



ADVANCING  
DISABILITY INCLUSION  
& WORKFORCE  
INNOVATION

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

## CSAVR National News Brief

May 3, 2025

CSAVR *National News Brief* is a regular series covering legislative activity, media stories, research initiatives, webinars, reports, conferences, and national advocacy activities of interest to member state VR agencies.

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### NATIONAL NEWS

This past week Education Secretary McMahon appointed Diana Díaz, M.Ed., as *Deputy Assistant Secretary* within the [Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services \[ed.gov\]](#) (OSERS) at the U.S. Department of Education. She will also serve as *Acting Assistant Secretary for Special Education and Rehabilitative Services*. She joins OSERS from Arizona, where she was the Lead Founder and Executive Director of Arizona Autism Charter Schools (AZACS), the state's first and only tuition-free charter network specializing in serving students with autism. Her journey began eleven years ago, inspired by her personal quest to find a high-quality education for her son, Sammy, who is on the autism spectrum.

What started as a mission for one family has grown into a network of five schools that serve hundreds of students with autism across Arizona. Welcome Deputy Assistant Secretary Diaz.

In an interview with Time magazine, President Trump said he would veto any legislation from Congress which cuts Medicaid or Social Security. He also said “they’re not going to do that” indicating he does not expect a proposal from Congress that has cuts to these programs. [See the interview here \[time.com\]](#) (which goes into a lot more than Medicaid):

In his first 100 days in office, President Trump has signed five bills into law while issuing approximately 124 Executive Orders (EO). The following are some EOs that might be of interest to you:

- A recently issued EO on Department of Education and accreditation standards directs the Secretary of Education to discipline accrediting boards up to and including removal of recognition if they fail to eliminate their “diversity, equity, and inclusion” requirements for accrediting universities. Per the EO, the Secretary shall ensure accreditation standards do not promote certain political influence or limit universities from innovative models for credentialing students or limit intellectual debate and diversity. It also requires the Secretary to ensure that accrediting bodies assess value of degrees in their accreditation process. [See the order here \[whitehouse.gov\]](#).
- President Trump also announced an Executive Order on workforce programs requiring the Secretary of Labor and cooperating agencies to:
  - Identify underperforming and redundant programs as well as those not meeting administration priorities and recommend changes or elimination.
  - Streamline programs and program requirements.
  - Reduce burdens on grantees to ensure more efficient use of workforce federal funding.
  - Increase registered apprenticeships to 1 million.
  - Refocus training programs on high-need jobs like those in tech and AI (but not limited to those fields). [See the full order here \[whitehouse.gov\]](#).

Possibly the requirements above concerning streamlining programs and reducing burden may provide an opportunity for us to push for changes to the Act to address some of the burdens our study identified such as the program having both a match and MOS requirement while most programs usually have only one or the other.

- Another recent EO of interest concerns Probationary Federal employee policy and requires departments to affirmatively hire employees based on an individualized review program at the end of a probationary period (usually 1 year per the order) instead of them being confirmed as non-probationary by default at the end of the review term. It also makes changes to allow that if a federal employee moves to a new department with the same type of job or a new job within the same department, they do not have to start the clock back to 0 for the purposes of probationary period. [See the executive order here \[whitehouse.gov\]](#).

## **2025 CSAVR SPRING CONFERENCE**

Thanks to all of you who have submitted your evaluation of the conference. If you have not submitted it yet, there is still time. If you attended the conference, you should have received an email from Theresa Hamrick inviting you to take the evaluation. You can also find the evaluation in the Cvent App from the home page by scrolling to the bottom of the page.

Presentations from the conference are now posted on the Resources page of the CSAVR website.

If you are having any trouble accessing the evaluation and/or the Cvent App, please contact Theresa at [Thamrick@csavr.org](mailto:Thamrick@csavr.org).

## **UPCOMING CSAVR MAY MONTHLY MEMBERSHIP CALL**

This past week President Trump completed his first 100 days in office. For the upcoming May Monthly Membership Call on Wednesday, May 7<sup>th</sup>, from 2 to 3 pm ET, we will deviate from the usual format to focus on some of the key things that have occurred in those 100 days, specifically since our Spring conference in Bethesda.

Given the agenda, this Monthly Membership Call we **encourage Directors, and selected senior staff participate**. The plan is among other things to discuss pertinent EOs, the possible movement of RSA, the FY 24 and 25 COLA increases and ongoing or planned work CSAVR is engaging in to support you.

We hope you will join us for this call. See you on May 7<sup>th</sup>.

## **CSAVR COMMITTEE WORK**

**The CSAVR Customer Services for Adults Committee** met this past week and affirmed they will provide the initial support to launch a new **Communications Professional Network** (CPN).

**Directors, we need your assistance:** Please forward to Theresa Hamrick and Steve the name and email of staff members you wish to assign to the CPN. Our hope is your representative is one who has full or part time responsibility for external communications. If not, any one you wish to select who has the interest in being your representative works for us.

We are looking for a core of interested agency communication staff leads who are willing to be our initial leadership team. It will require a few extra meetings over the next few months to help with identifying and communicating the CPN goals and objectives and coordinating with those involved with our third strategic priority “Increase Public Awareness”. Please let us know if you have a staff member you wish to nominate for the leadership team. Ideally, we want representation from Combined, General and Blind agencies.

We encourage any interested Directors to participate. Please let us know if you wish to be added to the distribution list for future notices.

To help move our agenda along, names of staff you wish to be assigned to the CPN and nominations for the leadership team would be appreciated by Friday May 16.

In other Committee news, the **CSAVR Operations and Personnel Committee** will be meeting on May 13<sup>th</sup> from 2 to 3 pm ET. They hope with this meeting to hear from agencies that have in the not-too-distant past been able to secure salary increases for their staff, especially counselors. Join to hear how they did it.

### **TIP OF THE EDITION**

RSA has released the 2024 Monitoring reports for the majority of state VR agencies monitored in 2024 [2024 Monitoring Reports \[avrsp.org\]](http://avrsp.org). These include reports for Arizona-C, Colorado-C, Florida-G, Idaho-G, Michigan-G, New Jersey-G, New York-G, and Illinois-C. as of this writing the Utah-C report was not posted.

The tip is that these reports can provide you with ideas for improving your operations, service, and outcomes. They can be especially valuable if you think you might be monitored soon in terms of preparing for monitoring.

### **TAC NEWS**

#### ***VRTAC-QM Manager Minute: Facing the Storm: What’s Keeping VR Leaders Awake at Night***

We’re celebrating a major milestone with the return of our very first guests: *Kristen Mackey*, Director of Arizona Combined, and *Natasha Jerde*, Director of Minnesota Blind. As Vocational Rehabilitation leaders navigate rising demands, shifting funding,

and major structural change, Kristen and Natasha join us again to reflect on the post-pandemic landscape—and how it's testing directors like never before. From managing centralized services to sustaining staffing under fiscal strain, they share the real-world challenges that keep them up at night—and the strategies they're using to adapt.

With transparency, persistence, and a mission-first mindset, these leaders dive into:

- Navigating state and federal priorities
- Responding to workforce volatility
- Staying connected to data and purpose

Their insights are a must-listen for anyone leading in today's VR environment. Tune in and be inspired to lead with clarity and resilience.

[Listen Here \[managerminutevrtac-qw.libsyn.com\]](https://managerminutevrtac-qw.libsyn.com)

On May 21-22 the VRTAC QE will host their 2025 National Symposium on Quality Employment. The Conference Theme is *Evidence-based practices leading to Quality Employment of Persons with Disabilities*. [Registration is required \[tacqe.com\]](https://tacqe.com) and there is no cost to attend. Attendees (in-person and virtual) can earn a total of 11 CRC CEUs, of which 5 will qualify for ethics credits.

The next VRTAC QE monthly webinar will be held in June on 6/19/25 Titled: *Building College Pathways to Employment - A Panel on Collaboration between Vocational Rehabilitation Agencies and Inclusive Postsecondary Education Programs*. This could change since 6/19 is a federal holiday.

**Time:** 1:00 pm EDT / 12:00 pm CDT / 11:00 am MDT / 10:00 am PDT

**Location:** Online via Zoom

**Cost:** Free to attend. Registration is required.

**CRC Credits:** 1 CRC credit available after completing the Evaluation Survey

Presenters: Meg Grigal and Russ Thelin will provide an overview of the current national landscape of inclusive postsecondary education (IPSE) programs, including key features and insights from federally funded model demonstration projects. Attendees will gain a clear understanding of the role of vocational rehabilitation (VR) services in supporting students enrolled in IPSE programs. The session will also highlight relevant federal legislation and guidance to inform the integration of IPSE within the broader scope of VR services. [Register here \[tacqe.com\]](https://tacqe.com).

**REPORTS, TRAINING, NEWSLETTERS AND CONFERENCE OPPORTUNITIES**

On May 15, 2025 an event posted on the NCRTM website: [Global Accessibility Awareness Day: Perspectives from North \[disabilityin.org\] America](#) (Disability:IN). Target Audience: VR counselors, individuals with disabilities, family members, service providers, and businesses.

Starting on June 24 at 8:30 a.m. and ending on June 25 at 5 p.m. EDT Join in Washington, DC the inaugural Administrative Data Research Conference (ADRCon). The event will share the latest research findings, discuss cutting-edge methodologies and emerging technologies for using administrative data, and showcase real-world applications. Together, we'll explore data linkage methods; data governance and infrastructure; ethics, legal, and social implications; and real-world data applications.

In May, Maryland Works is offering the following leadership & workforce development trainings:

### **SUPERVISORY BOOT CAMP**

May 2025

5/5, 5/7, 5/9, 5/12, 5/14, 5/16

9:00 AM – 12:00 PM

Virtual

[Learn More \[mxtws-zgpvh.maillist-manage.net\]](#)

### **SSDI&SSI Work Incentives: How to Keep Benefits While You Work**

May 14th & 15th

Day 1 - 9 AM -1 PM | Day 2 - 9 AM -12 PM

Location: Virtual

[Learn More \[mxtws-zgpvh.maillist-manage.net\]](#)

### **Empowering Disability Inclusion in Employment**

May 15th, 2025

Virtual

10 AM -1 PM

[Learn More \[mxtws-zgpvh.maillist-manage.net\]](#)

### **Revealing the Best Kept Secrets about Medicaid & Medicaid Waiver Programs**

May 29th, 2025

10 AM - 12 PM

Location: Blended Learning format with both in person and online self-paced portion.

[Learn More \[mxtws-zgpvh.maillist-manage.net\]](mailto:mxtws-zgpvh.maillist-manage.net)

**This is an unmonitored email account. Please direct any questions to:**  
[info@csavr.org](mailto:info@csavr.org)