



Commission on Rehabilitation Services Meeting

September 13, 2024

10 a.m. (Eastern)

Bosma Enterprises
7225 Woodland Drive
Indianapolis, IN 46278

MEETING MINUTES

- I. Call to Order/Roll Call/Welcome
 - a. The meeting was called to order by Marc Ruiz

V	Mandy Blaise	A	Kate Barrow	V	Ron Brown
V	Katie Connel	P	Jennifer Diaz	V	Mason Ellis
A	Abby Fleenor	V	Shawn Fulton	P	Kate Heger
A	Zaida Maldonado-Prather	V	Danie'l Mize	V	Ian Ragains
A	Cadence Riley	P	Marc Ruiz	V	Stacey Smith
P	Willaine St. Pierre-Sandy	A	Kindall Stewart	P	Mike Thibideau
P	Barbara Thompson	P	Theresa Koleszar	A	Kristina Blankenship
V	Mark Noyes	P	Courtney Scott	A	Whitney Ertel
V	Jonathan Kraeszig	P	Amanda Ormstedt	V	Ryan Revell

(A=Absent, P=Present, T=Teleconference, Virtual =V, I=Invited Guest)

- II. Approval of the May 10, 2024, meeting minutes
 - a) The Commission voted unanimously in favor
- III. Public Comment
 - a) There were no members of the public who made comment
- IV. VR Participant Self-Employment and Small Business Endeavors
 - a) Ima Abbott, VR Manager of Program Initiatives, presented to the group
- V. BRS Director's Update
 - a) Order of Selection update – the division shall provide the council with a quarterly report containing the following information relating to Vocational Rehabilitation services:
 - A status report of the division's effort to fill vocational counselor vacancies
 1. As of August 12, 2024:
 - a. 205 VR Counselor positions
 - i. 10 vacant positions (5% of VRC positions); proceeding to fill all 10
 - ii. 18 staff in Trainee VRC status (9% of VRC positions)
 - A status report of the Order of Selection

1. As of August 12, 2024:
 - a. Categories 1 & 2 OPEN; Category 3 CLOSED
 - b. 98% of eligible individuals met criteria for Priority Category 1/MSD or 2/SD during current SFY
 - c. 14 releases to date, with 4174 moving off waitlist
 - i. 26% served or in services
 1. *26% of those served/in services exited with employment
 - ii. <2% in process of contacting
 - iii. 22% declined services
 - iv. 38% unable to be located/didn't respond to outreach attempts
 - v. 13% closed for other reasons
 - d. Priority Category 2 opened July 2023 – no waiting period
 - e. Priority Category 3 releases began October 2023
 - f. Priority Category 3 targeted to 'open' in October 2024 which will end OOS
- The number of individuals who submitted applications for Vocational Rehabilitation services
 1. 5798 new VR applicants SFY24 (11% increase from SFY23; 22% increase since SFY22)
 2. 5208 new VR applicants in SFY23
 3. 4740 new VR applicants in SFY22
 4. 3925 new Pre-ETS applicants SFY24 (2.5% increase from SFY23 and 4% increase from SFY22)
 5. 3830 new Pre-ETS applicants in SFY23 (1.6% increase from SFY22)
 6. 3769 new Pre-ETS applicants in SFY22
- The number of individuals who are currently on a waitlist to obtain Vocational Rehabilitation services
 1. As of August 12, 2024, 239 on waitlist
 - a. All in Priority Category 3
 - b. 114 of these individuals new to waitlist in SFY24
 2. FINAL waitlist release in October will reduce waitlist to 0!
- The number of individuals who are currently receiving Vocational Rehabilitation services (have an IPE)
 1. August 12, 2024 'snapshot' in services (post IPE) – 10,572 (10,068 previous update – 5% increase)
 - a. Number currently receiving services fluctuates daily
 - b. Snapshot captures individuals served as of a single point in time, rather than over the course of a year or other time period
 2. Total served SFY24 – 14,119

- a. 11.5% increase from SFY23 to SFY24; 16% increase from SFY22 to SFY24
 - 3. Total served SFY23 – 12,660 (SFY22 – 12,150)
 - b) Additional updates
 - Annual Reallotment
 - 1. Amount of unmatched funds returned was reduced from prior year (FFY23: \$25M; FFY24: \$22M)
 - Strategies to generate additional match while improving services and capacity
 - 1. DWD Jobs for America’s Graduates – anticipating increased budget next year
 - 2. DMHA Individual Placement and Support Employment Project
 - 3. Hamilton County Training and Employment Pilot
 - 4. Establishment Projects to support CRP employment program growth
 - SE+ Project update
 - 1. VR Counselor SE+ Liaisons have regular presence in 14c pilot sites
 - 2. SE+ referral process started 7/2023; 113 subminimum wage employees (or contemplating SMW) across pilot sites are active in VR
 - 3. Expanding to another pilot site in SFY25
 - 4. 18 employed so far
 - a. Average wages \$11.21 (range \$8.25 - \$14.00)
 - b. Average weekly hours 14 (range 2-24)
 - 5. 5 Peer Support Specialists trained and onboarded; expanding in SFY25
 - 6. SE+ Project Manager serving as liaison for DDRS CIE efforts
 - c) 2024 Annual Report
 - There will be a draft ready for review at the November meeting
 - 2024 report due by end of December
 - Continued focus on successes?
 - “Why I serve on the Commission” quotes/photos
 - Employment First update
 - d) Employment First call out
 - Process for collecting examples that support progress or innovation
 - Distribute letter through state listserv, asking for examples
 - Reach out to other state agencies to ask for examples or changes made that support progress
 - Include highlights in Annual Report
 - Provide brief background and link to Employment First plan
 - Review draft language
 - Membership feedback due by the end of September; call out released around October 1
 - e) Employment First call out – general
 - **Are you an agency, an employer or community partner, or a person with a disability or family member seeing this in action in your community? Please share**

your best practices and experiences with us! We are interested in all innovations, small or large as they pertain to increasing the workforce participation rate of people with disabilities.

- Are you a person with a disability who is employed in your local community? We would love to hear about the role employment plays in your life and any tips you have for other job seekers with disabilities who are looking for employment.
 - Are you an agency that supports individuals who are working in their local community? Please share best practices or highlight effective partnerships or innovations that are making a difference in increasing the workforce participation of individuals with disabilities.
 - Are you an employer that supports diverse hiring practices through recruitment or hiring of qualified candidates with disabilities? What strategies have been most impactful in diversifying your workplace?
 - Are you an active member in your community seeing increased employment opportunities for job seekers with disabilities?
- f) Employment First call out – state agencies
- We are seeking information from your agency regarding initiatives, policy changes, outcomes, or examples of how your programs are including or advancing Employment First across Indiana.
 - Some examples may include, but are not limited to, an increase in diversity hiring initiatives to include qualified candidates with disabilities; new or expanded programs or initiatives that improve access to services needed to support training and employment outcomes for individuals who experience barriers including disabilities; expanded data collection to track outcomes for program participants including those with disabilities; or improved accessibility of service locations or programs for all participants including those with disabilities.

VI. Committee Updates

- a) Customer Satisfaction Committee
 - A Customer Satisfaction report will be presented at the next meeting
- b) Employment First Committee
 - No update
- c) Recruitment, Public Outreach, and Commission Development Committee
 - Marc met with VR staff and new provider
 - Membership role needing to be filled
 1. An individual with a disability who is a business owner
 2. Send any referrals to Marc or Jennifer
- d) Awards Committee
 - VR Awards virtual ceremony was held in September
- e) Transition Committee
 - No update

VII. Committee Work Discussion

- a) Will take a fresh look at committees to assess the need as needs have shifted
 - Policy & Oversight and Planning & Evaluation committee will be divided up into different committees at times of need
 - 1. Bylaws will be revised to reflect changes during January meeting

VIII. Other Business

- a) Will discuss Statewide Needs Assessment during November meeting
- b) 2025 meeting dates
 - Will meet on the second Friday of the month
 - January and March will be virtual
 - May, September, and November will be in person
 - There will be no summer (July) meeting
 - 1. The meeting schedule will be as follows:
 - a. January 10, 2025 – virtual
 - b. March 14, 2025 – virtual
 - c. May 9, 2025 – in person
 - d. September 12, 2025 – in person
 - e. November 14, 2025 – in person

IX. Meeting Adjourned

Future meeting dates:

Date	Time	Location
November 8, 2024	10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Bosma Enterprises 7225 Woodland Drive Indianapolis, IN 46278
January 10, 2025	10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Virtual Click here to join the meeting
March 14, 2025	10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Virtual Click here to join the meeting
May 9, 2025	10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Bosma Enterprises 7225 Woodland Drive Indianapolis, IN 46278

September 12, 2025	10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.	Bosma Enterprises 7225 Woodland Drive Indianapolis, IN 46278
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