



October 2017

## President's Column

Irina Razvina, MA, CDMS, VRC

Welcome to the newest issue of the IARP WA Chapter newsletter! Fall is here, and with it vocational rehabilitation productivity is back in full swing. Gone are the laidback days of summer, and we can only hope that the return to work rates will continue to increase as a result.

We have a lot of things to celebrate this year. As a result of more vocational referrals being made earlier on in the claim, we are able to help more workers return to gainful employment sooner and with less time spent off work. We are also able to work with the employers more effectively and really demonstrate to them why it's in their best interest to bring their workers back to work.

Your current IARP board is continuing their hard work on bringing additional educational opportunities to Washington state vocational rehabilitation professionals. **There is an upcoming educational event at the beautiful Suncadia resort on November 2, 2017** which will focus on the subject of **LMS/R and defensible vocational outcomes**. Amazingly enough, **this event is free to IARP members!** If you know of anyone who has been considering becoming an IARP member, now would be a great time to join!

We are also continuing to plan our 2018 annual conference, and we have a new and exciting venue in mind! Please stay tuned for the great reveal of the conference venue, dates, and agenda. A variety of exciting topics will be covered during the 2018 conference. We have speakers flying in from other parts of the country, so please keep an eye out for registration information which will become available in early 2018.

The vocational recovery project (VRP) work continues. Additional L&I staff members and private sector vocational counselors are being added to the project team to ensure that everyone's voice is heard and all opinions are considered. VRP will focus on improvements to the current vocational system; its "heavy lifting" work is expected to begin in early 2018.

I am having a lot of fun serving as your IARP WA chapter President. It is truly an honor and a privilege. I continue to be open to your ideas and feedback on how we can continue to improve and strengthen our local chapter. You can get in touch with me at [irina@abilityvoc.com](mailto:irina@abilityvoc.com). Enjoy this lovely Fall weather, and best of luck in your vocational rehabilitation efforts!



## Sarah's Job Mod Corner

Sarah Martin, OTR/L, Therapy Services Coordinator, L&I



To expand on last quarter's topic, I wanted to share additional information about the concept of participatory job modifications and an excellent return to work success story.

### Participatory Job Modifications

A term to describe the collaborative process between the worker, employer, and vocational provider in identifying possible job modifications. Workers and employers can help identify the problematic tasks and possible solutions. This return to work (RTW) plan is presented along with the job analysis to help the attending provider make return to work decisions.

### Successful Return to Work using the Job Accommodation Network (JAN) and Participatory Job Modifications.

Recently a vocational provider was assigned a worker who was an elevator mechanic with a back injury and off work for over a year. After meeting with the worker and employer, they identified the task of transporting 400 pound weights upstairs using a hand truck. The vocational provider consulted with [JAN](http://www.jan.org) to identify possible solutions. Based on this collaboration, a RTW plan was presented and supported by the attending provider. The vocational provider facilitated a successful return to work to include a work hardening program, a graduated return to work schedule and a motorized hand truck/stair lift covered under job modification benefits.

### Helpful hints

[Vendor Services Lookup Tool](http://www.lni.wa.gov/apps/VendorServicesLookup/default.asp)

(<http://www.lni.wa.gov/apps/VendorServicesLookup/default.asp>)

When looking for job mod suppliers, don't forget to also check for out of state companies. Select "All" under the State category.

**The job modification benefit is available for both temporary and permanent restrictions with the employer, a new employer, or self-employment.**

[www.AskJan.org](http://www.AskJan.org) or 800-526-7234

[www.AskJan.org](http://www.AskJan.org)  
800-526-7234



**Job modification benefit questions: Sarah Martin, OTR/L L&I 360-902-4480**

### SEASONAL QUOTE

*"Life starts all over again when it gets crisp in the fall."—F. Scott Fitzgerald*

## Collaboration is Key to L&I Improvements to Vocational Services

Ryan Guppy, Chief, L&I Return to Work Program



Helping workers put their lives back together is rewarding work. Recently we asked some vocational providers what makes their work meaningful. Among other comments, we heard, *"It's rewarding to see the light in a worker's eyes."*

Like you, here at the Department of Labor & Industries (L&I) we are passionate about helping workers and employers to eliminate work disability. Private-sector vocational providers are our indispensable partners in this vital part of a worker's recovery.

Great things happen when vocational providers receive referrals earlier and can engage and activate workers in the Return to Work process. However, to a large extent L&I's current system encourages a focus on process rather than on vocational recovery. Now that we understand more about the importance of engagement and activation, we need to make it easier for all of us to use these techniques in helping workers heal and return to work.

### **A new system will be co-designed**

We have recently launched the Vocational Recovery Project, which brings private-sector vocational providers together with L&I staff from our vocational and claims sections.

We will be working to strengthen our partnership with vocational providers. Together, we will create a new system that is collaborative, transparent, supports innovation and improves service quality.

### **Building on successes to date**

As you know, we have been working to improve vocational services for a long time. The Vocational Recovery Project builds on these efforts and moves them to the next level. We have already had some notable accomplishments:

- Sending more AWAs out early in the process. This change has increased positive outcomes for injured workers while significantly reducing the prevalence of some of the most negative outcomes.
- Increasing the incentives for employers to keep their workers working through our Stay at Work and Preferred Worker programs.
- Resolving half of all vocational complaints with a phone call. This new emphasis on education and consultation is improving relationships and behaviors while avoiding the time-consuming exchange of working files.
- Bringing in experts to IARP and L&I conferences who share evidence-based methods for increasing engagement and activation and strategies to address psychosocial barriers.

### **Successes are already visible in cost-savings**

The last four years of efforts to improve the timing and content of vocational services have contributed to significant efficiencies while increasing positive outcomes. These efforts, in combination with many other

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agency initiatives such as the expansion of the Centers of Occupational Health and Education (COHE) and efforts to reduce the use of opioids, have led to significant cost reductions. L&I now projects a reduction of more than \$1.7 billion in long-term costs for the workers' compensation program. This projected savings contributed to L&I's current proposal to decrease employers' premiums by 2.5 percent next year.

These numbers represent real people. For example, the 18 percent decrease in workers still on time-loss after 100 days translates to more than 700 workers who have improved their chances of leading full and rewarding lives.

## **We have a long way to go and we need your help**

We are in exciting times! We want to improve fundamental parts of our vocational system. To understand the issues and co-design solutions, we want to work closely with the vocational community.

Currently there are six dedicated private sector vocational providers on the project's advisory committee. We are expanding this membership to involve providers from eastern Washington, professional organizations, and the self-insured community.

We will also invite vocational providers to participate on various project teams and pilots. In addition, we meet regularly with the [Vocational Technical Stakeholders Group \(VTSG\)](#) and the IARP Management Group (IMG) to share progress, discuss issues and gather feedback.

## **Join the effort!**

At the last VTSG meeting, vocational providers told us that they are excited about the direction of the Vocational Recovery Project. Among other comments, they said, "*It puts the help back into a helping profession.*" We are excited about the new project and we hope you will be too.

## **How can you connect to the Vocational Recovery Project?**

This is an opportunity for all of us to reconnect with our passion and purpose for doing this work. Please share your ideas on how we can make our system better!

Here are some ways you can stay informed and connected to the project:

- Contact your representatives at VTSG, IARP, or IMG.
- Attend VTSG as an audience member.
- Attend L&I and IARP conferences.
- Watch our [What's New](#) page.
- Email your questions, comments, or suggestions to [VocRecoveryProject@Lni.wa.gov](mailto:VocRecoveryProject@Lni.wa.gov).

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## **WSIA 2017 RTW Summit Takeaways: A VRC Perspective**

**Joseph Young, MPA, AIC, CDMS**

Working with people is tough! Working with people in systems is tougher! Working with people in systems with competing interests is extremely tough! Luckily, through skill, dedication, and continued learning, we as professionals are able to navigate these treacherous waters and provide tangible outcomes to the people and organizations we serve.

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When I was a kid and the Circus came to town I marveled at all the acts and various talents on display. While enjoying their varied feats, I actively wondered about the amount of preparation and dedication that kept the tight rope walkers, trapeze artists, and gymnasts from falling into the safety net below. There were so many acts that I can't remember most of them. One act I do remember are the plate spinners. I never paid close attention to the plate spinners, I just ate my popcorn and the show went on.

Now, the fact that I think of the circus when asked to write an article for the IARP WA newsletter may give us all a collective chuckle, but we will leave that discussion to another time. When asked to describe my job, one of the first images to appear in my head is that of the plate spinner. The act that is somewhat interesting but not really dangerous; one that people see, but don't really understand. The spinner moving plate to plate with precision, giving just the right amount of touch to each plate to keep them all spinning toward some resolute finish. Pushing too much or too little could lead to disaster. It takes judgement, experience, and practice to perform this act. It takes dedication and a level of commitment to be able to perform this act as a professional. All circus and plate spinning talk aside, our work as vocational counselors requires a level of dedication and commitment to continue to develop our skills to maintain our standing as professionals.

On July, 28, 2017 I was able to attend the First Annual Washington Self Insurance Association's (WSIA) Return to Work Summit. This event consisted of 8 sessions dedicated to the foremost goal of our profession, Return to Work. The event offered an opportunity to network with other professionals from the medical, surety, regulatory, employer, advocate, and vocational fields. The sessions ranged in topic and perspective. There were discussions on many different topics all with a focus on returning our clients to work. There were discussions on the differences between state fund and self-insured outcomes, effective vocational testimony, enhanced services, ethics and culture, overcoming TBI's, employer return to work program design, and updates on recent vocational case law. The event offered multiple different perspectives on how to effectively keep our clients moving toward returning to work.

Perhaps the biggest take away I personally received from this summit came from a presentation on ethics by Brett Schoepper and Craig Bock. In our jobs we often have to navigate between competing interests that can blur the lines between what may or may not be considered ethical. It was reassuring to hear that other professionals understood this as a real struggle to our profession. One of the most powerful concepts I gleaned from this presentation came from a discussion about defining who our "customer" is; essentially which party in the claim do we as vocational counselors owe a duty? Mr. Schoepper and Mr. Bock argued that when these lines are blurred to such an extent, our customer should then become the system as a whole. There is so much empowerment from this concept that I will remember and use this for the remainder of my career.

There were also many takeaways regarding the concept of return to work. All of us who have worked in this field (and have attended one meeting or another) have heard about the disability curve and the challenges of returning injured workers to work after any prolonged period. There was one panel discussion that offered an employer's perspective on this issue. This presentation added tools to my vocational tool box and a sense of confidence to share one employer's success story with another employer contemplating a return to work program. I have since used this story to supplement my normal discussion of long term claim cost and loss of productivity to facilitate return to work discussions with other employers on my self-insured case load. I have yet to see this work on my state fund case load, but it has empowered me and made me feel more confident as a professional and I am confident that it will eventually work.

Overall, The WSIA RTW Summit offered practical utility to me and my colleagues. I would encourage all who desire to sharpen their "plate spinning" skills to attend future return to work summits. It was a good use of billable time and has contributed greatly to the development of my personal and professional style. The experience has enriched my ability to keep each claim moving towards an appropriate resolution with the overall goal of successfully returning our clients to work.

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## ANNOUNCEMENTS

### Don't Miss Out on the Upcoming IARP WA Sponsored Educational Event!!!

Topic: **“LMS/R & Defensible Vocational Outcomes”**

Date: **Thursday, November 2, 2017**

Location: **Suncadia Resort, Cle Elum, WA**

Time: **10:00 am to 3:30 pm**

CEUs: **4 CRC and CDMS CEUs pending**

#### Featured Speakers from Vocational Community:

- + Nick Choppa, MA, CRC, CDMS-OSC Vocational Systems
- + John R. Cary, MA, CRC, CDMS-OSC Vocational Systems
- + Brett Desnoyers, MA, CDMS, Rainier Case Management
- + Katrina Marquardt, MS, CFLE, VRC-Eastside Vocational Services

Featured Speaker(s) from the WA Dept. of Labor & Industries: TBD

**Cost: \*FREE for IARP Members!**

\*Use Code: **memberdisc** when registering on-line

\$75.00 for Non-Members

*On-line registration is required for all attendees and limited seats are available.*

Register today by following the link below

<https://attendee.gototraining.com/r/4206579041692674050>

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## UPCOMING EDUCATIONAL EVENTS

### **Washington Self Insurers Association**

**October 19 & 20, 2017, Legal Issues Workshop 2017**

*DoubleTree Hotel, Downtown Olympia*

<https://www.wsiassn.org/events/legal-issues-workshop-2017/>

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## **Professionals in Workers Comp (PWC)**

**November 16, 2017 - “Anatomy of an Addiction: Opioids, Benzos and the Brain”**  
*DoubleTree Hotel at Southcenter, Tukwila, WA*

**January 18, 2018 - “Preventing Disability Conviction: Don’t Even Go There!”**  
*DoubleTree Hotel at Southcenter, Tukwila, WA*

**January 25, 2018 - “Preventing Disability Conviction: Don’t Even Go There!”**  
*Venue: To be announced – Thurston County, WA*  
<http://www.pwc.org/pwc-events/>

## **National Rehabilitation Association**

**October 27 - 29, 2017, “Bridge to Excellence” Annual Conference**  
*Omni Corpus Christi Hotel, Corpus Christi, Texas*  
<https://www.txrehabassoc.org/nra-conference>

## **Explore IARP LEARN Courses**

<https://www.pathlms.com/iarp>

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## **Your IARP WA Board of Directors**

**Irina Razvina, President - [irina@abilityvoc.com](mailto:irina@abilityvoc.com)**  
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**Laurel Burditt Creek, Member at Large – [lburdittcreek@rcmail.com](mailto:lburdittcreek@rcmail.com)**

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## **What’s New for Vocational Counselors**

<http://www.lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Voc/WhatsNew/Default.asp>

## **L&I service locations moving, renamed**

October 3, 2017

The Bremerton service location field office:

- Is moving to Silverdale October 16, 2017.
- Will have a new name – Silverdale service location.

The Port Angeles service location field office:

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- Moved to Sequim October 2, 2017.
- Has a new name – Sequim service location.

## Updated ADMX pilot process

September 28, 2017

We've updated the ADMX pilot guidelines, templates, and stakeholder engagement resources. Our goal is to create a culture focused on vocational recovery that engages all parties in preventing workplace disability while improving the worker's return-to-work opportunities. Please use the following updated resources:

-  [ADMX Pilot Guidelines](#) (170 KB PDF).
-  [ADMX Request Template](#) (196 KB PDF).
-  [ADMX Update EVOG](#) (178 KB PDF).
-  [ADMX Stakeholder Engagement](#) (272 KB PDF).

## VRC access to *Claim and Account Knowledge Base*

September 20, 2017

VRCs can now use the online *Claim and Account Knowledge Base* to find L&I's vocational policies and other information. We've added the directions on how to access this online reference to the [Laws, rules, and policies](#) page (formerly called "About Referrals").

## Fall Vocational Conference – Activity Coaching Integration and Collaboration Presentation Slides

September 14, 2017

Here is the  [presentation](#) (1 MB PDF) with contact information for those of you who requested the slides.

Remember: If you obtain an attending provider's referral for this intervention, please fax it directly to 360-902-5035 or call 360-902-6261.

## Maximum vocational retraining amount effective July 1, 2017

July 7, 2017

The maximum vocational retraining amount is reviewed annually and adjusted as needed according to the statute governing vocational rehabilitation services. For plans approved July 1, 2017 through June 30, 2018, the maximum vocational retraining amount is \$17,885.

## Request archived news

Email [VocRehabProgram@Lni.wa.gov](mailto:VocRehabProgram@Lni.wa.gov) to request archived What's New postings.

*Thank you to all who contributed to this edition of the IARP WA quarterly newsletter!! Any comments, suggestions or if you are interested in submitting an article for our Winter newsletter, please contact the Editor, Roselyn Blair via email at: [rblair@scsvoc.com](mailto:rblair@scsvoc.com).*

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Ready to expand your work opportunities as a  
**Rehabilitation Counselor?**

[www.wvu.edu/RC](http://www.wvu.edu/RC)

Choose Western to:

- Enhance skills and diversify your employment options with a Master of Arts program
- Experience a flexible program with evening and online courses

**RC.Info@wvu.edu**

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## Guidelines for Advertising through IARP WA

The IARP WA Newsletter is distributed electronically to approximately 200 members quarterly. If you are interested in advertising in this newsletter, please note the following are guidelines:

We accept ads from vendors who provide ancillary services to injured workers to reduce the physical, mental, social and financial impact of disability. We do not accept ads for job postings. Job postings may be placed through the National IARP Website. ([www.Rehabpro.org](http://www.Rehabpro.org))

IARP WA is scheduled to publish four newsletters per year; Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter.

Email the ad as an attachment to Roselyn Blair at [rblair@scsvoc.com](mailto:rblair@scsvoc.com). Please provide the phone number and email address of a contact person(s) who can make decisions regarding the ad. Please be sure the ads look exactly as you wish them to appear. IARP WA is not able to provide ad development or editing services.

Ads should be submitted in one of the following formats: MS Word (DOC or DOCX), or as a TIF, GIF, JPG or other universal graphics file. **Please do NOT submit ads in PDF format.** Ads may be in color, grey tones or black and white.

Ads may appear in the following sizes: Cost:

Full Page: 9 inches high by 5 7/8 inches wide. \$200

Half Page: 4 ½ inches high by 5 7/8 inches wide \$125

Quarter Page: 4 ½ inches high by 3 3/8 inches wide \$75

Prior to submission, please “preview” your ad with the final print size in mind, to make sure that fonts are large enough to be read.

**Please proof-read ad for accurate spelling, phone numbers, and other important information as WA-IARP is not responsible for proof reading.**