**Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation**

**2024 Fall Conference**

**Promoting the Value Proposition of Vocational Rehabilitation**

**In partnership with George Washington University**

**Hyatt Regency Seattle**

**808 Howell Street**

**Seattle, Washington, 98101**

**Saturday, October 19 – Wednesday, October 23**

**Saturday, Oct. 19th**

**National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC)**

**8:30 AM – 4:15 PM** 301 Ashnola 3rd Floor

**CSAVR Director’s Forum & Business Meeting**

**3:00 PM – 5:00 PM** 402 Chiliwack 4th Fl

**Sunday, Oct. 20th**

**National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC)**

**8:30 AM – 4:15 PM** 301 Ashnola 3rd Floor

**CSAVR Leadership Forum** Columbia A 3rd Floor

**8:30 AM – 4:45 PM**

**12:00 PM – 1:30 PM Lunch on Your Own**

**4:00 PM – 6:00 PM**  **CSAVR Registration** **Opens** Columbia Foyer 3rd Floor

**Monday, Oct. 21st**  **Registration & Coffee** Columbia Foyer 3rd Floor

**7:30 AM– 8:30 AM**

**8:30 AM – 10:00 AM Welcome & First General Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**Michael MacKillop,** Co-Chair, CSAVR Careers and Business Relations Committee, State Director, WA-B

**Dana Phelps,** State Director, WA-G

**Steve Wooderson,** CEO, CSAVR

**Danté Q. Allen,** Commissioner

Rehabilitation Services Administration

Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services

U.S. Department of Education

**Presiding: Felicia Johnson,** State Director, SC-G

CSAVR President

**10:00 AM – 10:30 AM Break**

**10:30 AM - 11:30 AM Second General Session**  Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**Getting our VR Message House in Order**

Defining the Value Proposition of Vocational Rehabilitation now has a greater opportunity more than ever to address the nation’s employment crisis. Everyone can work and contribute to our economy, and VR’s goal is to increase the workforce participation rates for people with disabilities with a competitive wage.

**Presiding: Dacia Johnson,** State Director, OR-B

**11:30 AM – 1:00 PM** **Lunch On Your Own or Regional Meeting**

**Region 1 Meeting** 406 Klickitat

**Region 3 Meeting** 301 Ashnola

**Region 4 Meeting** 401 Chelan

**Region 5 Meeting** 403 Cispus

**Region 6 Meeting** 305 Chelais

**Region 7 Meeting** 404 Entiat

**Region 8 Meeting** 407 Satsop

**Region 9 Meeting** 405 Kachess

**Region 10 Meeting** 402 Chiliwack

**1:00 PM – 2:15 PM Concurrent Session One**

**1.1 Concurrent Session** Columbia A 3rd Floor

**Careers in Media: Increasing Employment Outcomes**

**Tari Hartman Squire,** CEO, EIN SOF Communications Inc.

**Gwyn LaRee,** Veteran Outreach Coordinator

Lights! Camera! Access!

**Joe Xavier,** State Director, CA-C

**Presiding: Kathy West-Evans,** Director of Business Relations   
 CSAVR-NET

**1.2 Concurrent Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**Using Authorized Pre-ETS Activities to Enhance Service Delivery in Indiana**

**Jonathan Kraeszig,** Director of Youth Services, IN-C

**Phillip Parnell,** Senior Consultant, Public Consulting Group

**Presiding: Elisha Jenkins,** State Director, DE-G

**1.3 Concurrent Session** 302 Beckler 3rd Floor

**Counselor Intent to Remain or Leave the State Vocational Rehabilitation Program**

**James T. Herbert,** Professor of Counselor Education & Rehabilitation & Human Services, Department of Educational Psychology, Counseling & Special Education

**Presiding: John Connelly,** Director, Research and Grants

CSAVR

**2:15 PM – 2:30 PM Break**

**2:30 PM –3:45 PM** **Concurrent Sessions Two**

**2.1 Concurrent Session** Columbia A 3rd Floor

**Recovery Works: Job-driven Training for Substance Use Disorder Treatment and Recovery**

**Fran Basche,** Senior Program Director, Advocates for Human Potential, Inc.

**Rachel Reyes,** West Regional Director

MassAbility (formerly known as Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission)

**Presiding: Cassondra Williams,** State Director, AR-B

**2.2 Concurrent Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**Equipping Workforce System Professionals with the Tools They Need to Support Mental Wellness for Youth & Young Adults Through Access to High Quality Training**

**Adene Karhan,** Extension Associate

Yang-Tan Institute on Employment & Disability, Cornell University

**Kim Osmani,** Senior Extension Associate & Program Director

Transition & Postsecondary Vocational Advancement

Yang-Tan Institute on Employment & Disability, Cornell University

**Presiding: Keith Ozols,** State Director, OR-G

**2.3 Concurrent Session** 302 Beckler 3rd Floor

**Supporting Counselors to Empower Entrepreneurs: Enhancing Skills and Resources for Self-Employment Services**

**Jamie Blondin,** Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor

HireAbility Vermont

**Hib Doe,** Regional Vocational Rehabilitation Manager

HireAbility Vermont

**Molly Sullivan,** Senior Associate

Griffin-Hammis Associates

**Presiding: Chris Clause,** State Director, MO-G

**3:45 PM – 4:00 PM Break**

**4:00 PM –5:15 PM** **Concurrent Sessions Three**

**3.1 Concurrent Session** 302 Beckler 3rd Floor

**Taking the Dull Out of Data – Making Data Relevant to VR Staff**

**Donna Bonessi,** Director of Employment Services & Special Programs, VA-G

**Dahlia Shaewitz,** CEO, Third Sight, LLC

**David Leon,** Director, Workforce Programs, VA-G

**Presiding: Kathy Hayfield,** State Director, VA-G

**3.2 Concurrent Session** Columbia A 3rd Floor

**From Learning to Earning: Unlocking Success through Work-Based Learning in VR**

**Ryan Hyde,** State Director, PA-C

**Dawn Sokol,** Director, Bureau of Blindness & Visual Services

PA-C

**Marci Katona,** Director, PA- C

**Denise Verchimak,** Director, Bureau of Central Operations

PA-C

**Presiding: Tonia Ferguson,** Director of Legislative Affairs

CSAVR

**3.3. Concurrent Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**Applying Culturally Responsive Communication in Outreach, Recruitment & Retention Strategies in VR**

**Robin Freeman,** Director

UA CURRENTS, University of Arkansas Fayetteville

**Tricia Eyerly,** Assistant Director of HR and Training, WA-B

**Michael MacKillop,** State Director, WA-B

**Emily Brinck,** Research Professor

University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Alexa Soberal,** Educational Services Specialist

[Connecticut Aging and Disability Services](https://portal.ct.gov/ads)

**Presiding: Natasha Jerde,** State Director, MN-B

**6:00 PM – 8:30 PM Reception** Regency A

**Tuesday, Oct. 22nd**  Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**8:30 AM – 9:30 AM** **Third General Session**

**The Value Proposition of VR Through Employment**

Join this session to hear from Tribal and State VR programs   
 partner in Washington to help shared customers achieve   
 competitive integrated employment. You will hear about the   
 way tribal programs approach VR and the approaches taken   
 by both tribal and state VR programs to support employment   
 success for shared customers. Information will also be   
 shared on the government-to-government protocols utilized   
 in Washington state when tribes and state government work   
 together.

**Jana Finkbonner,** Director

North Intertribal Vocational Rehabilitation Program (NIVRP)

**Christopher Zilar,** Program Director

Vocational Rehabilitation Spokane Tribe of Indians

**Dana Phelps,** State Director, WA-G

**Presiding: Michael MacKillop,** State Director, WA-B

**9:30 AM – 10:30 AM** **Fourth General Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**The Value Proposition of VR Through Scaling Impact & Strengthening Our Partnership with Service Providers**

Join this session and hear from the CSAVR Performance and Accountability committee, in partnership with the VRTAC-QM, who conducted a national survey of community rehabilitation programs and other service providers, to determine their capacity to serve individuals with disabilities referred by the public VR program. Additionally, two SVRAs will share effective practices they have adopted to support reduced administrative burden and improved communication and relationships with service providers.

**Chaz Compton,** Project Director

The Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center for Quality Management (VRTAC-QM), San Diego University Interwork Institute

**Elizabeth Perkins,** Coordinator, Programs, MO-G

**Kristen Mackey,** State Director, AZ-C

**Presiding: Theresa Koleszar,** State Director, IN-C

**10:30 AM – 10:45 AM Break**

**10:45 AM – 11:45 AM Fifth General Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**The Value Proposition through Talent Innovation &**

**Working with Business to Develop and Retain the Talent of America’s Workforce**

Join this session to hear from business customers and partners regarding the importance of partnership with the CSAVR-NET and VR staff at the national, state and local level as we continue to advance the importance of the dual customer strategy in preparing our individual candidates and supporting our business partners.

**Jessica Rafuse,** Director of Strategic Partnerships & Policy Microsoft

**Leah Levar,** Area Director of Human Resources

Hyatt Hotels **–**Seattle

**John Ficca,** Program Director, Hands on Education

**Presiding:** **Kathy West-Evans,** Director of Business Relations

CSAVR-NET

**11:45 AM – 1:00 PM Lunch on Your Own**

**1:00 PM – 2:15 PM Concurrent Sessions Four**

**4.1 Concurrent Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**Intersection of Artificial Intelligence and Vocational Rehabilitation: Panel Discussion with State Innovators**

**Alicia Halle,** Assistant Director, ND-C

**Dale Batten,** Deputy Commissioner, VA-G

**Katie Taliercio,** Disability of Employment First Collaboration Manager, CO-C

**Tara Sullivan,** Staff Trainer

Department of Employment and Economic Development, MN-B

**Dana Phelps,** State Director, WA-G

**Presiding: Ashley Brizzo,** Rehabilitation Services Administration, **Michele Mulhern,** Rehabilitation Services Administration and **James McCarthy,** Rehabilitation Services Administration

**4.2 Concurrent Session** 302 Beckler 3rd Floor

**Advancing Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE):   
A National Framework for a Path Forward**

**Michael Petrick,** Senior Program Manager

Economic Systems Inc. (EconSys)

**Rachel Hoard,** Supported Employment Program Manager

CO-C

**Richard Davis,** Policy Advisor

Office of Disability Employment Policy

US Department of Labor

**Presiding: Steve Wooderson,** CEO, CSAVR

**4.3 Concurrent Session** Columbia A 3rd Floor

**Innovative Pre-ETS Ideas: VR/Provider Collaborations That Work in Rural Areas**

**James T. Williams,** State Director, IA-G

**Lillian Hogan,** National Pre-ETS Director, Bloom Consulting

**Presiding: Chanda Hermanson,** State Director, MT-C

**2:15 PM – 2:30 PM Break**

**2:30 PM – 3:45 PM Concurrent Sessions Five**

**5.1 Concurrent Session** Columbia A 3rd Floor

**Transforming VR Service Delivery: A Strategic Model for Increasing Access and Removing Barriers**

**Rooshey Hasnain,** Clinical Associate Professor

University of Illinois Chicago, Department of Disability and Human Development

**Francisco Alvarado,** Central Management Services

University of Illinois Chicago, Department of Disability and Human Development

**Presiding: Antionette Williams,** Project and Operations Manager, CSAVR

**5.2 Concurrent Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**Building Effective Stay-at-Work/Return-to-Work Services: Lessons from RETAIN and Vocational Rehabilitation Partnerships**

**Lori Collins,** Senior Technical Assistance Consultant

American Institutes for Research (AIR)

**Mona Kilany,** Senior Health Care Policy Researcher

American Institutes for Research (AIR)

**Jackson Costa,** Senior Economist

US Department of Labor, Office of Disability Employment Policy

**Cora McNabb,** State Director, KY-C

**Presiding: Cynthia Speight,** State Director, NC-B

**5.3 Concurrent Session** 302 Beckler A 3rd Floor

**Inspiring, Retaining & Growing the VR Leaders of   
 Tomorrow**

**Susan Adams-Jager,** Professional Development & Training Director, NC-G

**Robin Freeman,** Director, UA CURRENTS

**Presiding: Kathie Smith,** State Director, NC-G

**3:45 PM – 4:00 PM Break**

**4:00 PM – 5:15 PM** **Concurrent Sessions Six**

**6.1 Concurrent Session** Columbia A 3rd Floor

**Building College Pathways to Employment: A Panel on Collaboration Between Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies and Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs**

**Russ Thelin,** Senior Research Fellow

Institute for Community Inclusion, University of Massachusetts-Boston

**Melinda Fruendt,** State Director, OK-C

**Rachel Hoard,** Supported Employment Program Manager

CIE Unit, CO-C

**Presiding:** Lindy Foley, State Director, NE-G

**6.2 Concurrent Session** 302 Beckler 3rd Floor

**Advancing Vocational Rehabilitation (VR): Successful Strategies for Impactful Business Services for VR Programs and Customers**

**Eric Clark,** Manager, Workforce Strategy and Business

Development, CO-C

**Heather Brooks,** Manager, Business Outreach Services

CO-C

**Presiding: Kristin Corash,** State Director, CO-C

**6.3 Concurrent Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Fl

**Beyond Subminimum Wage: Vocational Rehabilitation as a Gateway to Equitable Employment**

**Donna Bonessi**, Director of Employment Services & Special Programs, VA-G

**Michelle Yin,** Associate Professor, Northwestern University

**James Knauf,** Director of Field Operations

Illinois Institute for Rehabilitation & Education Research, SWTCIE Project Manager

**Robyn Lewis,** Policy Advisor

Division of Rehabilitation Services, SWTCIE Project Manager

IL-C

**Presiding: Kristen Mackey,** State Director, AZ-C

**Wednesday, Oct. 23rd**

**8:30 AM – 9:30 AM** **Sixth General Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**Scaling Up: Amplifying the Voice of VR with Modern**

**Marketing Strategies**

Join this session as MassAbility (formerly known as   
 Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission) shares their recent   
 marketing efforts and how states can implement similar com-  
 munication strategies to amplify the Value Proposition of VR.

**Toni Wolf,** State Director, MassAbility

**Colleen Casey,** Director of Communications and Legislative   
 Affairs, MassAbility

**Cindy Walker**, Digital Communication Coordinator

MassAbility

**Presiding: David Doukas,** State Director, CT-G

CSAVR Immediate Past President

**9:30 AM – 10:00 AM Break**

**10:00AM – 11:00 AM Seventh General Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**Fireside Chat with RSA Commissioner Danté Allen About the Employment and Independence of People With Disabilities in the Age of Artificial Intelligence**

Join RSA Commissioner Danté Allen for a conversation about Artificial Intelligence (AI) with two national experts. The experts will share their views about where this technology is heading for the future and how people with disabilities and VR professionals can engage in the evolution of AI and prepare for the changes to come.

**Dr. Gregg Vanderheiden,** Founder and Director Emeritus

Trace R&D Center and Professor, College of Information Studies at the University of Maryland

**Alison Levy,** Director, Office of Technical and Information Services at the U.S. Access Board

**Presiding: Robert Doyle,** State Director, FL-B

CSAVR Treasurer

**11:00 AM – 12:00 PM** **Eighth General Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**RSA Updates – Supporting the Value Proposition**

RSA will describe activities undertaken to support the critical role of the VR program in achieving competitive integrated employment for individuals with disabilities, while providing key fiscal and programmatic data.

**Carol Dobak,** Deputy Commissioner

Rehabilitation Services Administration

**Chris Pope,** Director, State Monitoring and Program Improvement Division, Rehabilitation Services Administration

**Michael Quinn,** Chief, Data Unit, SMPID

Rehabilitation Services Administration

**Suzanne Mitchell,** Chief, Vocational Rehabilitation Program Unit, SMPID, Rehabilitation Services Administration

**Ashley Brizzo,** Director, Training and Service Programs Division, Rehabilitation Services Administration

**Presiding: Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw,** State Director, AL-C CSAVR President-Elect

**12:00 PM – 12:30 PM** **Closing Session** Columbia B-C-D 3rd Floor

**Presiding: Felicia Johnson,** State Director, SC-G

CSAVR President