



Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

CSAVR National News Brief

October 1, 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 - CSAVR 2023 FALL CONFERENCE. The registration page for the Fall Conference has closed. Late registration is open through October 23rd. Any accommodation and dietary requests are due by October 13th.

Don't forget about the Leadership Forum on Sunday and the Directors' Forum on Saturday. Agendas for the Forums will be up soon.

PLEASE NOTE- An updated conference agenda has been posted to the registration page. Also, we have listed additional overflow hotel locations. **MAKE YOUR ROOM RESERVATION** as soon as possible to help us anticipate any adjustments to the number of sleeping rooms needed.

HIGHLIGHTS:

1. [NATIONAL NEWS](#)
2. [IRI/INSITUTE FOR REHABILITATION ISSUES/AN OLDIE BUT GOODIE](#)
3. [CSAVR BUSINESS](#)
4. [THINK COLLEGE](#)
5. [RSA & OTHER FEDERAL NEWS](#)
6. [ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES & VR](#)
7. [REPORTS, TRAININGS, NEWSLETTERS, AND CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES](#)
8. [RECENT ARTICLES](#)

NATIONAL NEWS

This past Tuesday, we celebrated the 50th anniversary of the passage of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Hopefully, you were able to join in the celebration. Thanks to all who helped us in the making of the video especially Senator Harkin, the Harkin Institute, and Virginia DARS.

Tuesday was significant for another reason because the National Institutes of Health (NIH) made a [major announcement \[nih.gov\]](#) that the National Institute of Minority Health and Health Disparities (NIMHD), the lead institute on monitoring minority health and health disparities research for the NIH, decided to designate people with disabilities as a health disparity population in a rejection of the Advisory Council's recommendation to the director. In the NIH press release, Acting NIH Director Dr. Lawrence Tabak addressed the groundswell of support from the disability community, "To the disability community, we hear you and thank you for sharing your lived experiences with NIH."

A health disparities designation allows NIH funding to go towards projects that include a focus on disability health disparities and enhance clinical research by incentivizing the recruitment of both researchers and clinical research participants with disabilities. Accordingly, the NIMHD also announced a Notice of Funding Opportunity focused on the intersection of disabilities, race and ethnicity, and socioeconomic status in persons with developmental and physical disabilities. See link: <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-23-309.html> [\[grants.nih.gov\]](#).

This reminds us of all the power of the disability community. What a great victory.

We are all aware of the challenges that Social Security overpayments to beneficiaries present. A recent article cited below delves into some of the problems and solutions. It opines that "Overpayments can result from Social Security making a mistake or from beneficiaries failing to comply with requirements, intentionally or otherwise. But much of the fault lies within the system — for example:

- Rules are complex and hard to follow.
- Limits on what beneficiaries can save or own [have not been adjusted for inflation \[cbpp.org\]](#) in decades.
- The Social Security Administration does not have adequate staffing to keep up with its workload, much of which is done by hand.
- The system has built-in lags in checking information such as beneficiaries' income and relies heavily on data submitted by beneficiaries themselves."

Learn more by going to: Hilzenrath, David, and Jodie Fleischer. “[Social Security Overpays Billions to People, Many on Disability. Then It Demands the Money Back](#) [[links.news.mathematica-mpr.com](#)].” KFF Health News.

A new study from Drexel University’s A.J. Drexel Autism Institute published in *The Milbank Quarterly* and based on data from the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services and RSA found that a significant number of adults with autism possibly needing employment services did not receive help from Medicaid or VR.

When we go to the office, what are we wearing? According to Gallup, just three percent of all US workers wear business professional attire to work. Men were almost evenly split between business casual (32%), casual street clothes (33%), and uniforms (31%). *Axios*

The US Senate may be changing its dress code to keep up. Senate Majority Leader Charles Schumer has asked the chamber’s sergeant at arms to stop enforcing the chamber’s unofficial dress code of business attire: typically, a suit and tie for men and shoulder-covering dresses or pantsuits for women on the floor. It seems Senator John Fetterman may also be a catalyst for this move since he favors hoodies and shorts and has circumvented the dress code by voting from the doorway of the Democratic cloakroom. *NBC [News.com](#) [[news.com](#)]*

Does a college degree mean greater long-term wealth? Due to the rising expense of college and student debt the answer is maybe not. New research has looked at the net wealth of a typical college graduate. College grads born in the 60s had two to three times the wealth of non-college grads. For those born in the 80s, they are only showing almost no difference or only a bit more wealth than high school graduates born in the same decade.

Public-sector jobs at the federal, state, and local levels have risen by 327,000 positions so far in 2023—close to one-fifth of all new American jobs created this year. Government jobs accounted for 5 percent of employment growth in the same period last year. *The Wall Street Journal*

IRI/INSITUTE FOR REHABILITATION ISSUES/AN OLDIE BUT GOODIE

Some of you have probably heard of IRI and many may not. Its primary purpose was to develop publications for use in training and technical assistance for vocational rehabilitation (VR) counselors, consumers, administrators, and other partners in the VR process. IRI publications provided a unique perspective on emerging issues in vocational rehabilitation as both the topics and the content were developed by practitioners, teams of VR Directors, managers, supervisors, counselors, and others.

For more than 50 years, this national forum sponsored by RSA provided for the discussion of the important challenges facing the VR Program and more importantly solutions. It is the

longest running event of its kind in the rehabilitation field, and one of the longest in the human services profession. It provided a link between knowledge development and practitioner utilization and gave VR staff the opportunity to network and build their knowledge base and leadership skills.

Topics were solicited each year from VR agency personnel and other stakeholders under the signature of the RSA Commissioner and reviewed by the IRI National Planning Committee. Work groups as noted above were appointed. Monographs containing the findings and recommendations of the work groups were then published each year.

I believe past monographs are available on the NCRTM. Depending on what you are wrestling with, you may want to check them out. Maybe it is time to bring this tool back!

CSAVR BUSINESS

Please do not forget our upcoming October Monthly Membership Call from 2-3p eastern this coming Wednesday, October 4th. The main feature is a presentation entitled *"The Pandemic's Impact on State VR Services: Adjustments and Recommendations"*. A group of researchers from Cornell university and other higher learning institutions will present their findings.

Thanks to those of you who have completed the Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEI&A) Professional Network survey concerning your State's landscape on DEI&A. Please complete this 5-minute survey to help us better assess the State's needs. The Network would love to hear from all SVRAs. The survey is now open here.

[DEI&A PN Survey \[docs.google.com\]](https://docs.google.com).

Please do not forget to complete the survey CSAVR and the Technical Assistance Centers are conducting to learn more about how agencies are pursuing any roadmaps, workplans or new strategies or practices because of the information presented at the Spring 2023 CSAVR conference. There will be an update of this information and a discussion of the survey results at the Fall 2023 conference. We have received 19 responses so far so please if you have not done so complete the survey ASAP or no later than close of business on Friday, October 6th, by clicking on the link below.

https://sdsu.co1.qualtrics.com/jfe/form/SV_3KveJESsyKaq1la [google.com]

If you have any problems or questions, please contact John Connelly at jconnelly@csavr.org. Thank you!

I would be remiss if I did not remind all of the survey 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 has out.

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

THINK COLLEGE

Looking for additional ways to improve employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities, then it seems like an opportune time to share [“Think Higher. Think College.” campaign \[thinkhighered.net\]](https://thinkhighered.net). The purpose of this initiative is to build awareness and expand access to college for students with intellectual disabilities. If you have any further questions about this work, please feel free to reach out to Meg Grigal, who is the Co-Director of Think College.

We had a great response to our Call for Proposals for the conference. Those who submitted proposals accepted for the conference have been notified. We thank all those who helped us circulate the Call and those who responded to it.

RSA & OTHER FEDERAL NEWS

This past week RSA issued \$2,000,000 in supplemental one-time Federal fiscal year (FFY) 2023 funds to the Client Assistance Program (CAP). The supplemental funds (\$2,000,000), when added to the FFY 2023 appropriation (\$13,000,000), total \$15,000,000. *The supplemental funds were reprogrammed from FFY 2022 Disability Innovation Fund, for the benefit of the CAP.* These funds do *not* represent an ongoing addition to the CAPs formula grant award. If you have any questions, please contact the CAP RSA specialist, April Trice.

Earlier this past week, RSA announced the new [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\) Unified and Combined State Plan Training for Program Year \(PY\) 2024 \[youtu.be\]](https://youtu.be/...). This training discusses the requirements for submission of the WIOA Unified and Combined State Plan for PY 2024 and includes the redesigned Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services portion of the State Plan. Visit the [National Clearinghouse of Rehabilitation Training Materials \(NCRTM\) Library \[ncrtm.ed.gov\]](https://ncrtm.ed.gov) to access the supporting PowerPoint presentation and transcript.

On Friday, September 22, 2023, the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) posted a [blog \[whitehouse.gov\]](https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2023/09/22/uniform-grants-guidance/) highlighting proposed [updates to the Uniform Grants Guidance \[whitehouse.gov\]](https://www.whitehouse.gov/blog/2023/09/22/uniform-grants-guidance/) (2 C.F.R. Part 200). OMB concurrently submitted the proposed updates to the Federal Register, which will soon be posted for public comment for a period of 60 days. OMB will provide an update when the notice is published for public comment.

You should have also received notice from RSA that starting October 1, 2023, the U.S. Department of Treasury will no longer accept refund checks on behalf of the U.S. Department of Education (ED). After September 30, 2023, refunds to ED must be sent via Fedwire, as an Automated Clearinghouse (ACH) transaction initiated through ED's Grants Management System (G5) (g5.gov), or through a check sent directly to ED. The notice provides details on how to send refunds to Ed by the aforementioned means.

On September 25, 2023, the Office of Management and Budget [approved \[reginfo.gov\]](#) the Rehabilitation Services Administration's (RSA) proposal to extend with revisions the Case Service Report (RSA-911) through September 30, 2026. You should have received RSA issued [Instructions for the Case Service Report \(RSA-911\) \[rsa.ed.gov\]](#) (DCL 23-04). Within DCL 23-04, you may access the revised RSA-911 through their website or download the Excel file directly. The revised RSA-911 will be effective for Program Year 2024. For the remainder of Program Year 2023, VR agencies will continue to collect and report RSA-911 data outlined in [PD 19-03 \[rsa.ed.gov\]](#).

ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY SERVICES & VR

Assistive technology services for adults with disabilities in state-federal vocational rehabilitation programs. *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology.* NARIC Accession Number: J91828.

This NIDILRR-funded study identified sociodemographic factors which may act as barriers to receiving assistive technology (AT) services in vocational rehabilitation (VR) programs. In a review of national VR service data, researchers found that less than 9 percent of VR clients received AT services. The following client characteristics were associated with a lower likelihood of receiving AT services: being male gender, unemployed, minority, younger age, non-enrolled in post-secondary education, and having low income, significant disability, mental or cognitive disability, and less education.

The findings emphasize the need for more research to identify underlying mechanisms and potential solutions to these apparent disparities in access to AT services for adults with disabilities. Future research and implications are provided. [Access the full abstract and ordering information in REHABDATA\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#).

REPORTS, TRAINING, NEWSLETTERS AND CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES

The [Rehabilitation Research and Training Center \(RRTC\) on Community Living and Participation\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) (90RTCP0003) will host a webinar, [Forum: Institutional Bias in Long-Term Services and Supports for People with Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities \(IDD\)\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#), October 3rd, 2 - 3:30 pm ET. Presenters will explore how disparities in funding for services affects people with

disabilities and discuss issues raised in a [recent Policy Research Brief\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#), addressing policies that affect home and community-based services (HCBS). Registration is free and required.

The [Rehabilitation Research and Training Center \(RRTC\) on Promoting Healthy Aging for People with Long-Term Physical Disabilities\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) (90RTHF0001) and the [RRTC on Equity in Health and Functioning for Adults with Physical, Cognitive, Sensory, and Developmental Disabilities from Marginalized Communities\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) (90RTHF0005) will host the [4th Annual Disability Research Symposium\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#), October 6th, 9 am - 4 pm ET. The virtual symposium will feature TEDx- and research-style presentations highlighting diverse disability research, followed by breakout groups to facilitate networking and discussion. Registration is free and required.

The Small Business Hub, at National Disability Institute (NDI), invites you to its Second Annual Disability Owned Convening, a national and virtual event taking place on October 31, November 1 and 2, 2023. Connect with entrepreneurs, advocates and experts in the business owners with disabilities community. Register at www.disabilityownedconvening.com [\[disabilityownedconvening.com\]](#). #DisabilityOwnedConvening #SmallBusiness #NDIConvening.

On November 16-17 the NCD Council will meet in-person at the Omni Hotel in Providence, Rhode Island. The meeting is open to the public.

[Register](#) [\[eventbrite.com\]](#)

The [National Library of Medicine \(NLM\)\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) created a [series of audio described \(AD\) videos\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) that convey visual-only information to people who are blind or have low vision. The videos cover a range of topics that illustrate NLM activities, giving viewers a better sense of NLM research, resources, and more by providing narration to convey visual-only information.

[NIDILRR\(link is external\) \[acl.gov\]](#) has published a new resource, Tips for NIDILRR Grant Applicants, available in the [Noteworthy from NIDILRR section of the About NIDILRR page\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#). The tip sheet includes guidance for prospective grantees which may be helpful before and during the application process, such as how to contact NIDILRR, ways to learn about new funding opportunities, registering at grants.gov [\[grants.gov\]](#), language use in applications, and tracking applications throughout the review process.

The [Rehabilitation Engineering Research Center on Augmentative and Alternative Communication \(RERC on AAC\)\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) (90REGE0014) announced

that more than 10,000 future teachers, speech-language pathologists, and other professional have completed one or more modules available through its [AAC Learning Center\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#). The AAC Learning Center includes more than 15 modules covering research on AAC supporting children and adults with complex communication needs. The modules are in use at more than 100 colleges and universities and have a 97% recommendation rate among users.

The [Assistive Technology Network \(AssistiveTech Network\): A Community of Practice on Assistive Technology\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) is conducting interviews with care partners, caregivers, and family members of individuals who use assistive technology (AT) to gather information on how consumers search for, select, adopt, and incorporate AT into their daily routines. Eligible participants will be interviewed virtually, either individually or in small groups, for up to 90 minutes, and will be compensated for their time. Interested individuals may [complete the screening form\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) or contact Kelly Kolman at [kkolman3@gatech.edu\(link sends e-mail\)](mailto:kkolman3@gatech.edu) or 678/841-0554 for more information.

The [Institute for Community Inclusion \[r20.rs6.net\]](#) has announced for November several upcoming training opportunities in the Innovative Guided Rehabilitation Employer Engagement Training (iGREET) series designed to enhance staff performance in forming business relationships that lead to more successful employment outcomes for job seekers with disabilities and their employers. There is no cost to participate in any of the training courses. CRC credits provided. *Registration is required, and space is limited. They will accept registrations on a first-come, first-served basis and close registration once they reach the registration cap. Questions? Contact Mary DiBiase by email at Mary.DiBiase@umb.edu*

AgrAbility is having their 2024 national training conference on March 25-28 in Atlanta and they are looking for presenters and exhibitors. For more information, go to [https://bit.ly/3Pj6f0n \[bit.ly\]](https://bit.ly/3Pj6f0n) or contact Tess McKeel tmckeel@goodwillfingerlakes.org.

The [Administration for Community Living \(ACL\)\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#) published a series of blog posts celebrating the 50th anniversary of the signing of the Rehabilitation Act (Rehab Act). A post from ACL Administrator Alison Barkoff, [Reinvigorating Implementation and Enforcement of the Rehab Act\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#), highlighted the significance of the Rehab Act and recent accomplishments on Section 504 and programs funded under the Act. A post by NIDILRR Director Anjali Forber-Pratt, PhD, [Reinvigorating the Rehab Act: Bringing “Nothing About Us Without Us” to the Research Enterprise\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#), described achievements and innovations from the grantee community to support and enhance community living, health and function, and employment among people with disabilities, and diversifying the research community. A post from Administration on Disabilities Commissioner Jill Jacobs, [Reinvigorating the Rehab Act’s Independent Living Programs: Partnerships to Accelerate Progress\(link is external\) \[click.icptrack.com\]](#),

described ACL programs that work side-by-side with the disability community to support independence and advance the goals of the Rehab Act.

RECENT ARTICLES

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