



Date: Friday, August 8, 2025

**Meeting start: 9:30am**

- Ground rules/Interpreter/CART, Desiree Dean
- Welcome, Corinne Moore
- Introductions of Council, New Member(s), & Public Participants

Members Present: Corinne Moore, Tommy Roberts, Doug McElroy, Joleen Weatherwax, Desirea Johnson, Wayne Dagel, June Hermanson, Lacey Keller, Jean Schroeder (filling in for Heidi Gibson/absent)

Members Online: Brian Tocher, Jennifer Owen, Eva Belatski

Staff Present: Celina Cline, Desirea Dean, Darell Hannum, Allyson Talaska

Staff Online: Lacey Conzelman, Anna Gibbs, Sarah Seltzer, Tammy Hogan, Nur McRea, Hanna Stokes, Gabrielle Broere

Guests: Laticia Dean, Rebecca Sirrine, Dana Kjersom

- Approval of Meeting Minutes

Lacey Keller motioned to approve the May meeting minutes. Second given by Wayne Dagel. Approved unanimously.

- Announcements

Tommy Roberts shared that this would be his last meeting as he would not be staying for another term.

Lacey Keller announced that Ability Montana has acquired an adaptive fly fishing camp just outside of Ennis, MT for accessibility to the Madison River. They also have an adaptive ski program for winter recreation. They are also collaborating with the VR Pre-ETS program for an upcoming youth camp. There will be 2 days of outdoor career fun and recreational activities.

Joleen Weatherwax shared that their Annual Disability Conference is coming up in the last week of October.

June Hermanson reminded us that the Montana Youth Transition Conference is coming up November 12th-14th. Registration is available online.

- Public Comments

Celina Cline asked how the information shared at the Round Table Discussions are being used and how this is being shared with the public. Eva Belatski asked how the public is informed about the SRC meetings. Tommy Roberts stated that other states use social media accounts to get the word out to the public. Sarah Seltzer shared that VR is working on a social media plan for a variety of communications. Others chimed in about social media activity and Desirea Dean reminded the council that the meeting dates are posted on the SRC website. Corinne asked what audiences we would like to reach and how we would connect with them. Darell Hannum cautioned the use of social media and to be aware of certain restrictions, being a Governor appointed council. Eva Belatski suggested reaching out to the Chamber of Commerce in each area we plan to meet. Allyson Talaska suggested coordinating with each location's VR office for a specific area of focus.

#### 10:20am--Member Moment

Eva Belatski shared her story with the SRC today along with a tidbit about Disability Rights Montana.

#### 10:30am--Federal & State Reports

Sarah Seltzer reported in the absence of Chanda Hermanson today. She shared some recent legislative updates and some of the new positions that our division has been awarded. She spoke on how those positions are posted and the process of hiring for them. Sarah went on to speak about the goal for this year being to increase the utilization of Vocational Rehabilitation services by 5%. Within this goal is the continued success for Business Services and how the Specialist, Jacob, has been making some successful connections for the program in the western portion of the state. This includes the apprenticeship and on the job training programs. Sarah stated that Montana went into Order of Selection on July 28<sup>th</sup>. All applicants who fall into categories 2 and 3 will now go

onto a waitlist until the order is lifted. This will remain in effect and re-evaluated based on the state budget over the next several months.

#### 10:35 Budget Report

Anna Gibbs introduced Nur McRae who is the VR Budget Analyst. They shared the budget template and explained the dollar amounts on the templates. We are currently two months away from the end of Fiscal Year 2025. Anna went on to discuss the Ticket to Work program's income and the projected expenditures.

#### 10:45 VRBS Report

Allyson Talaska reported on current caseload sizes in relation to the Order of Selection. The current average caseload has dropped from 140 to 128 per counselor with the highest caseloads in Butte, which has had a long-time vacancy that has now been filled. The lowest caseload size is in Miles City, which has the most miles to cover. All of the offices now have updated resource lists. Allyson answered a question from the council about the process of coming out of Order of Selection. Applicants will be invited off of the waitlist in the order in which they applied. Allyson shared that there are currently six vacancies across the state. There have been some recent promotions as well. She gave some updates from different offices throughout the state with vacancies and positions having been filled.

#### 11:15 BLVS Report/Customized Employment

Darrel Hannum reported that the Adjustment to Blindness program has passed legislation. This program was made for individuals under the age of 55 who are learning how to adapt to blindness and adapting to new life skills, not necessarily employment. This program will begin on July 1<sup>st</sup>. This will be primarily a resource and referral service in the beginning stages. Darrel shared additional outreach and development services including health fairs, the business services and apprenticeship programs, and connecting with MSU Billings as well as the Great Falls collage.

#### 11:50 Pre-ETS Report

Tammy Hogan reported on what is happening with Pre-ETS. She shared a slide presentation and also discussed Goal 2 of the Strategic Plan, which is Youth Engagement. She expanded

on information regarding the second annual Disability Awareness Mentoring week. Tammy stated that there will be a community partner meeting that is scheduled for August 26<sup>th</sup>. She also shared some of the many summer camps happening this year.

#### 12:05 Extended/Customized Employment

Lacey Conzelman gave updates on the Extended Employment program and the expenses utilized this fiscal year. She shared that in legislation this year, a provider rate increase of 3% had been approved. Lacey reminded the council of how the Extended Employment process works. She then moved onto Customized Employment. She shared that Montana had received a technical assistance grant they had applied for in September. They are working with Abbey Cooper, an expert in customized employment. They are also working with the Developmental Disabilities Program to partner with them on customized employment services. Cheri Reed-Anderson will be presenting to the DDP this month. Cheri will also be starting her next round of customized employment training. This training is “in house” and will be free to providers who would like to offer the service.

#### 12:15 Committee Reports

- Planning & Review Committee

Joleen Weatherwax shared that by November they ought to have the draft for the Governor’s Report. They are working on gathering pictures and VR statistics due by October. The committee is reviewing this year’s success stories for the report as well. The SRC recommendations for VR will need to be added also.

- Education & Membership-Bylaw changes/edits

This committee needs a new chair person. No meeting was held. Corinne Moore stated that at the next quarterly meeting the council will need to vote on the bylaws, and she will send out information to the council for review.

- Consumer Satisfaction & Needs Assessment

Celina Cline reported that the sample survey was sent out in July and that there was minimal feedback. Market Decision Research has been in communication with VR leadership to develop questions and for approval before they will be released to the clients. Celina says we should have more updates by the October meeting. There will be a “kick-off” with VR staff to go over the survey to get clients prepared to receive them.

- Policy, Procedure, & Personnel Development

Allyson Talaska stated that this committee had not met and there will be a meeting before the next quarterly meeting.

- Legislative Committee

June Hermanson said she was not certain of the status of this committee. There has not been a meeting as the legislature is not currently in session. This might be a topic for a round table discussion to use for testimony in the next session.

#### 12:55 Nomination and election officers for next year

For the position of Functionary, Doug McElroy is currently in this position. A motion was made by Lacey Keller to stay on as the Functionary. Brian Tocher offered a second on the motion. The council voted and passed unanimously.

For the position of Vice-chair, Gabrielle Broere is currently in this position. After discussion, a motion was made by Corinne Moore for Gabby to stay on as Vice-chair. Joleen Weatherwax submitted a second on the motion. The council voted and passed unanimously.

For the position of Chair, Corinne Morre is currently in this position. Noting that this position is a lot of work, Corinne offered to stay in this position. A motion was made by Doug McElroy for Corinne to remain in this position. Lacey Keller offered the second on the motion. The council voted and passed unanimously.

Finally, the Membership and By-laws Committee chair position was discussed and Doug McElroy made a motion for Desirea Johnson to take this position. A second was offered by June Hermanson. The council voted and passed unanimously.

#### Vote on Bylaw changes—tabled until the November session

#### 1:10 Planning for Next Meeting & Wrap Up

Corinne Moore & Gabrielle Broere along with the council agreed upon October 23-24, 2025, for the next quarterly meeting to be held in Hamilton, MT.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:22pm with a motion by June Hermanson and second by Doug McElroy, passed unanimously