STATE REHABILITATION COUNCIL (SRC)

Quarterly Meeting
Tuesday, February 24, 2026
10:00 AM – 2:00 PM

MINUTES

Attendees:

SRC Members Present:
Dr. Judy Daniels (Disability Advocate Group)
Patrick Gartside (State Independent Living Council)
Sandi Jakob (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor-Private)
Sean Knox (Workforce Development Council)
Cynthia Mew (Department of Education)
Evan Nakatsuka (Business Industry and Labor)
Dr. Christine Park (Disability Advocate Group)
Emily Wilkinson (Client Assistance Program)

SRC Members Absentees:
Tira Kamaka (Community Rehabilitation Program)
Monty Montgomery (Business Industry and Labor)
Meriah Nichols (Former VR Recipient)
Ramon Ruiz (Business Industry and Labor, American Job Center)

DVR Attendees:
Gavan Abe-Branch Administrator at Ho'opono Services for the Blind
Lea Dias-Division of Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator
Cheryl Matthews-SRC Liaison

General Public:
Kahea Eli - Representing parents, Ho'omana Parent Support Group
Laura Fussell – Employment Manager CST
Savannah Mecchella-Hall – Practicum Student at Ho'opono
Annette Tashiro – Former SRC Member and Unified State Planning Committee Member

I. Call to Order at 11:03am — Chair Evan Nakatsuka
   1. Housekeeping remarks; Requested everyone identify self for the record prior to speaking. Individuals online asked to mute microphones when not talking and to make themselves visible on camera when speaking. Sandi Jakob taking minute notes for this session.

II. SRC Member and Stakeholder Introductions — Chair Evan Nakatsuka
   Took attendance; asked members and the public to introduce themselves.

III. Consent Agenda — Chair Evan Nakatsuka
   1. Approval of Minutes – November 14, 2025

Chair E. Nakatsuka asked for any corrections or comments to the Agenda.

2. State Rehabilitation Council Partner Council Reports
   Chair E. Nakatsuka asked for questions or comments on each Council Partner Report.
   - Client Assistance Program (CAP)
     Verbal report by E. Wilkinson. No additions or questions.
   - Department of Education (DOE)
     Verbal report by C. Mew – provided details on work-based learning opportunities and the intermediary role in schools. L. Dias reported an increase in referrals from DOE, particularly by those on the diploma track. E. Nakatsuka recognized the expansion of the work-based program and hoped to create a list of ways to help work-based learning. Ideas mentioned included a bigger focus on skills at school to work with employers, and a partnership with DVR to assist in transition.
   - Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC)
     Verbal report by P. Gartside - SILC is working on strategic impact and outreach with a focus on transition and housing. No additions or comments.
   - Workforce Development Council (WDC)
     Verbal report by S. Knox and context of the WDC within the Unified Plan found to be helpful.

     P. Gartside moved motion to approve minutes, council partner reports and consent agenda packet. S Knox seconded the motion.

3. State Rehabilitation Council Standing Committee Reports
   - Membership Committee Report- noted to also be a part of Old Business to be discussed later in the agenda.
   - Unified State Plan Committee Report
     Verbal report by P. Gartside. A meeting of the committee was held on 12/16/25 to finalize and propose specific recommendations based on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. Recommendations included:
     -Strategic outreach and partnership using a business-to-business model; support SILC outreach
     -Modernization of systems of training- toolkit creation
     -Staffing and retention- ways to broaden scope for DVR qualifications
     -WIOA – streamlined collaboration of partners with centralized system to share information.
     P. Gartside will add report language as a preamble before passing the recommendations to DVR
     L. Diaz mentioned exploring other options due to problems with recruitment and retention while still meeting Federal minimum requirements with a focus on a hybrid entry level requirements and providing support for staff wanting to get master's degree, noting that Hawaii has higher standards than some other states.

J. Daniels emphasized the main concern that qualified personnel are employed, differentiation between CACREP accreditation and CRC, and ways that UH can support DVR to increase qualifications.

P. Gartside moved to approve the committee recommendations and present the recommendations to DVR on behalf of SRC. Seconded by S. Jakob.

Meeting paused for a few minutes for an on-site fire alarm test

IV. Ad Hoc Committee Council Partner Report
Verbal report by P. Gartside. Creation of a template was voted on at the last meeting and a pilot template was created and passed around via email, with input requested. The consensus was that it helped contextualize actual activities and provided good consistent content. It was noted that not all questions were pertinent to all committees. E. Wilkinson recommended adding a section to share a positive story.
DOE, CAP, and SILC representatives stated they would move forward with use of the template. The template will be used as a guide and voting of acceptance of the template was thought unnecessary. Chair E. Nakatsuka thanked P. Gartside for his work on the template.

Chair E. Nakatsuka called for a break at 11:11 am. Chair E. Nakatsuka resumed meeting at 11:21am.

Chair E. Nakatsuka introduced Keola Harris of DVR who joined the meeting.

V. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Data Report VRA Lea Dias
L. Dias presented program information from the 2025 which ran from 07/01/25 through 02/02/26 focusing on strengths and structural challenges. Data presented.
1. Status of Total DVR Consumers Served
2. Status of DVR Consumers Data by County
    - Total Applications Received – steady Q1 to Q2
    - Total Determined Eligible - consistent
    - Total Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE)- increased Q1 to Q2
    - Total Cases Closed Other than Rehabilitated
    - Total Cases Closed Rehabilitated
    Some of the anomalies in the data on closed cases may be due to increased effort to clean-up and reach out to more participants.
3. Status of Competitive Integrative Employment (CIE) Detail
4. Status of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) to Student with Disabilities (SWD) – corrective action plan for Pre-ET services resolved.
5. RSA Performance Measures – did not meet performance levels for several indicators, new performance improvement plan for RSA.
6. Status of FFY26 (October 1, 2025 – September 30, 2026) Impartial Hearings

VI. Division of Vocational Rehabilitation (DVR) Verbal Updates VRA Lea Dias
1. State and Federal Budget Status
L. Dias reported no fiscal sanctions and financial stability
2. SRC Advocacy Needs

3. General Updates:
    - Operation staffing
    - Federal performance measures
    - Consumer satisfaction survey
    - Fiscal stability
    - Unified State Plan
    - How SRC can help by sharing employer connections, providing consumer feedback, and engaging in solution-focused discussions.

K. Eli commented that efforts made by DVR were evident with the most positive experience with DVR since 2019.

Chairman E. Nakatsuka thanked L. Dias for hard work and update.

VII. Old Business — Chair Evan Nakatsuka

1. Selection of Standing Committee Members
    - Membership Committee
      Chairman E. Nakatsuka reported that 3 members terms are expiring, with 6 upcoming vacancies in total. An important goal is to fill the membership committee. Information on recruitment and the application process is to be provided at the next quarterly meeting.
    - Policies and Procedures Committee
      Committee nominations discussion was tabled until more information could be provided.

VIII. New Business — Chair Evan Nakatsuka

1. 2025 Consumer Satisfaction Survey Result Presentation by Dr. Violet Habrath, University of Hawaii, Pacific Disabilities Center- moved to a later time in the meeting
2. Nominees to attend National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils, Inc. (NCSRC) and Councils of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Spring Conference- Washington D.C. March 28, 2026 to April 1, 2026
   Dr. J. Daniels will be attending the Spring Conference. Any others interested is to contact C. Matthews as soon as possible.

IX. Upcoming SRC Events — Chair Evan Nakatsuka

1. Wednesday, March 4, 2026 Day at the Capitol
2. Tuesday, May 19, 2026, SRC 3rd Quarterly Meeting 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Chair E. Nakatsuka called for a break at 12:32 p.m. Chair E. Nakatsuka resumed meeting at 12:45 p.m.

VIII. New Business (continued)

1. 2025 Consumer Satisfaction Survey Result Presentation by Dr. Violet Habrath, University of Hawaii, Pacific Disabilities Center. Areas covered:
    - Case and Survey Information

- Levels of Disability and Primary and Secondary Disabilities
- Types of Exits
- Survey Statements and Questions
- Survey Statement Results and Average Scores
- Hourly Wages and Hours worked from VR Data
- Survey Questions
- Levels of Satisfaction
- Case Closure Reasons
- Open-ended Questions

Summary: overall good results with positive feedback. This is year 12 of doing this report, now sees DVR progressing.

P. Gartside requested a copy of slides. Chairman E. Nakatsuka has a copy.

Dr. C. Park questioned whether VR had helped those that were currently employed in some way but were noted to have found employment on their own.

Chairman E. Nakatsuka thanked Dr. V. Habrath for the information.

X. Comments from the Public — Chair Evan Nakatsuka

Chair E. Nakatsuka opened up discussion for comments from the public. No comments.

XI. Adjourn — Chair Evan Nakatsuka

P. Gartside made a motion to adjourn the meeting. C. Mew seconded the motion. Chair E. Nakatsuka adjourned the meeting at 1:36pm