

SRC-DVR Minutes
May 11, 2026, 1PM-3PM
Zoom Meeting

Council Members Present: Jenny Ardito, Lynn Feely, Samantha Fenderson, Jennifer Kimble, Patricia Ngara, Meg Ryan, Andrew Smith, Joshua Weidermann, Allison Wiest

Council Members Not Present: Darcy Gentle, Dylan Sullivan

Guests: Jill Ferrington, Lucas A Cuellar

Others Present: Alyssa Brazier, Kathy Despres, Hailey Howard, Chris Quinn

Scribe: Meridy Lippoldt

Next Business Meeting: July 13, 2026

Minutes Approved: No

Introduction

- The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Allison Wiest at 1:02 p.m.
- A quorum was established with 7 voting members in attendance
- Members/guests were welcomed and participated in an ice breaker activity by sharing something that the others might not know about themselves
- No additions to the Agenda were proposed

Minutes

- The minutes of the March 9, 2026 meeting of the Council were reviewed and no final vote was taken on whether to approve them or not. An outstanding matter from the March meeting was whether the Council had voted at the meeting to approve the recording of the Council's future meetings, and if so had any objections been raised in this regard? Council members did not recollect whether a final decision had been taken; one member recalled that there may have

been a discussion debating the pros and cons of having a transcription vs. a recording, and if it were a recording, where would the recording be stored out of concerns for security reasons. In the end, the Council members present took no action on the matter and it was decided that it would be tabled to a future meeting for further discussion.

Guest Speaker - Jill Ferrington/NASHIA

- Jill presented on Maine's 5-year Acquired Brain Injury State Plan, which runs from 2023 to June 2028, and outlined its four main priorities: i) expanding the number of service recipients throughout Maine (especially in rural areas); ii) raising awareness through such platforms as Facebook by providing increased education about brain injuries; iii) enhancing current screening efforts by such means as conducting trainings on brain injury screenings and informing about the availability of supportive resources; and iv) data collection to track among other things waitlist information, and gaps in existing services and unmet needs. She highlighted positive developments achieved thus far, including a 50% growth in people diagnosed with brain injury from 2024 to 2025 and the closure of Maine's waitlist. Jill invited attendees to provide feedback on these priorities and suggest areas for greater focus, particularly regarding vocational rehabilitation.
- Jill is happy to remain in contact with Council members should they have further questions and can write to her at jferrington@nashia.org.
- In the discussions that ensued, Council member Kathy Despres briefed participants about a potential resource for DVR at the agency she represents, the NeuroRestorative Services, a private agency, which caters to the needs of people with brain injuries. They have 6 speech therapists and brain injury specialists as part of their team. DVR Director Sam Fenderson added that the Portland Office has a brain injury liaison associate on board who can provide information on DVR programs, and also has an information table with information on available resources.

Client Assistance Program (CAP) Update and Guest

- Meghan Ryan from Disability Rights Maine who holds the CAP seat on the Council provided an update on CAP services, explaining that the organization is expanding from having one person handle CAP cases to having multiple staff members, including Lucas Cuellar, who is one of the newest full-time CAP advocate focusing on employment-related advocacy, whom she introduced to participants at the meeting. Lucas shared how important employment is as a feature of the CAP work done by the advocates. They are currently preparing for the HOPE Conference later this month where he and another advocate will present on employment-related advocacy issues such as how to apply for vocational rehabilitation services, employment rights and reasonable accommodations in cases where discrimination may be at play.
- Meghan will be bringing other staff members to attend future meetings of the Council which will allow the Council to be introduced to the staff as they will be the initial point of contact for anyone interested in availing of the CAP services provided at Disability Rights Maine.

How VR Helped Someone

- DVR Director Sam Fenderson shared a success story about a client who successfully transitioned from incarceration to employment through DVR services. Working with prison officials before his release and with DVR staff upon his release, the client was able to find stable employment as a damage appraiser at a Ford dealership, earning \$70,000 annually, while also serving as a house leader at a sober house. DVR staff coordinated with prison case managers and re-entry staff ahead of time to identify what direction the individual wanted to move in to find employment and then once he was released from jail, with probation officers to help the individual in his

job-seeking activities. DVR provided suitable work clothes for interviewing, and bus passes and transportation to enable him to look for work. Sam noted that DVR does regular visits to corrections facilities to inform them about the availability of DVR services, and the groundwork done by DVR in this regard was definitely helpful in ensuring the client experienced a smooth transition into the community and workforce upon his release.

Treasurers Report (Jennifer Kimble)

- Treasurer Jennifer Kimble provided a FY 2026 budget update two quarters into the year showing the Council was slightly over budget in travel expenses due to conference attendance, but that this will likely be offset by other expenditure for other items such as Administrator Salary between now and the end of the fiscal year in September. She said Council expenditure was on a sound footing.
- Jenn shared a snapshot of current SRC DVR budget details, as follows:

DVR-SRC Budget	October	November	December	January	February	March	April	YTD Total	Remaining	% Remaining
Administrator Salary	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 106.09	\$ 327.75	\$ 143.75	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 577.59	\$ 2,734.41	83%
Stipends	\$ 50.00	\$ 225.00	\$ 150.00	\$ 237.50	\$ 100.00	\$ 162.50	\$ 100.00	\$ 1,025.00	\$ 1,975.00	66%
Website Maintenance	\$ -	\$ 249.45	\$ -	\$ 180.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 127.50	\$ 556.95	\$ 692.00	55%
Subscriptions & Licenses	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 31.65			\$ 31.65	\$ 462.84	94%
Supplies / Printing	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ 500.00	100%
Accommodations	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -		\$ -	\$ 1,000.00	100%
Fiscal Agent*	\$ -	\$ 500.00	\$ 19.84	\$ 500.00	\$ -	\$ 108.45	\$ -	\$ 1,128.28	\$ 1,699.72	60%
Travel/Lodging/Meals	\$ 1,911.40	\$ 424.90	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,030.66	\$ 358.25	\$ 4,725.21	\$ (1,225.21)	-35%
	\$ 1,961.40	\$ 1,399.35	\$ 275.93	\$ 1,245.25	\$ 275.40	\$ 2,301.61	\$ 585.75	\$ 8,044.68	\$ 7,838.75	49%

Director's Report (Samantha Fenderson)

- DVR Director Sam Fenderson briefed participants on DVR news since the Council's last meeting in March.
- DVR is welcoming the arrival on May 25 of a new intern through the government intern program of the Margaret Chase Smith Center, who will be supporting the DVR summer program for youth. The intern will be based at the Bangor Office.

- Workforce Pell Grant monies are being made available for vocational training through DVR starting July 1st for students who can demonstrate a financial need by completing a FAFSA application. DVR is currently vetting community colleges who are submitting their applications for consideration to be a partner in the program. There will be a website set up for anyone interested in learning more about how to apply for the grant monies.
- DVR recently learned from RSA that it must comply by June 29 with a new federally- mandated requirement to file annually a Real Property Status Report detailing VR dollars invested in fixed property assets including leased properties such as those where DVR offices are now housed. The requirement is retroactive requiring that the report include data from the past 20 years. This would include any VR dollars that have been allocated to help clients invest in property to set up their own business, or even for renovations made to their business-related properties. The requirement will pose a significant administrative burden on DVR and may have an impact on future DVR funding for self-employed clients, in particular.
- DVR has been invited to participate in an Individual Placement and Support (IPS) International Community of Practice in collaboration with the Maine Office of Behavioral Health (OBH) along with 30 other states and 9 countries. Several DVR staff have recently completed a rigorous IPS Fidelity training which will allow them to perform fidelity reviews in collaboration with the OBH.
- The Division continues to work on stabilizing its staffing situation. It recently posted an opening for an RCI position in deaf services along with a number of RI and R2 postings. A new RC 2 for Region 1 is set to start later this month.
- In collaboration with the Department of Education, DVR will be participating in the “I Belong” Youth Summit in Auburn designed to allow transition-aged students with disabilities to participate in activities to increase their awareness about the world of employment. Employers will be on hand to talk to the students about careers.
- Tracy Whitlock, Director of Special Education Services at the Department of Education will provide in August an educator

orientation for school staff as they return for the school year which will include information on VR services and how to connect with VR counselors.

- DVR submitted its State Plan to RSA on April 30 and is awaiting RSA's feedback.
- Sam informed about the following summer employment-related programs:
 - The VIBE Summer Program in conjunction with DBVI at USM, which is a 2-week session addressing how to prepare for employment and will include a paid work experience
 - The Try- a -Trade Tour, which is a 4-day hands-on overnight event for apprentices and pre-apprentices gain hands-on experience in a variety of trades
 - The PEERS Program at the University of Farmington that will offer an introduction to college course and online courses
- Sam shared with the Council DVR exit numbers between July 1 2025 and April 30 2026 during which time the Division recorded 2,597 exits vs. 239 successful placements. Of special note was the time-to-complete data which was in the upper 90% percentile. There are a total of 6,185 open cases and 1,143 potentially eligible cases. The number of intakes was 531. Current client enrollments stood at 1,305 in the Northern Offices, 2,959 in the Central Offices, and 1,390 in the Southern Offices.

Priority Topics

- There was a brief discussion on how to best engage Business and Industry Seat Representatives. Because of time constraints, it was decided to save discussion of this item as well as the recruitment and meeting structure for businesses for the next meeting.

Announcements

- Jennifer Kimble noted that a webinar on the ABLE Program was being held today, adding that eligibility for the program had been expanded from age 26 to age 46
- Chairperson Allison Wiest shared that Community Work Incentives Counselors (CWICS) were doing a presentation on benefits at MPR on Wednesday, May 20 and noon and she offered to share the link to the presentation for anyone who may be interested in attending
- Allison attended the Spring 2026 Conference of the NCSRC in Washington, D.C. and will report out on the meeting at the Council's next business meeting
- Allison introduced Meridy Lippoldt to the Council who has been hired to fill the SRC Administrator position vacancy
- Allison reported further that work on the Consumer Handbook revision is continuing apace
- Honorarium were offered
- Meeting reminders:
 - Focus Group: It was proposed and agreed by Council members present to move the date of the June meeting of the Focus Group to Monday, June 15, 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.
 - Business Meeting – Monday, July 13, Pre-Meeting-12:30 p.m. followed by Business Meeting from 1:00 - 3:00 p.m.

No public comment was provided and the meeting was adjourned promptly at 3:00 p.m.