in the 1990s, referring to diversity in the way we think, learn, and behave. It is often used in the context of autism, as well as some neurological and developmental disabilities such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder and learning disabilities. In a recent blog post, we took a look at [current NIDILRR-funded research and development supporting people with autism](#), and found it reflects the diversity of the autism community itself.

Tidbits:

- Forty-eight percent of US workers say they use all their vacation days according to a new survey by the Pew research Center. Those who do not say it is because they do not need it or they worry about falling behind at work or burdening their co-workers. *Bloomberg*
- A survey of 2,067 college students and recent graduates found that 16% hope to work for Google. The next most attractive job was the federal government at 6% followed by Apple at 5%, and Disney at 2.2%. *Axios*
- The number of students at community colleges has fallen 37% since 2010, or by nearly 2.6 million. High school students taking dual-enrollment courses now make up nearly a fifth of community college enrollment. *Associated Press*.

CSAVR, ASPIRE AND WESTAT

This coming week is a busy one for VR not only with CSAVR and NCSAB conferences and the ODEP ASPIRE Orientation Development meeting at the end of the week. I know some of you such as OH and VT will have staff presenting. RSA will be represented and so will CSAVR by our WESTAT contractor Ron Vessell.

RSA & OSEP NEWS

RSA has announced the 60-day comment period for the Grant Reallotment Form (RSA-692) (OMB Control Number: 1820-0692) which began on March 30, 2023, and concludes on May 30, 2023. It is an opportunity to comment on the proposed information collection request (ICR). State VR agencies and other stakeholders may submit public comment related to the proposed ICR through the [Federal Register Notice](#). The docket number is ED-2023-SCC-0054. A link to the text of the announcement in the Federal Register is included below.

<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/FR-2023-03-31/pdf/2023-06625.pdf>

Comments are due **May 30, 2023** through [regulations.gov](https://www.regulations.gov).

On April 5th RSA released a notice inviting applications for the Disability Innovation Fund, Pathways to Partnerships Innovative Model Demonstration Project (Pathways to Partnerships), Assistance Listing Number 84.421E. The application deadline is June 5, 2023. An estimated \$224 million is available to fund multiple innovative model demonstration projects administered through partnerships among state vocational rehabilitation agencies, state or local education agencies, and centers for independent living focused on the creation of systemic approaches to improve access to pre-employment transition services for children and youth with disabilities.

Key Info: **RSA.ED.GOV** (link to the Federal Register Notice and additional information)

<https://rsa.ed.gov/about/programs/disability-innovation-fund-pathways-to-partnerships>

Pre-application meeting on **Tuesday, April 25, 2023, at 2:00 PM ET** to respond to questions.

The teleconference information, including the 84.421E pre-application meeting summary of the questions and answers, will be available at <https://ncrtm.ed.gov/grant-info> within six business days after the pre-application meeting.

GRANTS.GOV (link to application package)

<https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=347303>

Send questions to 84.421E@ed.gov in advance of the pre-application meeting.

At first glance it might make meeting Pre-ETS set aside harder. However, with little creativity might be able to use the dollars for purposes that have benefit to customers in addition to students with disabilities. For example:

- Could use it to test new service delivery methods such as rapid engagement strategies or new AI applications such as SARA and then apply successful strategies to other customers,
- Calls for project website so might be able build it in a way that modernizes antiquated systems for better outreach not only to youth as well as other customers.
- Could fund positions in schools and shift any staff there to other duties or just reduce staff burden.

Seems like there may be several possibilities.

The Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) has announced an upcoming kickoff event for the transition initiative, **Expect, Engage, Empower: Successful Transitions for All**, virtually on **May 10, 2023, from 1:00 – 2:30 pm ET!**

The Expect, Engage, Empower initiative is an opportunity to bring together various stakeholders to explore potential strategies and innovative approaches to address transition for children and youth with disabilities. [Register Here](#)

TAC NEWS

VRTAC-QM Manager Minute: See how persistence pays off with employee increase - Scott Dennis Maryland Combined

Scott Dennis, Assistant Superintendent of the Maryland Division of Rehabilitative Services (DORS), joins Carol Pankow in the VRTAC-QM Studio and tells us about how Maryland DORS increased recruitment and decreased resignations by raising salaries to compete in the regional job market. Learn how they opened the door and proved the case. [Listen Here](#)

On 4/20/23, at 12 Central, 1 Eastern VRTAC-QE will present its April webinar *Increasing Employment Outcomes Through Partnership Plus!* They will share information about statewide best practices, including resources for strengthening your relationship with your statewide Partnership Plus coordinator and local Employment Networks. Register here: <https://tacqe.com/trainings/partnership-plus-webinar/>

VRTAC-QM has added a new team member, **Katie Marchesano**! She likes to dig into regulations and brings a strong professional background in key critical areas:

- Grants management
- Accounting operational efficiency
- Contract management
- Technical writing
- Internal control implementation and effectiveness
- Financial analysis.
- Financial systems automation

Welcome, Katie!

REPORTS, TRAINING, NEWSLETTERS AND CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES

The [Mid-Atlantic ADA Regional Center](#) (90DPAD0008) will host a webinar, [Enhancing Disability Inclusion and Awareness in Hospitality](#), April 19th, 2 – 3 pm ET. Presenters will explore best practices for including people with disabilities in the hospitality sector. Presenters will share tools and resources to promote inclusive venues and will offer guidance to help improve disability awareness, with the ultimate goal of enhancing experiences for people with and without disabilities. Registration is free and required.

The [Rehabilitation Research and Training on Employment Policy: Center For Disability-Inclusive Employment Policy Research \(DEIP RRTC\)](#) (90RTEM0006) published a brief, [Telework After COVID: Challenges and Opportunities for Workers with Disabilities](#), outlining the benefits and drawbacks of remote work for people with disabilities. The brief blends findings from three DEIP RRTC studies which suggest that expanded acceptance of telework can foster financial stability for people with disabilities. The findings also suggest prospective employees with disabilities experience more favorable employment outcomes when labor markets are competitive.

[NIDILRR/ACL \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) will host a webinar, [NIDILRR's 2024-2028 Long-Range Plan: Themes and Priorities](#), April 19th, 2 – 2:45 pm ET. In 2022, NIDILRR initiated the development of its new 2024-2028 Long-Range Plan (LRP), which will outline its guiding principles, priorities, and focus areas for the next five years. NIDILRR obtained comments and input from the field. Presenters will discuss the feedback received and will present the themes and priorities for the 2024-2028 LRP. Registration is free and required. ASL interpreting and CART will be provided.

The [Learning and Working During the Transition to Adulthood Rehabilitation Research and Training Center \(Transitions ACR\)](#) (90RTEM0005) posted the latest episode of the Supporting Transition Aged Youth (STAY) Tuned podcast, [Is there anybody out there? The isolation of adulthood](#). Hosts Emily and Mei, discuss their struggles in creating healthy routines in a life where screens dominate their day and the sometimes lonely reality of post-grad life. The hosts shared some of their thoughts on making this podcast and the challenges of using social media for their job.

The NIDILRR-funded project [Being Needed: Building Social Connections that Matter to Reduce Social Isolation and Loneliness](#) (90DPCP0011) is conducting [interviews with people with serious mental health conditions about their experiences in mattering to others](#). Participants will answer questions about times they felt like they mattered, or perhaps times when they felt like they didn't matter, during a 10-minute interview. Participants must be over 18 years old and have a mental health condition. To volunteer, complete the [interest form](#). Eligible participants will be contacted to schedule a time for the interview.