



# Washington IARP Quarterly Newsletter

Winter, 2012

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*Nothing says holidays*

*Like a cheese log*

[Ellen DeGeneres](#)

*Views expressed in this newsletter do not necessarily represent the views of IARP National, the WA IARP Chapter or its Board of Directors.*

## President's Column, Ryan Guppy, CDMS, 2012-2013 Chapter President

I would like to start off by thanking everyone who attended our 2012 WAIARP Annual Conference and Pre-Conference Workshop. This year's conference was another success and would not have been possible without the support of our Board and membership. We are already planning our 2013 Fall Conference and are working on offering some additional continuing education seminars in the meantime. Stay tuned for more information.

On the International front, IARP has approved a two year branding and marketing plan. The final plan was approved this past October during the International Conference in San Juan, Puerto Rico. The plan has several goals and serves to ensure growth of our organization coupled with continuity of messaging, appearance, and membership benefits. Several members of the

Washington Chapter Board of Directors assisted with the review and selection process of the two strongest marketing plan submissions. In the future, some of these same Board Members will be called upon to help collaborate and execute the plan. The Washington Chapter is also supporting the branding and marketing plan by joining forces with fourteen other chapters to adopt a new platform for our website. The new platform for our chapter's website is currently being developed and we hope to have it in place in the near future.

As many of you know, The Department of Labor & Industries received a report authored by Dr. Nyak Polissar and Moni Neradilek entitled "Studies to Assess and Improve Vocational Performance Indicators".

*(continued on page 3)*

## Statistical Studies and the Vocational Profile,

Janice Orcutt, L&I Performance Measure Administrator

When making a vocational referral, claim managers use the Vocational Profile to compare providers on one or all six performance indicators, depending on the facts in each claim. In order to create this Vocational Profile, the department gathered extensive feedback from internal and external stakeholders about 18 potential performance indicators. Hundreds of stakeholders ranked the potential indicators and offered comments. We found there were advantages and disadvantages for each of the 18 indicators. In short, some indicators were better, some were worse but there was no perfect indicator. (The report is available at

<http://www.lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Voc/WorkWithLni/Performance/Profile/Improvement.asp> ).

We selected six performance indicators based on all the feedback. Before we implemented the Vocational Profile in September 2010, we asked Dr. Nyak Polissar to evaluate the statistical soundness of these six performance indicators. He concluded that "The six indicators can be used as statistically valid quality indicators if they are shown not to be unduly influenced by factors other than VRC quality of work."

We secured additional funding for a second report and asked Dr. Polissar to recommend statistical studies that could assess the extent to which non-VRC factors may influence the measures.

*(continued on page 4)*

I just finished completing the online program evaluation for the 2012 IARP International Conference from the comfort of my dining room table, while sipping an adult beverage and reminiscing of the great experiences. I am sure my recollection of the educational sessions has not been tainted by the emotional connection to freshly squeezed orange juice in the morning and Pina Colada's in the afternoon; or the refreshing dips in the pool or lagoon; or the overwhelming beauty of sky blue ocean with dancing white caps melding into the distant blue sky. I am absolutely positive that every presenter to whom I gave those 'exceeds expectations' ratings absolutely deserved them!

A tremendous educational line up of presenters – “Pros” from every aspect of our profession — provided top-notch education on a variety of topics from the everyday to totally specialized experiences. Beyond the excellent educational sessions was the laid back, high quality experience of life in the tropics: fresh seafood for dinner every night of the week if desired; recreational experiences, zip-lining, tours of local and historical businesses (we chose the Bacardi Distillery -- wow!), churches, local historical features and even nightlife available on a nightly basis.

The cast of thousands 2012 Conference Planning Committee out-performed in every category. IARP Headquarters managed the crowds with skill and ease, creating a 'drama free' experience for all attendees. Knowledgeable exhibitors were well-received and visited. This truly was a conference not to have missed. Keep your eyes peeled for the next one.



*(President's Column, continued from page 1)*

This report was posted to “What’s New” on the Department’s web site on August 29, 2012. In the report, Dr. Polissar provided an analysis of the six current performance indicators. As a result of his analysis, Dr. Polissar recommended five specific studies to assess the validity of the Department’s performance measure of Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors. Please read through the report if you have not already.

In October I sent a letter to the Department in response to Dr. Polissar’s report following lengthy discussions with the other WA IARP Board Members. The purpose of my letter was to ensure proper documentation of our interpretation of Dr. Polissar’s findings. Additionally, I requested the Department let us know if it is going to pursue Dr. Polissar’s recommended studies, and if so, timelines for the beginning and ending of these studies. My intent behind the letter was to find out how the Department is planning on handling Dr. Polissar’s recommended studies and to identify points at which we can collaborate as partner-stakeholders on future work related to the report.

In the meantime, the Department has met with the Implementation Advisory Group (IAG) on three occasions since August to discuss Dr. Polissar’s report. The IAG is comprised of six Private Sector Vocational Counselors (including IARP members) and two representatives of the Department and has been developed to discuss issues surrounding the Vocational Performance Profile. Dr. Polissar’s study has been discussed by the IAG; however, a formal response from the Department to my letter has not yet been received. A Department representative provided a copy of my letter to the six VRC’s who sit on the IAG. Please contact an IAG member or myself if you would like a copy of the letter.

Moving forward, I have recently been informed by Rich Wilson and several VRC members of the IAG that in addition to conversing about the Dr. Polissar report, this group will also be formally discussing the ADM I problem. I am pleased to hear that after years of informal discussion about the negative repercussions of ADM I, the Department has chosen the IAG as a platform upon which to collaborate on this issue. I strongly encourage all of you to monitor “What’s New” or to contact the Department to determine when the next IAG meeting will take place (I have since learned that there is an IAG meeting on 12/6/12 in Tumwater) and to attend if you wish. I have been assured that the meetings are public. See you all there!

*Next IAG  
meeting:*

*12/6/12*

## Get Involved — Attend Meetings and Speak Up!

Your Washington IARP Board meets the second Wednesday of every month in Auburn. Monthly board meetings are open to all members and our board minutes can be viewed online at [www.rehabpro.org](http://www.rehabpro.org). Our next Board meeting is December 12.

L&I’s Vocational Technical Stakeholder Group (VTSG) meetings are open to the public. The next VTSG is at the L&I headquarters in Tumwater on January 14. Check the L&I website for details.

(Vocational Profile, continued from page 1)

This second report by Dr. Polissar and his colleague Moni Neradilek, titled "[Studies to Assess and Improve Vocational Performance Indicators](#)" was posted on "What's New" last August.

The department has worked closely with a small advisory group of VRCs regarding the Vocational Profile since its inception. Six VRCs and two L&I staff are on this Implementation Advisory Group (IAG).

IAG has had three meetings since Dr. Polissar's second report was finished. We have discussed the report and the VRCs have prioritized the studies they think would be most important to the vocational community;

- ⇒ Highest priority studies are VSS consistency. The department is committed to conducting the VSS consistency study next year (2013).
- ⇒ Another high priority study is to simplify the display on referral screens. Options for simplifying the display will be discussed in the next IAG meetings and with internal staff.
- ⇒ Medium priority is a study of how case mix might influence indicators. While the VRCs in IAG recognized the value of such a study, they also recognized the extraordinary difficulty in identifying "difficulty factors", obtaining data on relevant factors, and possible reactions from other customers if one referral is documented as more difficult than another referral. It was also noted that case mix is likely to be most influential for the indicator Useful Outcomes because of ADMI. The VRCs suggested that modifications of ADMI could address the primary concern of the vocational community and reduce the need to pursue a study on case mix.
- ⇒ A low priority is the study of referrals where the VRC recommendation and the department closing codes are different. It was concluded that this occurs rarely and scarce resources should focus on other areas.
- ⇒ Another low priority is a study of proxy scores. This study would look at firms to see how consistently VRCs perform within a firm. If VRCs are very consistent, a proxy measure would be a good estimate of how another VRC in the firm (i.e. one with less than a minimum sample size) is likely to perform. The department has decided to conduct this study because internal consistency of high quality work is a desired state. Results will be provided to firm managers. It is hoped that firms will use this information to evaluate and improve their own internal training and quality assurance systems.

In the near future, IAG has two specific items on the agenda; ADMI and simplifying the display. VRCs in IAG said that the top concern of the vocational community regarding the Vocational Profile has to do with ADMI. Therefore, the next meetings of IAG will focus on gaining a better understanding of the issues and developing a process for addressing them. The department will work closely with IAG, VTSG and other stakeholders to develop solutions.

The next meetings of IAG will also discuss ways to simplify the display on vocational referral screens. One example is the display of Dispute results which shows the total number of disputes and the total number of no applicable findings (NAF). This seems to be confusing to claim managers and could be simplified. Another example is Timeliness of Progress Reports (PR). The current calculation truncates the score instead of rounding it. For example: a VRC has only 1 of 300 PRs "late". The actual percentage is 99.6667%. When this is truncated, the score becomes 99%. This has caused all of us to invest an inordinate amount of time chasing a tiny issue; VRCs spend their time tracking down a single PR, asking the department to research it and sometimes asking programmers to postpone other priorities in order make a change to the PR data. IAG will discuss ways to display PR performance in a way that is accurate and avoids highlighting anomalies.

The intent of the Vocational Profile is to show patterns of performance in a way that is both simple to understand and valid. We are committed to this goal and look forward to continued collaboration with the vocational community to continue to improve the Vocational Profile.

For those of you who don't know, VTSG stands for the Vocational Technical Stakeholders Group and is a bimonthly meeting of L&I folks with Voc folks. The intent of the meetings is the sharing of new information and the stakeholding of new ideas (i.e., What does the voc community think of a particular concept being considered by the Department?)

This is a very good thing!

One glitch is that the new information is not necessarily disseminated among the whole of the vocational community and is limited to those directly connected to the VTSG group. The good news? The meetings are public and you (yes, YOU) can attend, if you choose. You can just get the handouts and listen, or you can speak up. In either case, you are a most welcome addition to the room, I can assure you.

The most recent meeting, which took place on 11/19/12, was filled with some pretty fabulous information relating to a new grant that is available for RTW projects. It's the SHIP (Safety & Health Investment Projects) RTW Grant. The grants are being awarded to projects with the purpose of promoting the development and implementation of innovative and effective return to work programs for injured workers. And guess what, folks? There are a lot of funds still available!

If you have a magnificent idea about how to improve return to work in your own company or for employers you work with and would appreciate some funding, check out the L&I website – go to the main page and click “safety”. Then select Safety & Health Grants and there you will find a plethora of information.

Be SURE to look at the eligibility requirements first, because you will not want to put in effort for naught. And yes... shocker of shockers, there are guidelines and rules.

If you have specific questions after reading all the skinny on the website, Jenifer Jellison is the contact person and she is both knowledgeable and eager to help.

360-902-5551 or [jelj235@lni.wa.gov](mailto:jelj235@lni.wa.gov).

Also on the roster of information at VTSG was Activity Coaching through the Progressive Goal Attainment Program (PGAP). Is this an exciting and intriguing new project? It most certainly is! Does it offer additional resources and energizing ideas for injured workers to take control of their lives, feel empowered, and get back to work? Absolutely! Is it the best thing that's happened to vocational services since apple pie?! Err ....

Well, no. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors cannot make referrals to the program, nor are we eligible to apply to be an Activity Coach. Yet. It appears that the attending healthcare providers are the ones who will have to make a referral to the program, and there are limitations as to who is eligible. Essentially, it doesn't seem that you, the vocational provider, can make this magic happen, but you may get a referral that already has it in place, like a surprise package of joy! You can also add this information to your education piece with attending healthcare providers.

The program is in its pilot stage and it's not yet state wide, but cross your fingers that it succeeds, because it **does** sound beneficial.

Each meeting of VTSG would not be complete without an update from the core group for LEAN. The Claims Managers are loving the LEAN project, and I can say as a vocational provider, I'm loving their enthusiasm. I'm also loving working as a team with Department personnel again.

All in all, the recent VTSG was a fairly awesome little shin dig, as it most typically is, and I'd encourage you all to try it sometime. You'll like it! The next meeting is in Tumwater on January 14, 2013. I hope to see you there!

Check out this website for details and minutes of past meetings: <http://www.lni.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Voc/WorkWithLni/Vtsg/Default.asp>

### Medical Provider Network is coming in January 2013

November 13, 2012.

Beginning January 1, 2013, treating medical providers that are not in the network will not be reimbursed for services to injured workers after the initial visit. This includes services that you request related to return to work and vocational rehabilitation.

Insurance Services is mailing 45,000 letters to injured workers with active claims to tell them about the new Medical Provider Network and the need for them to see network providers for ongoing care. Courtesy copies were also sent to medical providers.

If a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) determines that the treating provider is not in the medical network, the VRC may encourage the worker to request the treating provider to join the network or transfer his or her care to a network provider. This will help to ensure that the worker obtains a network provider and avoids the potential for delays.

To get started with joining the network, providers can go to [JoinTheNetwork.Lni.wa.gov](http://JoinTheNetwork.Lni.wa.gov).

You can use [Find a Doctor](#) to determine whether a provider has been approved to be in the network. The list of network providers in [Find a Doctor](#) is updated each business day and is growing quickly as L&I continues to process applications.

For additional information about the network go to [Medical Provider Network Q&A for Workers](#).

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### AWA Lean results recognized

November 13, 2012.

The efforts to reduce AWA duration are paying off. We estimate savings of more than \$20 million dollars by the end of this year. The savings are derived from a reduction in time loss days consistent with reduced time to complete AWAs. Overall the average time to complete new AWA referrals has dropped by nearly 60 days.

These results were showcased recently at the Governor's Lean Transformation Conference.

We attribute this success to the efforts of our claim staff, vocational providers and vocational firms. The AWA Lean approach describes a system that works to identify and quickly deal with barriers to speedy referral resolution. Communication and collaboration are essential. The system also relies on data to keep close track of progress and to determine areas for additional improvement.

Importantly, the relative proportion of referral outcomes (ATW, RTW, etc.) has not changed, nor have we seen a change in disputes to vocational determinations. We believe that we're getting speedier results without sacrificing quality. This is an important "win" and represents real value for the workers and employers in our system.



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## Guidelines for Advertising through WA IARP

The WA – IARP Newsletter is distributed electronically to approximately 200 members quarterly. If you are interested in advertising in this newsletter, the following are guidelines and deadlines for ad submissions:

We accept ads from vendors who provide ancillary services to injured workers in an effort 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))

WA – IARP publishes four newsletters per year; Spring, Summer, Fall and Winter, Ads are due based on the following schedule.

<u>Newsletter</u>	<u>Due Date</u>	<u>Publish Date</u>
Spring	2/28	March
Summer	5/31	June
Fall	8/31	September
Winter	11/30	December

Email the ad as an attachment to Kari D'Aboy at [Kari@CareerHorizon.net](mailto:Kari@CareerHorizon.net). 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. WA – IARP 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 Microsoft Publisher (PUB) formats, 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.**

*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))*