



ADVANCING
DISABILITY INCLUSION
& WORKFORCE
INNOVATION

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

CSAVR National News Brief

May 7, 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.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. [DISABILITY INNOVATION FUND – PATHWAYS TO PARTNERSHIPS](#)
2. [NATIONAL NEWS](#)
3. [2023 SPRING CONFERENCE](#)
4. [CSAVR MAY MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP CALL](#)
5. [RSA AND OSERS NEWS](#)
6. [SSA UPDATE](#)
7. [TAC NEWS](#)
8. [REPORTS, TRAININGS, NEWSLETTERS AND CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES](#)
9. [COVID NEWS](#)
10. [RECENT ARTICLES](#)

DISABILITY INNOVATION FUND – PATHWAYS TO PARTNERSHIPS

Typically, our first topic of our News Brief is ***National News***. This week it has been preempted by a brief discussion of the DIF initiative. Bottom line up front - There seem to be a lot of possibilities. We do know for many the burden of application and reporting are onerous. *And because the potential for innovation is so great, CSAVR staff are here to help with ideas, editing, checking, connect you with possible grant writers or evaluators, etc.* Here is more information:

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.

We are starting to hear a lot of potential partners, CILs, SEAs, and LEAs, are eager to partner with you on this opportunity. We know a couple have started their application process and others are in the pondering stage. Given the parameters of this DIF, there may be an opportunity to let others help carry the load. We know of one SVRA that is working with CIL and a university to do the heavy lifting. Another is working with an outside firm. We also know many Local and State Educational Agencies have grant writers whose talents could possibly be harnessed here.

At first glance it might make meeting Pre-ETS set aside harder. However, with little creativity SVRA's 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 websites 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.
- Could use the dollars to fill budget holes in terms of services to youth and students and shift some of dollars currently being spent there to other customers.
- Money always helps build partnerships so could be great way to further relations with SEAs, LEAs, and CILs.
- Have SEAs, LEAs and CILs help you use dollars to enhance their services to students and youth with disabilities and in the end can benefit other customers.
- Think about what can be done in terms of working with businesses like funding more internship and apprenticeship programs.

Remember you have five years to spend the dollars and there is no match or MOE to worry about!

There is a [new video](#) about the [Disability Innovation Fund, Pathways to Partnerships Innovative Model Demonstration Project](#) (Pathways to Partnerships), which shares the history of the DIF program, goals of the Pathways to Partnerships project, and messages from key Federal change agents at the U.S. Department of Education and Administration for Community Living ([ACL](#)) leadership about this exciting funding opportunity. A reminder that applications for this grant opportunity are due June 5th. If CSAVR can help you in any way in preparing your application, please get in touch with us.

Also, RSA is seeking peer reviewers for this grant competition. **If interested, you are strongly encouraged to submit your application by Friday, May 12th.**

NATIONAL NEWS

Tidbits:

The number of available US jobs dropped below 10 million in February for the first time in nearly two years. Job openings still far outnumber the 5.9 million or more unemployed seeking work. *The Wall Street Journal*

The share of prime age Americans (25 to 54) who are part of the workforce is now higher than it was before the pandemic: 83.1 percent compared with 83.0 percent in February 2020. The overall participation rate is down (62.6 percent from 63.3 percent in February 2020) and this is attributed to the Baby boomer generation retiring. *Axios*

A Pew research report found that 62 percent of Americans think AI will have a major impact on workers in general. However, only 28 percent think they will be affected personally. *Mashable*

2023 SPRING CONFERENCE

Another one is in the books and what a great one it was! Of the 78 VR agencies, all but a handful were represented. I do want to thank the planning committee, the TACs NCSAB, and RSA for all their work. Thanks too to the great presenters who shared their experiences, ideas, and strategies with us. Finally, thanks to the CSAVR team for all their work.

Now let's get ready for our fall conference in Savannah, Georgia
From October 28th through November 1st. Stay tuned for more information.

Speaking of our next conference, if you registered for the conference, you should have received a link to an evaluation for the spring conference. We need your input as we begin

planning for the fall. If you have not done so already, please take about five minutes to open the link to the evaluation survey and complete it. The evaluation will be open until May 12th. Thanks for your help and input.

CSAVR MAY MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP CALL

I want to again thank our two presenters for joining us for the call this past week. I am sorry that we ran short on time. You know how to reach Joe Xavier and he and his team are more than willing to answer any questions or just talk with you more about what they are doing. The same goes for the folks from the Shepherd Center. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have thought of something else you wish to know.

RSA & OSERS NEWS

On April 24, 2023 RSA published a Federal Register notice, [Federal Register](#), proposing to extend with revisions the Vocational Rehabilitation Financial Report (RSA-17) for an additional three-year period. If the RSA-17 revision is approved, VR agencies will collect and report data under this collection for grant awards issued in Federal fiscal years 2024 through 2026. Comments on this proposal can be submitted through June 23rd at [regulations.gov](#).

There has been a new TAC issued by RS, [RSA-TAC-23-02, Federal Requirements Governing the Composition and Membership of, and Appointments to, the State Rehabilitation Councils](#). Through this TAC 23-02, RSA reissues the guidance from TAC 12-01, addresses a technical change related to the membership of the representative of the American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services projects, and clarifies the appointment of, and term limits for, the director of VR agencies.

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](#)

As previously shared, RSA has requested comments on the Grant Reallotment Form (RSA-692). [Here is a link](#) to the text of the announcement in the Federal Register. Comments are due **May 30, 2023** through [regulations.gov](#).

SSA UPDATE

In early April, SSA issued to Employment Networks information regarding Ticketholder Engagement from tickettework@subscriptions.ssa.gov: Among other items, it clarifies the contact requirements for Ticketholders in both the Initial Job Acquisition Phase and the Ongoing Support Phase of a Ticketholder's progression toward their career goals as well as the requirements for a successful contact with a Ticketholder as well as the maximum length of time a Ticket may remain in assignment status without successful contact.

Also, in April SSA issued to Ens an update regarding Annual Service and Support Reviews from tickettework@subscriptions.ssa.gov. The update addresses how SSA conducts Service and Support Reviews. Email programintegrity@yourtickettework.ssa.gov with any questions.

TAC NEWS

The **VRTAC-QE** will hold its May webinar on 5/18/23, at 12 pm Central, 1 pm Eastern. The topic is: **Pathway to Trauma-Informed Rehabilitation Counseling**

Presented by Jaeyoung Kim - UW Madison

This webinar provides information on how trauma can significantly impact individuals' work-related psychosocial functioning, and service engagement, particularly for people with disabilities. Additionally, the presentation will provide vocational rehabilitation counselors with practical strategies for implementing a trauma-informed approach in their daily practice.

Below is the registration link:

<https://tacqe.com/trainings/trauma-informed-rehabilitation-counseling>

The **VRTAC-QM** recently launched the **Fiscal Management Community of Practice (CoP)** to support VR professionals in key fiscal decisions throughout the VR grant life cycle. Given the complexity of the fiscal requirements in the VR program, SVRAs benefit from a well-organized management strategy that brings the organization's activities and strategic goals together. Success is driven by a combined understanding of the fiscal requirements and applications unique to the organization, also considering state-specific requirements. Examples of topics include:

- Fiscal forecasting and strategies.
- Reallotment.
- Period of performance.
- End-of-fiscal-year requirements.

The CoP is designed to be an interactive experience where members can network, share best practices, and learn from one another. Leadership members across organizational units will come together monthly to learn about the fiscal requirements in alignment with the grant life cycle timeline. The group will discuss strategies for improved decision-making that lead to effective program and funds management.

They look forward to a rich discussion around the abovementioned fiscal topics and more. Join the COP on the following dates.

May 18, 2 pm EST

June 22, 2 pm EST

July 13, 3 pm EST

Aug 3, 2 pm EST

Aug 31, 2 pm EST

Oct 12, 3 pm EST

Nov 9, 3 pm EST

Dec 14, 3 pm EST

Topics for each date will be developed and posted on the Fiscal Management Community of Practice website.

Please calendar yourselves for these meetings and use this link.

<https://SDSU.zoom.us/j/81544482579>

They have some homework to help you prepare for this discussion. Please gather the fiscal reports you use to help make decisions-attrition rates, historical trends for reallocation, match, moe, and Pre-ets, and spend patterns over the year. They will discuss this and more. If you have any questions before the meeting, please send them to:

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aflanagan@sdsu.edu

camerritt@sdsu.edu

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REPORTS, TRAINING, NEWSLETTERS AND CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES

The Center for Advancing Policy on Employment for Youth ([CAPE-Youth](#)) is convening in Chicago on June 22 and 23 a working group of state policymakers and subject matter experts to inform their work. Programming in Chicago will include panel sessions on promoting STEM

career pathways, addressing mental health needs for underserved communities, and utilizing federal funds for workforce development. I hope to attend and I know several of you have been invited to serve on panels so looking forward to this opportunity to build a closer working relationship between VR and CAPE-Youth.

The [Great Lakes ADA Regional Center](#) (90DPAD0012) will host a webinar, [Mental Health First Aid in the Workplace](#), May 16th, 2 – 3:30 pm ET to introduce the Mental Health First Aid (MHFA) course and how it can prepare participants to manage mental health challenges in oneself and others, from the early signs and symptoms to crises like panic attacks, overdose, and thoughts of suicide. Registration is free and required. Continuing education credits are available upon request.

The [Great Plains ADA Regional Center](#) (90DPAD0007) and the [ADA National Network](#) (90DPAD0004) will host the [2023 National ADA Virtual Symposium](#), June 12th – 14th, 10:30 am – 6:30 pm ET offering 36 sessions covering all areas of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) presented by nationally recognized experts. The program includes sessions on accessible design education; diversity, equity, and inclusion; access in education and healthcare; and much more. Registration is required by June 4th for individual days or the full symposium and there are related fees.

The Summit Group and HireAbility Vermont, in cooperation with the VRTAC-QM, have issued a Call for Presentation Proposals for the 14th Summit Conference on Performance Management in VR which is scheduled for August 28-30, 2023 in Burlington, VT. The agenda and registration/hotel information will follow the call for proposals and in later conference announcements. The presentation proposals are due May 10th. **Use the below Link to submit your proposal:**

https://ubgse.iad1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_9T5MzwtRCw1KTbw

Starting May 11th SVRI is offering their CRC Exam Preparation Workshop continues to be popular for individuals seeking their CRCC certification. This unique opportunity prepares the applicant for the CRC exam by providing an overview of exam content, a facilitator to offer guidance, test-taking practice using tests similar to the CRC exam, and text messages for encouragement and preparation. [Learn More](#)

The [Federal Emergency Management Agency \(FEMA\)](#) will host a [series of virtual listening sessions on national resilience](#) on several dates in May and June as part of an effort to create guidance and resources to promote a common understanding of resilience; incorporate the relationship between stressors and shocks; address the critical roles of all stakeholders; and inspire fresh, forward-looking, and people-centered planning approaches to move the needle on increasing community and national resilience. Registration is free and required for each session, and seating is limited.

The [Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Home and Community-Based Services \(HCBS\) Person-Centered Outcomes and Measurements](#) (90RTGE0004) published a guide, [How Disability Models Affect Person-Centeredness in Home and Community-Based Services](#), which is a resource for people with disabilities, their families, and service professionals that provides key definitions, background, and context around person-centeredness and HCBS. Topics include how different models of disability impact how people with disabilities are viewed; key organizations involved in providing, paying for, and shaping how HCBS are offered; and why person-centered supports are important, among others. The guide is based on the in-depth policy brief [The Influence of Disability Models on Person-Centeredness in Home and Community-Based Services](#).

[Benefits.gov](#) published an article, [An Overview of Disability Resources](#), which highlights healthcare benefits, disability insurance, and where to find other resources on [Benefits.gov](#). The article discusses Parts A, B, and D of Medicare and how Medicare differs from Medicaid. It also provides information on Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) and discusses how use the [Benefit Finder](#) questionnaire to find other potential benefit programs.

The [Learning and Working During the Transition to Adulthood Rehabilitation Research and Training Center \(Transitions ACR\)](#) (90RTEM0005) has published a tipsheet, [My "Must Have" Papers: Managing the Paperwork of Adulthood](#), which explains what types of documents a person might need in everyday adult life, such as identification, medical and employment records, and Social Security cards.

COVID NEWS

Catherine Ipsen, PhD, and Andrew Myers from the NIDILRR-funded [Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Place-Based Solutions to Rural Community Participation, Health, and Employment](#) (90RTCP0002), and Andrew Houtenville, PhD, principal investigator for the [Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics \(StatsRRTC\)](#) (90RTGE0001), will present a webinar, [How Did the COVID-19 Recession Impact People with Disabilities in Rural America?](#), May 17th, 12 – 1 pm ET. The session will cover the impact of the pandemic on employment outcomes for people with disabilities in rural and urban areas over time, including rates of telework, business closures, and the challenges of finding work and getting paid. Registration is free and required.

RECENT ARTICLES

Abrams, Leah, Kevin Friedman, and Nicole Maestas. "[The Role of Physical and Cognitive/Emotional Functioning in the Associations Between Common Health Conditions and Working.](#)" *Social Science & Medicine*, vol. 322, 2023, p. 115816.

Brongers, Kor A., Tialda Hoekstra, Loes Wilming, Roy E. Stewart, Pepijn D.D.M. Roelofs, and Sandra Brouwer. “[Comprehensive Approach to Reintegration of Disability Benefit Recipients with Multiple Problems \(CARm\) into the Labour Market: Results of a Randomized Controlled Trial.](#)” *Disability and Rehabilitation*, vol. 45, no. 9, 2023, pp. 1498-1507.

Carter, Erik W., Emily R. Lanchak, Laura Guest, Elise D. McMillan, Julie L. Taylor, and Hannah Rowley. “[‘More Than a Paycheck’: Parent Perspectives on Meaningful Work for Individuals with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities.](#)” *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2023, pp. 145-157.

Channell, Marie M., Susan J. Loveall, and Meghan M. Burke. “[Exploring Caregiver Perceptions of Post-High School Employment Experiences Among Young Adults with Down Syndrome.](#)” *Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities*, vol. 61, no. 2, 2023, pp. 158-171.

Dolan, Vera L.B. “[‘...But if You Tell Anyone, I’ll Deny We Ever Met:’ The Experiences of Academics with Invisible Disabilities in the Neoliberal University.](#)” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, vol. 36, no. 4, 2023, pp. 689-706.

Lu, Junfei, Dana Brickham, Brian J. Jaeger, and Chu - Ling Lo. “[Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor Burnout Profiles and Mindfulness.](#)” *Journal of Counseling & Development*, vol. 101, no. 2, 2023, pp. 204-213.

Ruggs, Enrica N., and Alyssa K. McGonagle. “[Can Brief Video Trainings Reduce Bias and Improve Knowledge and Attitudes Toward Applicants with Disabilities?](#)” *Journal of Business and Psychology*, vol. 38, 2023, pp. 305-326.

Stratton, Elizabeth, Nick Glozier, Alix Woolard, Vicki Gibbs, Eleni A. Demetriou, Kelsie A. Boulton, Ian Hickie, et al. “[Understanding the Vocational Functioning of Autistic Employees: The Role of Disability and Mental Health.](#)” *Disability and Rehabilitation*, vol. 45, no. 9, 2023, pp. 1508-1516.