

INDIANA'S COMMISSION ON  
REHABILITATION SERVICES

Celebrating  
Our Success!



FFY 2016 Annual Report



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# GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON



## Greetings from the Chairperson

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services Annual Report for Federal Year 2016 reflects the commitment of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (VR) employees and the members of the Commission in working together to ensure that Indiana's citizens with disabilities receive the highest quality, individualized

services for their long-term employment success. The Commission is committed to meeting its mission: "Assist persons with disabilities in achieving employment and independence." As the Commission's Chairperson, I am proud to endorse the many accomplishments detailed in this year's annual report.

In addressing the status of the VR Program, the Commission recognized that Indiana VR has undertaken many important initiatives during the past year, and continues to build upon these accomplishments. The Commission enjoys a very positive working relationship with VR and supports their efforts to improve consumer services and the service delivery system.

Each year, hundreds of Hoosiers with disabilities become tax-paying members of our society by achieving employment through assistance provided by VR. Assistance with education, training, vehicle modifications, prostheses fitting, or sensory aids and devices, are among the many services that may be provided by VR, if such services are considered necessary for the individual to achieve employment.

The Commission is a diverse group of individuals, comprised of various areas of interest and expertise appointed by the Governor. Some commissioners have disabilities and may be former consumers. Other members are advocates, employers, and representatives from a variety of organizations seeking to promote independence and full employment of Hoosiers with disabilities.

# GREETINGS FROM THE CHAIRPERSON

As commissioners, we take our responsibilities seriously, in assisting, monitoring, and advising Indiana's VR administration. We have a significant role in reviewing the VR Policy and Procedure Manual updates, the Indiana State Plan for VR, and consumer appeals. We represent the Commission at federal, state and regional conferences, meetings and events to promote a positive perspective about Hoosiers with disabilities seeking employment. Our responsibilities also include attending public hearings and forums to listen to public needs and concerns.

VR and the Commission have successfully worked with service providers, employers, and other state agencies to provide the most comprehensive services to Hoosiers with disabilities. VR continues to provide employment opportunities that foster personal growth and enhance independence.

As I complete my second year as Chairperson of the Commission, I am extremely proud of the accomplishments this group has made this past year. I was also very proud, as the Chairperson of the Commission to have presented our initial four awards to exceptional VR staff. These awards were sponsored by INARF, and speak to our collaborative partnerships and the larger rehabilitation professional community in which we work and effect positive change in the lives of people with disabilities residing in Indiana. As we know, the VR program is evolving with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) regulations and other initiatives. The Commission is elated about the bright future people with disabilities in Indiana will have to achieve their independence and employment.

I wish to encourage the citizens of Indiana to continue to share their concerns, suggestions, and ideas with Commission members. Your input is welcomed by VR and every commissioner, and you will receive a response. We may be contacted through our website: <http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/3355.htm>

Sincerely,



Dan Stewart,

Commission Chairperson

# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Message from the Director

As I reflect on the Bureau of Rehabilitation Services (BRS) 2016 accomplishments and challenges, I am proud of what the Bureau has achieved and hopeful for the coming year. There are many changes and new initiatives ahead as BRS continues to implement new requirements under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), implements a new Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) case management system, enters into establishment projects with community rehabilitation programs (CRPs), and many other initiatives.



Major 2016 accomplishments included assisting more than 3700 individuals with disabilities in achieving their vocational goals in jobs that paid an average of \$13.12 per hour, which is an 8.7% increase in average hourly wages earned by individuals placed in the prior year. BRS also hit the one-year mark under the new VR employment services model, originally implemented in July, 2015, which brought a major re-focus on individualized services and enhanced access to discovery and supported employment services. BRS implemented numerous strategies to build staffing capacity such as piloting VR intake counselors, redistributing coverage areas across field offices, and utilizing itinerant VR Counselors to mentor new staff. Additionally, BRS awarded \$7 Million in funding to 9 collaborative groups of community rehabilitation providers to carry out pre-employment transition services in approximately 50 counties.

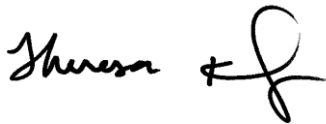
During this past year, BRS made a concentrated effort to identify and share successes, and to recognize staff for the good work they do every day. During the 2016 annual VR Symposium, four amazing individuals - Brian, Jimmy, George, and Meganne - shared their stories and how VR positively impacted their lives. I hope you enjoy reading their stories in this annual report. Another highlight of this year's VR Symposium, was the VR Commission on Rehabilitation Services presentation of the inaugural VR staff awards to four very deserving recipients, whom you can also read about in this report. I said to my staff during our annual symposium that I hope every one of them feels empowered to

## MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

directly impact, for the better, the lives of the individuals that we serve. Despite the significant changes and challenges in front of us, it is imperative that we not lose sight of our purpose and our core mission, to take action every day to help individuals with disabilities to increase their independence and self-sufficiency through greater access to their community, and through competitive, integrated employment.

I have a tremendous amount of gratitude for our staff, our community partners and stakeholders, our commissions and workgroups, and our state and federal partners, in supporting our efforts to continue to provide meaningful opportunities to Hoosiers with disabilities to help them in accomplishing their goals.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Theresa Koleszar". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial "T" and "K".

Theresa Koleszar, MS, CRC,

Director, Bureau of Rehabilitation Services

# THE COMMISSION ON REHABILITATION SERVICES AND VR SERVICES

## The Commission on Rehabilitation Services and VR Services

### MISSION STATEMENT

To assist persons with disabilities in achieving employment and independence.

### VALUES STATEMENT

**VALUE 1** - We value persons with disabilities and their equal opportunity to maximize employment, independence, and, to fully participate in their rehabilitation program.

**VALUE 2** - We value quality services for persons with disabilities to achieve employment and independence.

**VALUE 3** - We value staff as Vocational Rehabilitation Services' greatest resource.

### A SHARED VISION WITH VR SERVICES

Focusing on Long-Term Employment Success for Hoosiers with Disabilities In Partnership with VR Services.

# CELEBRATING OUR SUCCESS!

## Celebrating our Success!

The theme for the VR Services 2016 Fall Symposium, held September 2016, focused on *Celebrating our Success!* The symposium was both a training opportunity and an opportunity to recognize and thank VR staff for their outstanding work, dedication, and accomplishments in ensuring that people with disabilities have the services and supports necessary for them to achieve successful employment.

The symposium included presentations provided by state and nationally recognized vocational rehabilitation leaders. Multiple training sessions gave staff the opportunity to learn about new initiatives and best practices, and engage in meaningful conversations with their peers.

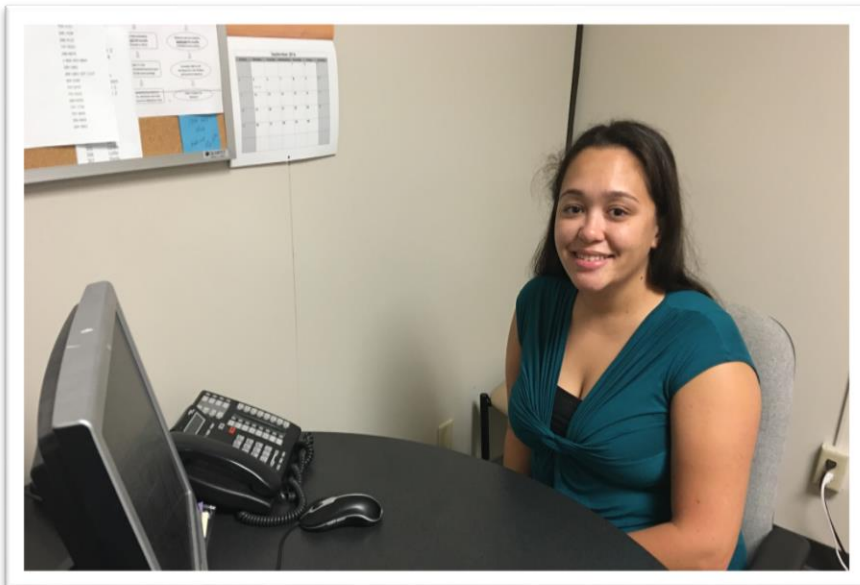
In keeping with the theme of celebrating success, a highlight of the symposium included a VR consumer panel discussion that showcased four incredible VR recipients, who kindly shared their stories and their employment success, describing how VR empowered them to achieve or maintain employment. VR staff were given the opportunity to ask questions and gain insights from the perspective of these VR recipients during this open discussion.



BRS is very excited to feature these individuals and share their successes in this year's annual report!



## MEGANNE WHEELER, VR COUNSELOR



### Meganne Wheeler, VR Counselor

Meganne Wheeler grew up in Greenfield, Indiana about ½ an hour east of Indianapolis. She has been hard of hearing all of her life and got her first pair of hearing aids in kindergarten, which she promptly lost in first grade. She experienced additional loss of hearing in the 8th grade due to a hit on her chin during

softball practice. In the summer of 2007, she had the same thing happen again while diving for a ball right before a game.

Meganne has always had the desire to work with people with disabilities, particularly those who are deaf or hard of hearing, but finding a career was hard to choose, since just about any career can be used to serve this population. It was suggested to her that she consider VR as a career as that would provide her with the opportunity to work with a wide range of individuals from many different backgrounds, giving her the diversity she was seeking.

When Meganne was starting college she had her sights set on attending Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, and was able to transfer to Ball State halfway through her freshman year. There, she received both her bachelor's degree in psychology with a minor in interpersonal relations, and a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling. Meganne also became a Certified Rehabilitation Counselor (CRC). Meganne received assistance from VR in completing her education as well as assistance with obtaining hearing aids that meet her needs.

Meganne was hired by VR and started working as a VR Counselor in June, 2016. Meganne looks forward to learning more about the field and how to work with individuals from many different backgrounds.

# JAMES (JIMMY) BLAIR KENNEDY III, COMMUNICATIONS MAJOR

## James (Jimmy) Blair Kennedy III, Communications Major

Jimmy has been a TV/radio/public relations contributor for the Indianapolis Colts since 2009. He has been featured as a team correspondent on the WTTV program Colts Up Close with Jeffrey Gorman, discussing team related activities including upcoming games and the NFL Draft. With the Indianapolis Colts public relations department, Jimmy serves as part of the game services press box staff. His duties include supervising and coordinating the broadcast needs of media members on the field during home games. This will be his third season.



VR Counselor- Julia A. Blunk, Jimmy Kennedy & Marie Kennedy

Jimmy was named the Most Outstanding Freshman in the Communication Department at UIndy for having an overall 4.0 GPA and the highest overall GPA among freshman in the Communication Department. As part of UIndy TV5's staff, Jimmy contributed to the sports department as a play-by-play commentator, color analyst, and correspondent producing story packages for live remote broadcasts. Jimmy returns to WICR as a contributor to their sports department, serving as a play-by-play commentator, color analyst, and studio reporter. Jimmy also serves WICR as an on-air personality for jazz and pop music formats.

Jimmy was the sports director for CHTV at Carmel High School for 3 years where he hosted, wrote, and produced, a monthly half hour sports program called Sound of the Hound. He also served as the lead play-by-play and color commentator for remote broadcasts on a weekly basis from 2010-2013, including state tournaments for football and basketball.

In addition to assisting Jimmy with some of the costs of his college education, VR has also provided services and supports to help Jimmy safely and independently get around his college campus, as well as drivers training and modifications to his vehicle, allowing him to keep up with his busy TV/radio experiences, building on his already excellent skills as he works toward his employment goal. Upon graduation in May of 2017 Jimmy hopes to work in the communications field for a professional sports organization.

Jimmy, who has cerebral palsy, has also been a public speaker with the non-profit organization Timmy Global Health. Through his presentations to schools, businesses, and organizations, he attempts to promote an initiative of ability rather than disability.

# BRIAN CHRISTIAN, BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM



## Brian Christian, Business Enterprise Program

Brian Christian is an Indianapolis native. After high school, he enlisted in the U.S. Navy and served during Operation Desert Shield and Operation Desert Storm aboard the U.S.S. Saratoga. After his service, he returned to Indiana, met his wife, and started a family. Brian then began working with a national engineering firm and ran a survey crew.

In 2007, at the age of 35, Brian began having difficulty with his vision and had a routine eye exam. The exam resulted in a diagnosis of Leber's Hereditary Optic Neuropathy (LHON). LHON is an incurable disease resulting in blindness. Blindness occurs because the mitochondrial DNA attacks the optic nerves in the eyes causing a loss

of central vision. By the time Brian received an official diagnosis, he had significant vision loss in both eyes.

After working with VR to prepare for his employment outcome, he completed training to become a licensed vendor for the Business Enterprise Program (BEP). The BEP is a program authorized under the Randolph-Sheppard Act, and enables state VR agencies to recruit, train, license, and place individuals who are blind, as operators of vending facilities located on federal and state properties. In addition to receiving assistance from VR to become a licensed vendor, VR also provided Brian with computer training and equipment, and orientation and mobility training to help him learn to safely navigate his surroundings and maintain his independence with daily living skills. Brian now owns his own vending business with the Pendleton Correctional Industrial Facility.

## G. GEORGE PANCOL, JUDGE



Denise G Garzon – Assistive Technology Specialist & Judge Pancol

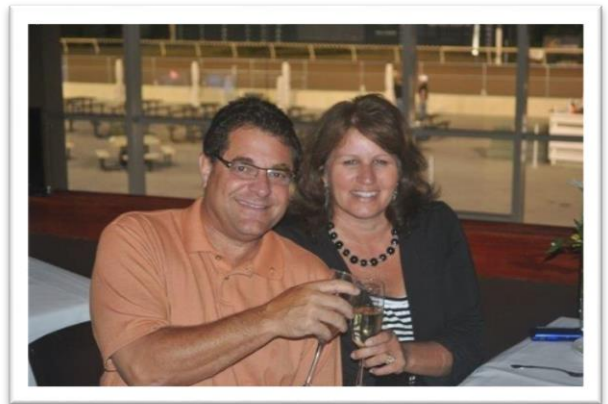
### G. George Pancol, Judge

George Pancol is a life-time resident of Indiana. He graduated from Anderson High School, Indiana University, and the IU School of Law, Indianapolis. After law school, he returned to Anderson and started a solo law practice, and worked in the prosecutor's office as a public defender.

In 2009, George was elected to serve his first term as a Madison County Juvenile Court Judge after 30 years in private practice. In 2014, he was uncontested in his bid for re-election and is now serving his second term.

Over the past few years, George rapidly lost his vision and is now completely blind. In 2013, his wife Anne contacted VR Services. George received orientation and mobility training and worked with an itinerant rehabilitation teacher to safely navigate his environment without the use of his vision.

George also learned new ways of performing various task at work, which included how to use assistive technology and specialized computer software like JAWS, and Dragon Naturally Speaking. With VR's assistance in obtaining these services and receiving training on how to effectively use this assistive technology, George has been able to continue to perform his judicial duties. He is a testament to the fact that VR can truly make a difference in a life.



George and his wife Anne



# CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE!



VR Director Theresa Koleszar, Dayna Adams, MaryAnn Hamilton, Erich Krueger, Rhonda Marcum & Commission Chair Dan Stewart

## Celebrating Excellence!

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services had a strong desire to recognize VR staff and the good work they do. This resulted in the Commission implementing a VR staff awards initiative in 2016, which led to presenting the inaugural VR staff awards to four very deserving VR employees during the VR 2016 Fall Symposium. This initiative was extremely well received by VR staff, who were eager to nominate their co-workers and share in congratulating the four award recipients!



### *Support Staff of the Year – Secretary or Case Coordinator Dayna Adams, VR Case Coordinator, Vincennes, IN*

*'Dayna demonstrates a balance between deep compassion for the people she serves and clearly communicating expectations that they need to meet. Dayna exemplifies the best in the core vision of VR by serving people to give them their best opportunity to overcome limitations. Dayna always answers the phone with a cheerful helpful voice. She is knowledgeable about VR processes and ensures that both questions and information get to the right people so that the process can work for the consumer.'*

# CELEBRATING EXCELLENCE!

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## ***Counselor of the Year – Any VR Counselor***

***Mary Ann Hamilton, VR Counselor, Indianapolis, IN***

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*‘Mary Ann works tirelessly until she finds a solution to meet the needs of VR customers. Her attitude is always positive. She works for the clients to find solutions that will enable them to be self-sufficient. She does not think about what the customer cannot do, but strives to find the resources to assist them in achieving what they can do. Mary Ann is a skilled mentor for newly hired VR Counselors. Her innovation for developing better solutions for case management, case processing, and organization has been extremely beneficial. Not only is Mary Ann a leader among her fellow counselors, she serves on many committees and focus groups, where her knowledge is an invaluable contribution in improving VR services.’*



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## ***Rising Star – All VR Staff employed 36 months or less***

***Erich Krueger, VR Case Coordinator, Indianapolis, IN***

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*‘Erich is the backbone of everything fiscal. He makes sure authorizations land in the correct hands, ensures paperwork is accurate so vendors can get paid, and takes care to see that everything balances. Erich is always willing to jump in where he is needed, and I cannot count the number of times I have heard him say “I like to help.” Erich’s hard work and outstanding attitude is beyond commendable. He is a tremendous asset to the VR office on a daily basis.’*

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## ***Leadership – Management staff other than the State BRS Director***

***Rhonda Marcum, Director of Deaf & Hard of Hearing Services, Central Office***

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*‘Rhonda is knowledgeable about numerous resources including various government and other programs, legislation and disability, new developments in communication and technology, hearing devices, computer systems, interpreter issues, etc. Over her 30 years in VR Services and Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services, she has laid a foundation for VR services, interpreting services, education, referral, and advocacy that is unsurpassable.’*

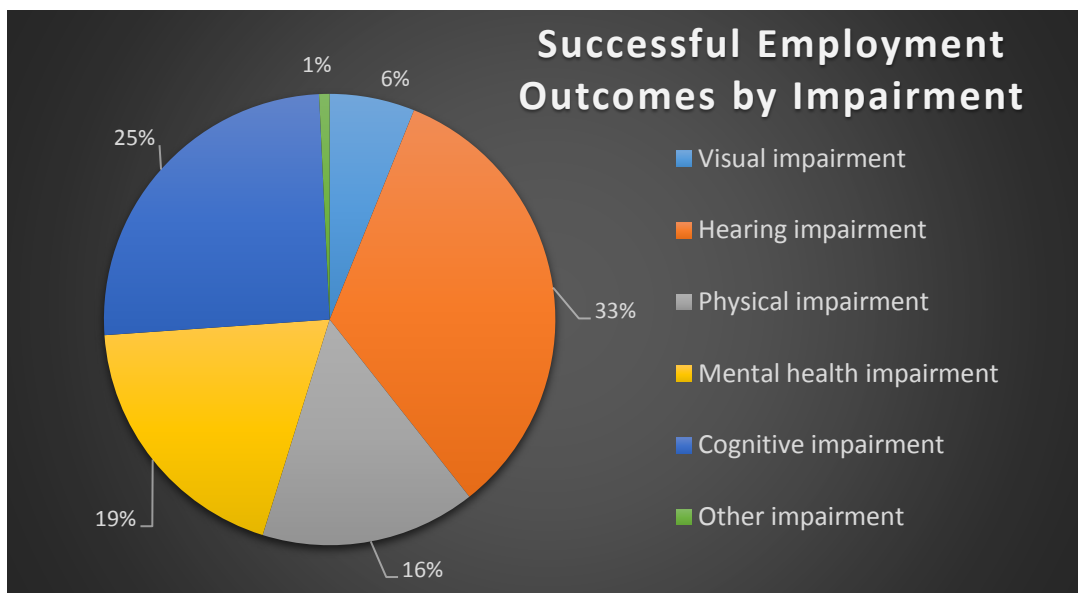


# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Accomplishments

2016 was a year of many exciting accomplishments in BRS!

- VR assisted more than 3700 individuals with disabilities in achieving their vocational goal, in jobs that paid on average, \$13.12 per hour. This is an 8.7% increase in average hourly wages earned by individuals placed in the prior year.



- BRS completed one full year under the new VR employment services model, originally implemented in July, 2015. These significant revisions brought a major re-focus on individualized services and enhanced access to discovery and supported employment services. Many additional enhancements and revisions to the model were implemented this past year to increase the effectiveness of the model and increase access to necessary services, especially for individuals with the most significant disabilities.
- As referrals to VR continue to increase, BRS implemented numerous strategies to build staffing capacity. Key strategies included piloting VR intake counselors, redistributing coverage areas across field offices, and utilizing itinerant VR Counselors to mentor new staff.

# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- BRS focused a great deal of effort this past year on understanding new federal requirements with the release of the federal regulations, following the signing of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) into law. More information about BRS' progress in implementing these new requirements can be viewed in the next section.
- This year, Indiana VR's Business Engagement Team has focused its work on raising awareness and changing perceptions of employment for individuals with disabilities. Many businesses are not aware of the supports and resources available, and BRS is working hard to change this through the efforts of the Business and Community Engagement unit. Some highlights for 2016 include:
  - Supporting the re-launch of the Indianapolis Chapter of the Business Leadership Network. This is the only Indianapolis area business to business mentoring group focusing on the hiring of individuals with disabilities;



- Working with Indianapolis area community rehabilitation providers to produce an annual Career Expo hiring event for job seekers with disabilities;
- Sustaining a strong collaboration with the Department of Workforce Development's Employer Engagement Division, serving as subject matter experts regarding employment for job seekers with disabilities;



# ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Providing ongoing support to industry leaders including Toyota Manufacturing, Pepsi, Staples, and AutoZone with their disability hiring initiatives;



BRS Business & Community Engagement and DDRS Leadership touring Toyota Princeton, IN

- Celebrated a first appearance on the television show *Inside Indiana Business* to raise awareness of employment for job seekers with disabilities as an untapped workforce.



DDRS Director Kylee Hope (left) was interviewed by Barbra Lewis on Inside Indiana Business

- In recognition of *National Disability Employment Awareness Month*, coordinating a month long social media campaign and providing a Disability Etiquette/Awareness resource guide to employers.

# WORKFORCE INNOVATION AND OPPORTUNITY ACT

## Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act

On July 22, 2014, President Obama signed into law the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA), which reauthorizes and updates the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 (the law providing oversight of the public VR system). Federal regulations were released in August, 2016 and went into effect for the VR program in September, 2016. Some of the most significant new requirements impact students with disabilities, youth seeking sub-minimum wage employment, and adults employed at sub-minimum wage.



President Obama Signs the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act – July 22, 2014

BRS has provided information to various audiences to help educate on these new requirements, including the Indiana Association of Rehabilitation Facilities (INARF), the Bureau of Developmental Disability Services (BDDS), the VR Employment Advisory Group, the VR Transition Advisory Group, the Division of Disability and Rehabilitative Services (DDRS) Advisory Group, the VR Commission, and others. A brief webinar was also recorded as part of the DDRS informational series, designed to provide key information to individuals with disabilities, their families, and other stakeholders.

## Pre-Employment Transition Services

To better prepare students with disabilities for competitive, integrated employment, VR agencies must set aside 15% of federal VR program funds each year (approximately \$9 million for Indiana) to provide pre-employment transition services (Pre-ETS) to eligible and potentially eligible students with disabilities. Students with disabilities are those students, age 14-22 who are in school, and who receive services under an Individualized Education Program (IEP), receive accommodations pursuant to a Section 504 plan, or are individuals with a disability as defined in the Rehabilitation Act, including students identified with a serious emotional disturbance.

There are five required Pre-ETS activities:

- job exploration counseling
- work-based learning experiences
- counseling on opportunities for enrollment in comprehensive transition or postsecondary educational programs at institutions of higher education
- workplace readiness training to develop social skills and independent living
- instruction in self-advocacy

BRS awarded \$7 million in funding, over two years, to nine collaborative groups of community rehabilitation programs (CRPs) to assist in carrying out Pre-ETS in approximately 50 counties across the state. These projects began October, 2016. To expand the reach of pre-ETS and ensure these activities are available to students in every county, BRS is exploring additional collaboration and funding opportunities in 2017.

# LIMITATIONS ON SUB-MINIMUM WAGE EMPLOYMENT

## Limitations on Sub-minimum Wage Employment

WIOA also introduced new requirements for individuals in sub-minimum wage employment, designed to ensure individuals have meaningful opportunities for competitive, integrated employment. VR must provide career counseling and information and referral services to individuals employed at sub-minimum wage.

Additionally, youth who are seeking sub-minimum wage employment must complete a series of activities designed to ensure they have meaningful access to prepare for and achieve competitive, integrated employment. Youth, who are individuals with disabilities age 24 and under, will be unable to enter into sub-minimum wage employment prior to completing the following activities:

- receive Pre-ETS, or transition services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA); AND
- apply for VR services resulting in a determination of ineligibility, OR a determination of eligibility but be ultimately closed unsuccessfully from VR because the youth was unable to achieve competitive, integrated employment after a reasonable period of time, while receiving all necessary services and supports; AND
- receive career counseling and information and referral services.

To learn more about this new requirement, check out BRS' Section 511 Overview and FAQ on the DDRS announcements site <http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/4329.htm>.

BRS conducted a survey with entities who employ individuals at sub-minimum wage, and is reviewing data collected through that survey to gain insight on the number of individuals employed at sub-minimum who may need CCIR services. BRS is partnering with the ARC of Indiana and Self-Advocates of Indiana to carry out CCIR activities throughout the state for individuals employed at sub-minimum wage. These activities will be provided in groups settings, or one-on-one based on the needs of each individual.

## Commission Information and Updates

### **Commission Functions**

The Commission's responsibilities are outlined in Section 105 of the Rehabilitation Act. In performing the following functions, the Commission must consult with the State Workforce Investment Board:

- Review, analyze, and advise the VR Services program regarding their performance related to eligibility, order of selection, the extent, scope and effectiveness of VR Services, and functions performed by VR Services that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities to achieve an employment outcome.

In partnership with the VR Services program, the Commission must:

- Develop, agree to, and review the state's goals and priorities;
- Evaluate the effectiveness of the VR Services program and submit an annual report to the Commissioner of the Rehabilitation Services Administration;
- Assist with the comprehensive statewide needs assessment of individuals with disabilities living in the state, which is undertaken every three years;
- Advise VR Services regarding its activities;
- Assist in the preparation of the State Plan, amendments to the Plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations, including those necessary for the VR Services program to satisfy the requirements of developing a comprehensive system of personnel development and establishing an order of selection;
- Review and analyze the effectiveness of and consumer satisfaction with VR Services functions, services provided by VR Services and others, and employment outcomes achieved by VR Services consumers;

## COMMISSION INFORMATION AND UPDATES

- Prepare and submit an annual report to the governor and the commissioner of the U. S. Department of Education's Rehabilitation Services Administration on the status of the VR Program in the state, and make the report available to the public;
- Coordinate the activities of the State Rehabilitation Council with the activities of other councils, such as the State Independent Living Council (SILC), the advisory panel established under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), the State Developmental Disabilities Council, the State Mental Health Planning Council, and the State Workforce Investment Board;
- Provide for the coordination and the establishment of working relationships between VR Services and the State Independent Living Council and the Centers for Independent Living; and
- Perform other functions that are determined appropriate and comparable to the State Rehabilitation Council's other functions, provided they are consistent with the purpose of Title I of the Rehabilitation Act and its implementing regulations.



# COMMISSION ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## Commission Accomplishments

The following accomplishments were achieved by the Commission during 2016:

- Represented the Commission at the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) Fall Training in Seattle, Washington on October 31, 2015 – November 1, 2015;
- Conducted a business meeting at the Arc Training Institute and Teaching Hotel in Muncie, IN, which is a nationally recognized training opportunity that develops employment skills to enable people with disabilities to obtain employment. The meeting included the opportunity to meet with training students and tour the hotel.
- Reviewed committee descriptions and re-aligned committee responsibilities and membership to be more effective;
- Expanded committee work to include the development of a BRS Awards Committee to recognize outstanding VR staff during the annual BRS Fall Symposium;
- Evaluated VR appeal decisions and made recommendations for changes when systemic issues were identified;
- Attended the VR Symposium held on September 28-29, 2016;
- Achieved the goal of networking with other governor-appointed boards, councils, and commissions, as well as agencies and organizations, to enhance the visibility of the Commission and to provide linkages by participating in related events throughout the year;
- Identified guest presentations for each meeting as a mechanism for collaboration and outreach to expand statewide awareness of the Commission;
- Worked with state government leaders in an effort to ensure that the Commission's membership was in compliance with federal mandates;

## Commission Focus 2017

Throughout 2017 the Commission will continue to develop mechanisms to ensure public participation in meetings. In addition, the Commission will continue to develop guest presentations for each meeting. The scheduled presentations will provide a shared opportunity for greater collaboration between the Commission and other agencies and organizations. This will expand the Commission's knowledge and enhance awareness of the Commission.

The Commission recognizes that BRS has undertaken many important initiatives during the past year and continues to build on these accomplishments. The Commission enjoys a very positive working relationship with BRS and supports their efforts to improve consumer services and the service delivery system.

As the Commission looks to the future, its members will continue to work in partnership with BRS to review VR goals and priorities and provide feedback on strengths and areas of improvement. During federal fiscal year 2017, the Commission will continue to focus its attention on WIOA, with a greater emphasis on transition from school to work. Additionally, the Commission will focus attention on consumer satisfaction and outreach efforts and an increased public awareness of the Commission and opportunities for consumer participation on the Commission. Measures will be taken to enhance the visibility of the Commission and BRS and provide linkages to other agencies and programs, resulting in greater public awareness of BRS programs. Furthermore, the Commission looks forward to leading the VR staff awards initiative again next year!



## Commission Outreach

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services recognizes the importance of outreach activities throughout the state, which have included networking with governor-appointed boards, councils, and commissions, as well as other agencies and organizations. Appropriate steps were taken to ensure Commission member representation at conferences throughout the year. Each year the Commission develops a new work plan for outreach which includes the identification of major training events.

The Commission on Rehabilitation Services welcomes your opinion about how BRS is meeting your needs and employment goals. The information collected will help the Commission and BRS to improve services and expand employment opportunities for all Hoosiers with disabilities.

- Please contact us if you would like to:
  - Learn more about the Commission
  - Share your ideas
  - Attend a Commission meeting
  - Be considered for appointment to the Commission

# COMMISSION MEMBERS

## Commission Members

The Rehabilitation Act requires the State VR Agency to establish a State Rehabilitation Council (SRC). Council members are appointed by the governor and serve no more than two consecutive full terms. No terms can exceed three years.

Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services is comprised of the following individuals representing specific categories, identified below, as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Section 361.17.

### **Commission Officers:**

**Dan Stewart**, Chairperson, Richmond, IN

Representing disability groups that include a cross section of individuals with disabilities who have difficulty representing themselves or are unable, due to their disabilities, to represent themselves

**Tim Kirk**, Vice-Chairperson, Vincennes, IN

Representing a Community Rehabilitation Program

**Scott Beauchamp**, Secretary, Indianapolis, IN

Representing Business, Industry, or Labor

Secretary 9-2015 to 9-2016

**Dee Ann Hart**, Secretary, Muncie, IN

Representing Business, Industry, or Labor

Secretary, beginning 9-2016

# COMMISSION MEMBERS

## **Other Members:**

**Chris Cleveland**, Indianapolis, IN

Representing the Independent Living Council (*pending appointment*)

**Tony Cross**, Greenfield, IN

Representing Business, Industry, and Labor

**Nancy Davisson**, Vincennes, IN

Representing the IN Department of Workforce Development (*pending appointment*)

**Dana Long**, Indianapolis, IN

Representing the IN Department of Education (*pending appointment*)

**Erica Macke**, Avon, IN

Representing disability groups that include a cross-section of individuals with various disabilities, representatives of individuals with disabilities, current and/or former applicants for, and/or recipients of VR Services

**James Michaels**, Indianapolis, IN

Representing disability groups that include a cross-section of individuals with various disabilities, representatives of individuals with disabilities, current and/or former applicants for, and/or recipients of VR Services

**Emily Munson**, Indianapolis, IN

Representing the Client Assistance Program

**Karen Rusk**, Brownsburg, IN

Representing a parent training and information center established pursuant to section 682(a) of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

**Traci Anne Taylor**, Richmond, IN

Representing disability groups that include a cross-section of individuals with various disabilities, representatives of individuals with disabilities, current and/or former applicants for, and/or recipients of, VR Services

# COMMISSION MEMBERS

## **Ex-Officio Non-Voting Members:**

**Theresa Koleszar**, Director  
Bureau of Rehabilitation Services, Indianapolis, IN

**Steve Henderson**, VR Counselor  
Elkhart, IN

## **BRS Representation - non-voting**

**Mary Hamilton**, Indianapolis, IN  
Representing VR Services Counselors

**Teresa Hudson**, Vincennes, IN  
Representing VR Services Area Supervisors

**Theresa Kaplon**, Elkhart, IN  
Representing VR Services Area Supervisors

# CONTACT THE COMMISSION

## Contact the Commission

You may contact the Commission by telephone, mail, e-mail, or by visiting the Web site.

<http://www.in.gov/fssa/ddrs/3355.htm>

E-mail: [VRCommission@fssa.IN.gov](mailto:VRCommission@fssa.IN.gov)

Mail to:

**Indiana Commission on Rehabilitation Services**

c/o Vocational Rehabilitation Services

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Indiana's Commission on Rehabilitation Services is a member of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC).

The NCSRC is a national organization comprised of State Rehabilitation Councils (SRCs) throughout the United States that work in partnership with the public vocational rehabilitation program to represent the consumer voice in enhancing employment opportunities for people with disabilities.

NCSRC website: [www.ncsrc.net](http://www.ncsrc.net)