#### Report of the Nebraska

# State Rehabilitation Council

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#### **Contact information:**

The State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) values the input and involvement of all citizens in Nebraska regarding rehabilitation services. All SRC meetings are open to the public and are a great opportunity for the public to voice concerns and opinions.

#### Meetings:

Meeting dates, times, and locations are posted on the Nebraska VR website at vr.nebraska.gov.

#### Write:

State Rehabilitation Council Chairperson Nebraska Department of Education 500 S. 84th St., 2nd Floor P.O. Box 94987 Lincoln, NE 68509

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#### State Rehabilitation Council

Nebraska Department of Education

December 30, 2025

On behalf of the Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council (SRC), I am happy to present the 2024-2025 Annual Report.

This report highlights the collaboration between State Rehabilitation Council members and Nebraska VR, aimed at ensuring individuals with disabilities in Nebraska have access to valuable employment opportunities. I would like to extend my gratitude to SRC members and Nebraska VR staff for the opportunity to have served as Chairperson this year and for continued opportunities to serve on the SRC. This year, we have worked hard and have once again seen many amazing accomplishments from our many partners and clients.

Over this past year, the SRC was provided quarterly reports from the Client Assistance Program, the Nebraska Assistive Technology Partnership (ATP), the Nebraska Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Project SEARCH, Nebraska Youth Leadership Council (NYLC), and the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (NCDHH). Nebraska VR Director Lindy Foley and ATP Director Tobias Orr provided updates including:

- · Developments on the State and Federal level
- Steps forward in Quality Assurance and Leadership
- Progress with the Employment Work Group for the State of Nebraska's Olmstead Plan

The Client Services Committee, Employer Services Committee, Transition Services Committee, and Executive Committee continue to work to ensure Nebraska VR clients have the most positive and successful experiences possible. The goal to increase the SRC's membership from each corner of the state to include urban and rural former clients and business partners continues.

For outreach initiatives, Council members forwarded information about Nebraska VR's services and the previous year's SRC Annual Report to State Senators. Messaging included the SRC's appreciation for continued funding from both the client and business partner perspective.

Finally, thank you to all the Council members, partners, and Nebraska VR staff members for their work to meet the needs of clients, students, and partners.

Respectfully,

Christine Gaspari

Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council



Ashley is an Education, Youth, and Family Liaison for the Nebraska Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing.

Ashley Altman-Omaha



Jodi is the Director of the Client Assistance Program.

Jodi Bodnar-Omaha



Jordyn is a School Age Special Education Specialist with the Department of Education, Office of Special Education.

Jordyn Brummund-Lincoln



Mike is the Director of HR at West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc. Mike serves on the SRC as a business, industry, and labor representative.

Michael Bursaw-Ravenna



Jana is an HR
Consultant for Mutual of
Omaha. She serves on
the SRC as a business,
industry, and labor
representative.

Jana Egan-Omaha

## **SRC Committee Reports**

#### **Transition Services Committee**

Members: Gloria Eddins (Chair), Ashley Altman, Jordyn Brummund, Sharon Elliot, Jason Gieschen, Paulette Monthei, and Nebraska VR Advisor Lupe Stevens.



Transition Services Committee Chairperson – Gloria Eddins

Gloria is the State of Nebraska ADA Coordinator.

Gloria Eddins-Lincoln

The Transition Services Committee discussions included:

- Review of 2025 Summer Transition Programs for students with disabilities ages 14-21.
- Exploration of how Pre-Employment Transition Services can increase the participation and success of young adults 18-21 who may have met credit requirements for graduation.
- Methods to reconnect with youth who have graduated and not applied for VR Employment Services.
- Continued advocacy to advance the idea that most people with disabilities can work.

#### Client Services Committee

Members: Lisa Kent-Scheer (Chair), Jodi Bodnar, Christine Gaspari, Matthew Kaslon, Alvin Parker, Janel Sweley, and Nebraska VR Advisor Angela Fujan.



Client Services Committee Chairperson

– Lisa Kent-Scheer

Lisa serves as a current or former applicant for or recipient of vocational rehabilitation services.

Lisa Kent-Scheer-Omaha

This year the Client Services Committee focused on understanding the client experience while receiving Nebraska VR services. The satisfaction survey was updated to ask more specific questions about respectful treatment, responsiveness, and how involved clients felt in making decisions. The Committee supported the new system where each office designates a staff member to complete surveys for another team which ensured quality data collection improved survey participation. The feedback included 96% of respondents reporting high satisfaction in these areas. In addition, 92% of surveyed clients were still employed and 90% said their job meets their current needs.

The Committee supports expanding surveys to include more clients who may not have had successful employment outcomes. This would help identify

opportunities for improvement by collecting feedback from clients with a range of experiences. The Committee also recommended exploring costs and feasibility of contracting with an external provider to support this work.

In addition, the Committee discussed the need to address challenges for clients who experience behavioral or mental health challenges. The Committee supports the following:

- Adding mental health awareness and strategies into staff development and using statewide training events to help build skills in this area.
- Ongoing training in Motivational Interviewing to help staff continue strengthening communication and rapport with clients.

#### **Employer Services Committee**

Members: Todd Ludwig (Chair), Michael Bursaw, Jana Egan, Tobias Orr, Scott Parrill, Terri Ridder, and Nebraska VR Advisor Michael Enriquez.



Employer Services Committee Chairperson – Todd Ludwig

Todd joined the SRC representing business, industry, and labor. He is the Talent Acquisition Manager of the Department of Transportation.

Todd Ludwig-Lincoln

On October 1, 2024, the SRC hosted the Disability Employment and Inclusion Awards in Lincoln at the Department of Education. Five Nebraska VR partners were celebrated and featured in a video during the event. Nebraska VR Director Lindy Foley was the emcee. SRC Council Chairperson Christine Gaspari shared information about the SRC and how award recipients are chosen from nominations. Guest speakers, Governor Jim Pillen and Department of Education Commissioner Dr. Brian Maher, shared remarks about the importance of creating opportunities for individuals with disabilities in Nebraska.

Planning began for the next award ceremony at the May 2025 meeting. It was decided to ask the Governor and the Education Commissioner to speak at the next event. Additionally, the Committee determined it was important to ask each Service Office to nominate at least two businesses in the future.

The Committee met in July to review 37 award nominations for the 2025 event. Five partners were selected and recipients were announced to the Council at the August meeting. The Nebraska VR Committee Advisor shared nominees not chosen for the SRC award will receive "You Make a Difference" certificates as part of their social media campaign during National Disability Employment Awareness Month.

The Employment Committee thanks member Terri Ridder, whose term is ending due to her retirement from Franciscan Care Services, for her dedication and involvement. Thank you also to Nebraska VR and ATP staff members for their assistance and guidance.



Sharon Elliot-Omaha

Sharon works for the Parent Training and Information Center (PTI).



Christine represents the Statewide Independent Living Council. Christine serves as the SRC Chairperson.

Christine Gaspari-Kearney



Jason serves as a current or former applicant for or recipient of vocational rehabilitation services.

Jason Gieschen-Ogallala



Matt serves as a current or former applicant for or recipient of vocational rehabilitation services.

Matt Kaslon-Grand Island



Paulette serves as a member at large.

Paulette Monthei-Omaha



Alvin is a Representative of the Winnebago Tribal VR.

Alvin Parker-Winnebago



Scott is the District Manager at Pizza Ranch. Scott serves on the SRC as a business, industry, and labor representative.

Scott Parrill-Louisville



Terri serves as a representative of the State Workforce Investment Board.

Terri Ridder-West Point



In his role as Director of Assistive Technology Partnership, Tobias is a provider of community rehabilitation program services.

Tobias Orr-Lincoln



Janel works at the Grand Island Nebraska VR Service Office. She serves on the SRC as a qualified vocational rehabilitation counselor.

Janel Sweley-Grand Island

## Director's Message



Lindy Foley-Director Nebraska VR

As I complete my eighth year as Nebraska VR Director, I am grateful for the ongoing opportunities to lead such a dedicated and innovative staff. For the last two years, the agency's call to action has focused on improving the quality of outcomes, leveraging resources, and developing partnerships while honing our skills as continuous learners. Each of these priorities were highlighted during an all-staff training conference in July.

Bringing all the staff together after more than a decade was a significant achievement and it exceeded

expectations. The conference theme was "Back to the Future". In a nod to our tagline "Where your future begins", the theme underscored the importance of getting back to the place our agency was prior to wait lists and the challenges of a global pandemic. The training equipped staff with the tools to navigate changes in technology, workforce trends, and the specific needs of the clients and students served across the state. These fresh perspectives help the agency accomplish the goals documented in Nebraska's Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) Combined State Plan.

Nebraska VR's tagline is intended to resonate for clients, students, businesses, partners, and each of us, as employees. While our caseloads and even the work may look differently than before, the dedication to supporting our mission, vision, and values is, in fact, how we get back to the future or, more specifically, be the place and space where futures begin.

This next year is sure to be filled with more innovation and forward thinking. We need and rely on the SRC to be engaged in ongoing conversations about services. I have no doubt, together we will accomplish great things for Nebraskans who experience disabilities and our many business and community partners across the state!

Lindy Foley

Nebraska VR Director

# Nebraska VR Funding

Every \$1.00 appropriated
to Nebraska VR from
the State of Nebraska
earns \$3.69 in Federal
Funding for services
to Nebraskans with
disabilities.

# Return on Investment for the Nebraska VR Program

Average Cost of Nebraska VR Services per Person:	\$43,650.72	
Average Annual Earnings after Nebraska VR Services:	\$30,534.40	
Estimated Annual Taxes on Earnings:		
Federal Income Tax	\$1,645.80	
State Income Tax	\$741.99	
Social Security Tax	\$2,335.88	
Average Total Taxes per Year	\$4,723.67	
Average Return to Taxpayers over 30 Remaining		
Years of Employment	\$141,710.10	

On average, a successfully employed person returns \$3.25 to the taxpayers for every \$1 spent through Nebraska VR services.

# Annual Program Costs

	Cost of Program
Administration	\$4,576,075
Client Services	Cost of Program
Provided by VR Staff	\$15,168,741
Purchased from Community Rehab Programs	\$2,260,995
Purchased from Other Vendors	\$4,359,223
Total	\$26,365,035

#### **Purchased for Clients**

Purchased for Clients	Cost of Program
Assessment	\$334,007
Pre-Employment Transition Services	\$620,205
Supported Employment	\$2,066,899
Occupational/Vocational Training	\$206,279
Transportation	\$98,344
Maintenance - Increased Living Costs	\$60,621
Benefits Counseling	\$76,585
Rehab Technology	\$1,055,485
Interpreter	\$24,929
Short Term Supports	\$73,828
Diagnosis and Treatment	\$3,200
Junior or Community College Training	\$164,312
Four Year College Training	\$381,363
On-the-Job Training	\$2,178
Miscellaneous Training	\$31,548
Graduate College	\$132,043
Customized Supported Employment	\$14,597
Job Placement Assistance	\$3,278
Disability-Related Skills Training	\$3,605
Job Search Assistance	\$1,174,114
Registered Apprenticeship	\$4,033
Home Modification	\$40,411
Extended Services	\$10,407
Other Services	\$37,949
Total	\$6,620,219

# Individuals Served by Nebraska VR

#### Clients Served by County

County Total	County Total
CountyTotal	CountyTotal
Adams180	Jefferson2
Antelope7	Johnson2
Arthur0	Kearney7
Banner1	Keith14
Blaine0	Keya Paha0
Boone8	Kimball3
Box Butte23	Knox18
Boyd0	Lancaster584
Brown3	Lincoln 128
Buffalo 159	Logan1
Burt14	Loup0
Butler 13	Madison168
Cass25	McPherson0
Cedar5	Merrick13
Chase2	Morrill7
Cherry7	Nance5
Cheyenne18	Nemaha7
Clay20	Nuckolls8
Colfax8	Otoe19
Cuming16	Pawnee3
Custer9	Perkins3
Dakota22	Phelps6
Dawes9	Pierce10
Dawson37	Platte 118
Deuel0	Polk9
Dixon4	Red Willow18
Dodge71	Richardson4
Douglas803	Rock3
Dundy0	Saline21
Fillmore8	Sarpy205
Franklin1	Saunders31
Frontier5	Scotts Bluff 131
Furnas4	Seward22
Gage40	Sheridan6
Garden2	Sherman2
Garfield1	Sioux0
Gosper8	Stanton 8
Grant0	Thayer7
Greeley2	Thomas1
Hall260	Thurston4
Hamilton27	Valley5
Harlan4	Washington25
Hayes2	Wayne8
Hitchcock4	Webster7
Holt19	Wheeler 0
Hooker1	York29
Howard12	Total Served 3536
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#### 2025 Nebraska VR Employment Program

Applied for Services	2399
Received Services	1660
Successfully Employed	604

#### Successfully Employed Nebraska VR Clients



49% of clients are employed full-time.

Average hourly wage for 2025 is \$18.88

#### 2025 Occupation & Earnings for Competitively Employed Clients

Occupations	Percent	Average Hourly Earnings
Service	28%	\$14.29
Professional	21%	\$24.82
Transportation & Material Moving	14%	\$16.29
Sales	11%	\$15.24
Office Support	9%	\$17.82
Production	5%	\$20.15
Installation, Maintenance, & Repairs	4%	\$20.63
Management, Business, & Finance	4%	\$33.60
Construction & Extraction	2%	\$19.12
Farming, Fishing, & Forestry	1%	\$38.99

### **Transition Works**

Nebraska VR Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinators work with schools and other organizations across the state to help students, aged 14 to 21, plan for the future and prepare for careers that match their skills, abilities, and interests. The scope of Nebraska VR Pre-Employment Transition Services is to provide students with exposure to various jobs and career paths through exploration activities. In coordination with your school and businesses in your community, you will gain skills and abilities to be successful after high school.

#### Learning to Earn

Macy Munderloh, a West Point High School student, first learned about Nebraska VR from her teacher, Mrs. Rood, during her junior year of high school. After her first meeting with Nebraska VR Pre-Employment Transition Services Coordinator Misti Halsey, Macy had a great first impression. She saw the advantage of Pre-Employment Transition Services to be helping high school students begin to explore different types of jobs. Macy experiences a learning disability that makes it difficult to stay focused and on-task. This sometimes makes it difficult for Macy to understand what is expected in a workplace setting.

Before helping Macy with the job exploration, Misti learned about Macy's skills and interests, instructed her in self-advocacy, and provided her with work readiness training. They also practiced skills for interacting with co-workers and supervisors. When out in her community, Macy got the opportunity to complete two job shadows at Graybeal's Food and Hy-Vee Dollar Fresh. During a Work-Based Learning Experience (WBLE) at the Hillside Villa Nursing Home, she gained hands-on experience working in a variety of different positions. She started in the dining area serving the residents and setting up dining tables. She then transferred to the laundry area and worked in the kitchen.

When asked how it felt to be in a work environment, Macy stated "it felt great, and I liked it a lot. I liked that I could meet new people that I can trust, and I have had really good support from my boss." Macy is also proud she can be a better self-advocate after practice and role-playing exercises with Nebraska VR. "I can tell my supervisor what I want and need. It's a little hard, but I know I can do it."



Macy Munderloh West Point High School Student

Macy explained some of the most important things she learned, "I need to do a better job of sweeping and cleaning up before I leave. I also learned to be totally honest all the time, respect other's feelings, and be respectful to my supervisor so that I can trust them, and they will trust me." Macy shared she thought her supervisor would describe her as someone who is kind, caring, respectful, and takes good care of the residents.

Since first meeting Macy, Misti observed a great deal of growth and maturity in Macy. She is now able to focus and work on the task at-hand.

The Hillside Villa Nursing Home said, "We are thrilled that we are able to provide these opportunities and have truly enjoyed working with Macy." When asked if they would recommend other businesses host a WBLE, they said "Absolutely!"

The WBLE at Hillside Villa was so successful she received a job offer after the experience was over and is now employed at the care facility. Her job is to serve residents, wash dishes, put them away, and she helps cook when needed to fry hamburgers and plate desserts.

# Nebraska VR Successful People

The Nebraska State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) honored five Nebraska VR partners for their role in creating inclusive workplaces and advocacy for disability employment during the October 2024 Disability Employment and Inclusion Award Ceremony.

#### Disability Employment and Inclusion Entrepreneur Award - Nick Natale, Cryptic Tattoos, Scottsbluff, NE

Nick Natale, artist and owner of Cryptic Tattoos, found his passion for body art when his father returned from the Navy with his first tattoo. He was immediately drawn to the art form and began drawing and illustrating with the hope of one day applying his design skills. After seeking Nebraska VR Self-Employment Services, he launched his business serving the Panhandle and surrounding states in 2017. He provides a full spectrum of custom design tattoos as well as tattoo removal and has now nearly doubled his original financial goal. Nick has built a successful body art business which has allowed him to provide for his family, save money, reinvest in his business, and feel prepared for unplanned expenses. His wife, Dezy, assists with bookkeeping, making appointments, and other duties. The couple has found opportunities to support their community through donating gift certificates for various fundraising events.



Nick Natale Cryptic Tattoos



Luke Pinkelman Pinkelman Truck and Trailer

#### New Business Partner Recognition Award - Pinkelman Truck and Trailer, Norfolk, NE

Pinkelman Truck and Trailer has kept their customers on the road since 2010 by meeting the need for fleet services, repairs, trailer services, and maintenance work. This partnership began when Business Account Manager Angela Korth reached out to Manager Nick Johnson. They discussed a client's interest in exploring jobs matching his interests and the business's need to cover various duties in the shop. After a business tour, Pinkelman hosted an On-the-Job Evaluation (OJE). During the experience, Pinkelman Truck and Trailer was open to discussions about accommodations and work hours to meet the needs of the client and welcomed a job coach to ensure success. The client, who was hired after the OJE, is happy in the job and proud to wear the Pinkelman uniform alongside his co-workers.

#### Small Business Partner Recognition Award - Community Christian School, Scottsbluff, NE

Community Christian School in Western Nebraska is a school with 130 students enrolled from pre-school through eighth grade. Additionally, the school provides daycare for 40-50 children ranging from infants to pre-kindergarten as well as after-school care. Pre-School and Daycare Director Michele Kuxhausen has provided business tours and mock interviews for client job seekers. Michele is willing to meet with students receiving Pre-Employment Transition Services and job seekers interested in exploring careers in this field.



Michele Kuxhausen Community Christian



Bryan Sullivan Embassy Suites by Hilton

#### Large Business Partner Recognition Award - Embassy Suites By Hilton Hotel, Lincoln, NE

Embassy Suites by Hilton Lincoln hosts guests every day and events such as Do the Dock, wedding receptions, career fairs, business conferences, and large parties throughout the year. Additionally, the hotel has hosted Lincoln Public School students for Project SEARCH for the past thirteen years. Student interns gain real-life work experience through workplace immersion in their last year of high school eligibility. The hotel has eleven current employees, two hired in the last year, who participated in the program. These former interns work in competitive integrative roles in various hotel departments including housekeeping, laundry, banquet, kitchen, complimentary breakfast, and front desk. General Manager Bryan Sullivan takes job candidate referrals for open positions and provides worksite tours for adult Nebraska VR clients as well.

#### Champion of Disability Employment Recognition Award - Michael Bursaw, Kearney, NE

Michael Bursaw, Director of Global Operations Human Resources at West Pharmaceutical Services, Inc. in Kearney, fosters a culture of hiring, retaining, and advancing individuals with disabilities. He has led his company and community with dedication,

expertise, and a relentless commitment to creating a more inclusive and accessible world. Michael is an active volunteer in supporting veterans, serving on the Board of Directors for the Kearney HelpCare Clinic, organizing annual pinewood derby events for the local Boy Scouts of America troop, and raising money for an inclusive playground. He participated in business panels about inclusive hiring practices, presented at the northwest regional meeting for the Corp of Engineers to highlight the challenges for individuals with invisible disabilities, and volunteers as an ambassador in West Pharmaceuticals Employee Business Resource group. As a previous two-term member of the Nebraska SRC, Michael served as a Chairperson, assisted in re-writing the SRC by-laws to ensure the Council was productive and focused, and led outreach efforts to state legislators and human resource managers about the Career Pathways Advancement Project grant.



Mike Bursaw

#### Office Locations

Columbus serves counties: Butler, Colfax, Nance, Platte, and Polk 3100 23rd St., Suite 5 Columbus, NE 68601

(402) 562-8065, (877) 505-0866 VR.InfoColumbus@nebraska.gov

Fremont serves counties: Dodge and Washington 1730 E. 23rd Ave. N Fremont, NE 68025 (402) 595-1212, (877) 240-4445

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Grand Island serves counties: Fillmore, Greeley, Hall, Hamilton, Howard, Merrick,

Nuckolls, Thayer, and York 203 E. Stolley Park Road, Suite B

Grand Island, NE 68801

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Hastings serves counties: Adams, Clay, and Webster 2727 W. 2nd St., Suite 326 Hastings, NE 68901-4683 402-462-0160, 800-852-3382 VR.InfoHastings@nebraska.gov

Kearney serves counties:

Blaine, Buffalo, Custer, Franklin, Furnas, Garfield, Harlan, Kearney, Loup, Phelps, Sherman, and Valley 315 W. 60th St., Suite 400 Kearney, NE 68845 (308) 865-5343, (800) 262-3382 VR.InfoKearney@nebraska.gov

Lincoln serves counties:

Gage, Jefferson, Johnson, Lancaster, Nemaha, Otoe, Pawnee, Richardson, Saline, Saunders, and Seward 500 S. 84th St. Lincoln, NE 68510-2611

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Norfolk, NE 68701

(402) 370-3200, (800) 442-3382 VR.InfoNorfolk@nebraska.gov

North Platte serves counties:

Arthur, Chase, Cherry, Dawson, Dundy, Frontier, Gosper, Grant, Hayes, Hitchcock, Hooker, Keith, Lincoln, Logan, McPherson, Perkins, Red Willow, and Thomas 200 S. Silber, Bldg. 2
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Scottsbluff serves counties:

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