



ADVANCING  
DISABILITY INCLUSION  
& WORKFORCE  
INNOVATION

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

## CSAVR National News Brief

September 17, 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

The big event has arrived! This coming week have 170+ people attending the NET Summit, not counting our business/federal partners. Thank you for your response and thanks to our team -- - Kathy, Tonia, Theresa and Inger --- for the work to support the recruit and confirm presenters, registration, hotel accommodations, agenda, etc. Thanks also to Michael MacKillop and Toni Wolfe, the Chairs of the Careers and Business Relations Committee who have worked with the team to put this great event together.

In late August SSA proposed a new rule to alter benefit payments for those who receive what's known as "in-kind support and maintenance" in the form of a rental subsidy. Under current rules, SSI benefits are reduced if a person is paying rent or shelter expenses that are lower than the current market value, or what they would pay on the open market. Now, the agency wants to update its rules to treat beneficiaries nationwide more equitably. SSA estimates that about 41,000 current SSI beneficiaries would see their monthly payments rise under the rule change by an average of \$128 per month. And, some 14,000 individuals who don't receive SSI now would be able to qualify for the program as a result of the update.

Some interesting tidbits:

- Between the pre-pandemic month of January 2020 and July 2023, the immigrant labor force grew by 9.5%, compared with a 1.5% growth rate in the US born workforce. *Axios*
- Travel is on a pace to become a \$15.5 trillion industry – accounting for more than 11.6% of the global economy \_\_ by 2023, according to the World Travel & tourism Council. The industry will employ up to 430 million people accounting for roughly 1 of every 9 jobs globally. *Bloomberg*
- For the Starbucks drinkers. Starbucks plans to open a coffee shop in China every nine hours to reach 9,000 locations across the country by 2025. *Financial Times*
- Working from the "gym office" seems to be growing as some gyms are offering keyboard warriors who want to work close to where they work out extra desks, offices, and outlets. In addition to co-working spaces and privacy booths some gyms are even offering conference room space. *The Wall Street Journal*
- Just for fun. For those of us who are young at heart, toys for adults are on the rise. A July survey by the Toy Association found that 41% of parents have bought toys for themselves in the past 12 months and 43% plan on doing so this year. Toymakers are reportedly banking on a retro toy craze among adults after the success of movies like *Barbie* and *Transformers*. More "kidults – also known as juveniles and adultescents" are embracing their inner child. McDonald's has introduced Happy Meals for adults. Stay tuned for updated versions of the *Game of Life* and *Trivial Pursuit*.

## **PATHWAYS TO PARTNERSHIPS DIF GRANTS ANNOUNCED**

This past Friday RSA announced it will fund 20 model demonstration projects (DIFs) focused on improving economic self-sufficiency for children and youth with disabilities by creating systemic approaches to enhance post-school outcomes.

The nearly \$199 million in funding for the [Pathways to Partnerships \[lnks.gd\]](#) innovative model demonstration project supports collaborative partnerships between state vocational rehabilitation agencies, state and local educational agencies, and CILs.

Congratulations to the following states on receipt of these grants: PA, AR, LA, IL, CT, OK, WY, NM, CO, AK, SC, NJ, VT, KY, MD, NV, GA, ME, ID, KS. Of the 20 grants eight are going to VR agencies as the lead and the remaining 12 are going to state education agencies.

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

## **CSAVR BUSINESS**

Last week the CSAVR Careers and Business Engagement Committee in partnership with the Operations and Personnel Committee working with Dr. Levine and her team at Iowa State reached out to you asking each agency to complete a survey so we can gain an understanding of the qualifications and duties that your agencies have in place for your Business Relations Specialists (BRSs), or the equivalent title you utilize at your agency. We ask that your agency complete the survey by going to the link in the message and provide the BRS position description(s) used by your agency. The information will be archived and made available to the VR agencies.

The survey should take about 20 minutes or less to complete. With many of the questions there are drop down boxes with potential answers that can be accessed by clicking the arrow next to the question. **Please only send one response per agency.**

Thanks to those who have already completed and submitted the survey and position descriptions. We are hoping for 78 responses!

## **REALLOTMENT**

The VR and SE reallocation results are public. You guessed it. Congressional Offices and others are now knocking on CSAVR's door to again ask why these large amounts of dollars are continuing to fall out.

**If your agency relinquished dollars, we are always looking to stay on top of new and emerging "whys". Please keep Tonia [Tferguson@csavr.org](mailto:Tferguson@csavr.org) and John [JConnelly@csavr.org](mailto:JConnelly@csavr.org) in the loop.** Many thanks to those who have already responded.

**Additionally, if you have not already, you may wish to share the “whys” with members of your Congressional delegation along with ideas of what they can do to help you reverse the trend for the future.**

### **CSAVR 2023 FALL CONFERENCE**

The registration page for the Fall Conference which will be in Savannah, Georgia from October 28<sup>th</sup> to November 1<sup>st</sup> is up and running. Register now! Don't forget about the Leadership Forum on Sunday and the Directors' Forum on Saturday. Agendas for the Forums will be up soon.

We had a good response to our Call for Proposals for the conference and hope to soon announce the ones selected to be on the conference agenda. Thank you for applying or encouraging others to apply. We have some great presentations for the agenda. If you have not yet registered for the conference, don't wait and do it now so you do not miss out.

Regarding the ***Directors Forum***, which is for Directors as the name implies, we hope to have a virtual option for joining in case you cannot be live with us on Saturday. More to come on this.

### **CSAVR PROJECT & OPERATIONS MANAGER POSITION**

The deadline for applications ended at 5 PM ET on Friday, September 8, 2023. We have almost 30 applicants for the position. Wow! Thanks for helping us spread the word about this great opportunity. We are in the process of reviewing and ranking applications. The next phase will be to set up a series of interviews with the top applicants. Stay tuned. It is a process and a very important one.

### **OSERS & RSA NEWS**

On October 1, 2023, RSA will begin collecting the following reports: *Annual Client Assistance Program (CAP) Report*, the *Annual Report for the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB)*, *Independent Living Program (RSA-7-OB)*, and the *Annual Report on Appeals Process (RSA-722 for FY 2023 in the [RSAMIS](#)*. These reports are due no later than December 30, 2023.

Last week RSA announced the release of the revised Vocational Rehabilitation Financial Report (RSA-17) form and instructions for the State Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) program. The Office of Management and Budget has approved this information collection (OMB control number 1820-0017) until September 30, 2026. The revisions to the RSA-17 are effective for the VR program for new VR grant awards issued on or after October 1, 2023 (Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2024). The RSA-17 collects semiannual cumulative VR financial data on an award-by-award basis.

RSA HAS shared an updated version of the Case Service Report (RSA-911) Data Dashboards including data reported for the fourth quarter of PY 2022. This workbook includes

performance results for all VR agencies and seven previous quarters of RSA-911 data. On the Summary tab, select a VR agency in the drop-down labeled “Agency Selection” and select a quarter in the drop-down labeled “Program Year-Qtr. Selection.” The specifications are detailed in the final tab labeled “Specs.”

OSERS has started a blog post series on secondary transition to ensure students and families have the tools and resources necessary for successful secondary transition experiences. Read more in [OSERS Blog \[lnks.gd\]](#)

### **SEPTEMBER TAC QE WEBINAR**

VRTAC-QE has announced their September webinar.

**Title:** Using the Illinois Model to Guide Case Conceptualization in the State/Federal Vocational Rehabilitation System.

**Presenter:** David Strauser, Ph.D., CRC, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign.

#### **About this Event:**

Join us for a discussion on how the Illinois Model can be used to guide case conceptualization and facilitate vocational rehabilitation service delivery in the State/Federal Vocational Rehabilitation system. The presentation will focus on developing a comprehensive and integrated view of the consumer that can be used to identify appropriate vocational strategies and interventions that leverage consumer strengths and address consumers limitations to facilitate competitive integrated employment. [Register Here \[tacqe.com\]](#)

### **REPORTS, TRAINING, NEWSLETTERS AND CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES**

The Great Lakes ADA Regional Center will host a webinar, [What You Should Know About the Pregnant Workers Fairness Act\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#), September 19th, 2 - 3:30 pm ET. Presenters will provide an overview of the new Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) federal statute, Pregnant Workers Fairness Act (PWFA). Continuing education credits are available upon request.

The [Learning and Working During the Transition to Adulthood Rehabilitation Research and Training Center \(Transitions ACR\)\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) (90RTEM0005) will host a webinar, [Shattering Myths: Performance, Attrition, and Executive Functioning of College Students with Mental Health Conditions\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#), September 21st, 2:30 - 4 pm ET. Presenters will discuss recent findings on academic persistence of college students with mental health conditions.

The [Southeast ADA Regional Center\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) (90DPAD0005) will host a webinar, [Digital Access - Break I.T. Down\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#),

September 28th, 10 – 11 am ET. Presenters will explore the digital landscape of the user experience of people with disabilities and will discuss how to steer around potential roadblocks with practical checkpoints to evaluate progress toward accessible digital materials. Registration is free and required and certificates of participation are available upon request.

The Small Business Hub, at National Disability Institute (NDI), will hold its Second Annual Disability Owned Convening, a national and virtual event taking place on October 31, November 1 and 2, 2023 from noon to 5 pm ET each day. Registration is required.

[ChatGPT and Disability: Benefits, Concerns, and Future Potential\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#), a new rapid research report published by the [Rocky Mountain ADA Regional Center\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) (90DPAD0014), explores the timely issue of artificial intelligence (AI) tools like ChatGPT and their potential benefits and concerns for people with disabilities. The report highlights emerging benefits such as pairing ChatGPT with visual mobile assistance apps and augmentative and alternative communication, supporting students with disabilities in the classroom, and helping employees with disabilities complete job tasks. The report also explores concerns such as biases and misinformation in the data used to teach AI and potential impact on reading comprehension and other academic skills.

The [National Spinal Cord Injury Statistical Center \(NSCISC\)\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) (90SIMS0016) released the [2022 Annual Statistical Report - Complete Public Version\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) (PDF). The annual report offers a summary of data collected in the National SCI Model Systems (NSCIMS) Database through the collaborative efforts of federally funded SCI Model System Centers since 1973.

The [Northeast ADA Regional Center\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) (90DPAD0003) seeks [human resources \(HR\) and diversity and inclusion professionals for a study on flexible workplace policies and practices that support workers with disabilities\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#).

The [National Institutes of Health \(NIH\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]\)](#) issued a [Request for Information\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) inviting feedback on a proposed update to its mission statement which reflects recommendations of the Advisory Committee to the Director (ACD) Working Group on Diversity, [Subgroup on Individuals with Disabilities\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) to remove language which may be perceived as ableist and to better reflect the current and future vision for the agency. Comments may be submitted through November 24th.

The [Model Systems Knowledge Translation Center \(MSKTC\)\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) published a new factsheet, [A Guide to Inpatient Rehabilitation Services for People with Spinal Cord Injury\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#). The factsheet provides information about choosing an inpatient medical rehabilitation center after a spinal cord injury

(SCI), including what to expect from inpatient rehabilitation, how to find an appropriate facility, preparing for discharge, and managing insurance claims. The factsheet is also [available in Spanish\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#).

## COVID

On September 11<sup>th</sup> the FDA approved a new coronavirus vaccine. The reformulated shots target an omicron subvariant ahead of fall's respiratory virus season. Cases and hospitalizations have already been rising. The FDA cleared the shot for anybody six months and older. However, the CDC advisory panel may recommend a more targeted approach. The shot should be free for most Americans with private insurance, Medicaid or Medicare. The shot should be available now. Might be good to get it and a flu shot before coming to Savannah.

Whittenburg, Holly, Jennifer McDonough, Carol Schall, Thomas Dubois, Vivian Vitullo, and Paul Wehman. "[Impact of COVID-19 on the Employment of Transition-Aged Military-Dependent or Connected Autistic Youth \[links.news.mathematica-mpr.com\]](#)." *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, July 2023.

## RECENT ARTICLES

Crudden, Adelle, Michele McDonnall, and Andrew Tatch. "[Unable to Work? Characteristics of People with Blindness and Low Vision Who Are Out of the Labor Force \[links.news.mathematica-mpr.com\]](#)." *Disability and Health Journal*, vol. 16, no. 3, July 2023, p.101438.

Kearney, Kelly, Ayseb Torres, and Sauryma Quezada. "[Teaching Young Adults with Visual Impairment and Intellectual/Developmental Disability How to Determine Appropriate Job Fit \[links.news.mathematica-mpr.com\]](#)." *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, July 2023.

Krause, James S., Clara E. Dismuke-Greer, Karla Reed, and Melinda Jarnecke. "[Characteristics Associated with Perceived Underemployment Among Participants with Multiple Sclerosis \[links.news.mathematica-mpr.com\]](#)." *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, July 2023.

Martin Ginis, Kathleen A., Arif Jetha, and Monique A.M. Gignac. "[Experiential Aspects of Employment and Their Relationship with Work Outcomes: A Cross-Sectional Study Using a Novel Measure of Participation in Workers With and Without Physical Disabilities \[links.news.mathematica-mpr.com\]](#)." *Disability and Health Journal*, vol. 16, no. 3, July 2023, p. 101448.

McDonnall, Michele C., and Zhen McKnight. "[How Degree Major and Demographic Factors Influence Employment and Earnings for College Graduates with Visual Impairments \[links.news.mathematica-mpr.com\]](#)." *Rehabilitation Counseling Bulletin*, July 2023.



Scott, LaRon A., and Karrie A. Shogren. "[Advancing Anti-Racism and Anti-Ableism in Transition: Equity-Oriented Indicators for Research](https://links.news.mathematica-mpr.com) [links.news.mathematica-mpr.com]." *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, August 2023.

Whittenburg, Holly, Jennifer McDonough, Carol Schall, Thomas Dubois, Vivian Vitullo, and Paul Wehman. "[Impact of COVID-19 on the Employment of Transition-Aged Military-Dependent or Connected Autistic Youth](https://links.news.mathematica-mpr.com) [links.news.mathematica-mpr.com]." *Career Development and Transition for Exceptional Individuals*, July 2023.