



ADVANCING  
DISABILITY INCLUSION  
& WORKFORCE  
INNOVATION

Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

## CSAVR National News Brief

May 17, 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

The US economy added 177,000 jobs in April so another month of employment gains. This is despite cuts in federal jobs. Further, state and federal government sector jobs overall were up 10,000 jobs. [CNN.com \[cnn.com\]](https://www.cnn.com)

While 177,000 jobs were added, there is one group that has been left behind and that is recent college graduates for whom the labor market had deteriorated noticeably in the past few months according to the New York reserve. Their unemployment rate now stands at 5.8% which is 1.6% above that of the overall population. There is some

speculation that AI might be impacting this since entry-level jobs are generally the easiest to replace with machines.

In other job news, UPS has said that it will cut 20,000 operational jobs to lower costs after announcing in January that it would slash the number of packages it delivers for Amazon by more than 50%. Amazon accounted for about 12% of its revenue last year.  
*The Wall Street Journal*

Time is running out for many student loan borrowers. Department of Education Secretary McMahon announced earlier this month that involuntary collections of defaulted loan payments will begin again this month after a five-year pause that began at the start of the Covid pandemic. The government has extended the pause eight times. Nelnet, the largest student loan servicer, has said that the repayment rate on student loans has fallen to just 38%. Borrowers must miss 270 days of payments before they are declared in default. DOE estimates that 10 billion borrowers, nearly a quarter of the total, could be in default within a few months.

## **NCSRC UPDATE**

The National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) have announced **leadership changes:**

Three Board of Director members will be transitioning off soon:

- Graham Sisson – President, Founding Board member, 20 years of service
- Karen Stanfill – Secretary, Founding Board member, 20 years of service
- Bernadine Chavez – Member, 8 years of service

At the NCSRC April board meeting, new officers were elected to fill vacancies effective immediately through June 30<sup>th</sup>:

- Shelby Satko, Interim President
- Julia Barol, Interim Secretary

As of July 1<sup>st</sup>, 2025 the Board of Directors will be as follows:

- Shelby Satko, President
- Kerri Fradette, Vice-President
- Theresa Hamrick, Treasurer (ex-officio)
- Julia Barol, Secretary

The NCSRC is recruiting new board members from the following regions to fulfill geographic representation:

Region 5 – Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin

Region 6 – Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas

Region 7 – Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska

Region 8 – Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming

Region 9 – Arizona, California, Hawaii, Guam, Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa

The commitment requires 1-3 hours per month to attend board meetings and serve on ad hoc committees as needed. In person attendance at their Spring and Fall conferences. If you have any questions and/or are ready to submit your nomination materials, please reach out to Shelby Satko, NCSRC Interim President at [shelby.satko@dshs.wa.gov](mailto:shelby.satko@dshs.wa.gov)

## **MARYLAND MODEL EMPLOYER ACT OF 2025**

Maryland has passed a law creating the Office of Disability Employment Advancement Policy (ODEAP) within the Maryland Department of Disabilities. The office is to enhance and elevate the coordination of existing efforts with partner agencies (DORS, DBM, MD State Department Education, Labor and MD Department of Health) to improve employment outcomes for Marylanders with disabilities. In addition, ODEA will develop The Maryland as a Model Employer Initiative (MME promoting the recruitment, hiring, retention, and career advancement of people with disabilities across State government.

The Governor signed the bill on April 8, 2025, and funding for it does not take effect until July 1, 2026. MDOD will spend the first year, beginning July 1, 2025 through June 30, 2026, planning by meeting with state agency partners. MME will evaluate current State employment practices and policies and development recommendations. MDOD will also host listening sessions during the planning year to get input on how the state can increase its hiring of job seekers with disabilities.

This grew out of Maryland's participation in the National Governor's Association (NGA) Disability Summit focused on employment in the Fall of 2023.

## **ORDER OF SELECTION**

As of April 14, 2025, the following VR agencies are reportedly operating under an OOS, as approved in their Program Year 2024-2027 WIOA State Plan, and have one or more

closed priority categories. If the VR agency has elected to serve eligible individuals outside of the order of selection, who require VR services to maintain their employment, those VR agencies are indicated with an asterisk.

- [Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation \(ID-G\) \[vr.idaho.gov\]](http://vr.idaho.gov): 0 of 3 priority categories open
- [Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation \(KY-C\) \[kcc.ky.gov\]](http://kcc.ky.gov): 0 of 4 priority categories open
- [Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services \(MD-C\) \[dors.maryland.gov\]](http://dors.maryland.gov): 1 of 3 priority categories open
- [Minnesota Vocational Rehabilitation Services \(MN-G\): \[mn.gov\]](http://mn.gov) 1 of 4 priority categories open
- [Missouri Vocational Rehabilitation \(MO-G\) \[dese.mo.gov\]](http://dese.mo.gov): 1 of 3 priority categories open\*
- [Oklahoma Department of Rehabilitation Services \(OK-C\) \[oklahoma.gov\]](http://oklahoma.gov): 1 of 3 priority categories open
- [Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation \(PA-C\): \[pa.gov\]](http://pa.gov) 1 of 3 priority categories open\*
- [Washington Division of Vocational Rehabilitation \(WA-G\) \[dshs.wa.gov\]](http://dshs.wa.gov): 2 of 5 priority categories open\*
- [West Virginia Division of Rehabilitation Services \(WV-C\) \[wvdrs.org\]](http://wvdrs.org): 1 of 3 priority categories open\*
- [Wisconsin Division of Vocational Rehabilitation \(WI-C\) \[dwd.wisconsin.gov\]](http://dwd.wisconsin.gov): 2 of 3 priority categories open

## **NENA NEWS**

New Full and Associate Members:

Janet Stevely, Workable Solutions, LLC, Oregon

Lisa O'Neal, Job Squad, Inc, West Virginia

Ashley Strange, Workforce Solutions, OCCK, Kansas

May schedule:

May 20 [NENA Ticket Talk with Q&A MAY 2025 ALL CALL \[nenaticket.org\]](http://nenaticket.org)

May 22 [NENA VR/EN Partnership Plus May 2025 ALL CALL \[nenaticket.org\]](http://nenaticket.org)

NENA has closed nominations for candidates interested in serving on the **2025-2026 NENA Board of Directors**. There are three (3) Board positions to be filled during this election. **Voting opens on June 12, 2025 (Following [Annual Member Meeting](#) [[nenaticket.org](http://nenaticket.org)]) and closes on June 26, 2025.**

The NENA Board is organizing a Hill Day at the US Capital July 8, 2025, to educate and engage legislators about the importance and impact of the Ticket to Work Program. Hill Day will bring together NENA members, advocates, and partners to meet directly with lawmakers and their staff. These conversations will focus on sharing success stories, highlighting the program's o

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

On Thursday, September 18<sup>th</sup> from noon until 5:30 pm ET the 2025 Disability Innovation Forum will be held at the Grand Hyatt Washington, Washington, DC. It is expected to bring together more than 300 business leaders, entrepreneurs, investors, and advocates to explore cutting-edge innovations that support individuals with disabilities in achieving economic mobility and career success. Registration is required. Early bird registration is open until June 18, 2025.

The Substance Abuse and Mental health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is offering a toolkit of comprehensive resources in a central location that you can download and share. Some of the content can be customized for the needs of your audience.

Connecting to resources, support, and elevating the conversation around employee mental health and well-being is important to creating a work culture of well-being. Businesses can take key steps to support employee mental health and make a positive difference in their well-being by: Planning comprehensive workplace mental health initiatives. The American Psychiatric Association Foundation Center for Workplace Mental Health has developed The Mental Health Works Guide which provides employers with guidance on how to create or update and maintain a workplace mental health initiative. [CLICK HERE](#) to access the Guide.

You received a flyer this past week concerning GWU's recruitment of new students for their online master's program in Rehabilitation Counseling starting Fall 2025. This is a great resource for SVRA's to support their staff educational needs. If you have questions about this opportunity, please contact the faculty lead Maureen McGuire-Kuletz at [mkuletz@email.gwu.edu](mailto:mkuletz@email.gwu.edu).

This past week you also received information about UA Currents' upcoming virtual LEAD VR training. Recruitment is underway for their next LEAD VR cohort which will begin August 18, 2025 and end March 16, 2026. The registration link is <https://www.uacurrents.org/RegistrationSystem/Register?m=2vm> [\[uacurrents.org\]](https://www.uacurrents.org) and the registration deadline is August 4, 2025. For more information, contact Dr. Robin Freeman, [rffreeman@uacurrents.org](mailto:rffreeman@uacurrents.org), 501-722-8089

Upcoming Maryland Works training:

### **ACRE Refresher**

Facilitated by Penn-Mar Human Services Consulting

May 28, 2025

This session is virtual from

9 AM - 1 PM

[Learn More \[mxtws-cmpzourl.maillist-manage.com\]](#)

### **Trauma - Informed Care**

May 28, 2025

10 AM - 2 PM

In-Person

[Learn More \[mxtws-cmpzourl.maillist-manage.com\]](#)

### **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 \[mxtws-cmpzourl.maillist-manage.com\]](#)

### **Strategic Thinking**

June 12th, 2025

9 AM - 12 PM

Location: Virtual

[Learn More \[mxtws-cmpzourl.maillist-manage.com\]](#)