



IVRS Administrator David Mitchell, IVRS Deaf and Hard of Hearing Counselor Kensie Channon and Lt. Governor Adam Gregg.

# Legislative Update

## VR100

VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION • 1920–2020

### 100 Years of Vocational Rehabilitation

Iowa has been a leader in vocational rehabilitation for a century after President Woodrow Wilson signed the Smith-Fess Act of 1920, also known as the Industrial Rehabilitation Act and referred to as "The National Civilian Vocational Rehabilitation Act," into law June 2, 1920.

100 years of the public VR program has seen positive changes through the years impacting employment outcomes for individuals with disabilities. VR is driven by a commitment to people with disabilities and businesses and is at the intersection of disability expertise and business intelligence.

The following four Principles are integrated into our strategic initiatives:

1. **Innovating Solutions** to achieve greater access to and use of vocational rehabilitation services. Our goal is to achieve the most effective outcomes for our customers.
2. **Building Careers and Retaining Talent** in America's workforce by investing expertise and resources to benefit our customers.

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### SRC Reception Held

Thank you to the many State Legislators who stopped to visit during the State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) 2020 Legislative Reception on March 4.

IVRS appreciates your ongoing support for Iowans with disabilities and we look forward to serving the vocational needs of Iowans for another century. The workforce needs of businesses continue to change, and IVRS strives to meet the future employment challenges with expert guidance and programming.

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*Governor Kim Reynolds signs a Proclamation declaring October National Disability Employment Awareness month.*



IVRS remains a key partner with Governor Reynold's leadership in the implementation of Future Ready Iowa. IVRS provided more than \$4.81 Million in post-secondary assistance for individuals with disabilities to access post-secondary education. A key part of our State Plan is the collaboration and coordination of service delivery with our core partners to align service delivery and eliminate any potential duplication of

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flexible supports and services. We accomplish this through specialized strategies to meet the workforce goals of our customers.

**4. Leading and Engaging in Collaborative Strategies** with our partners who are working with us to achieve greater collective impact at all system levels (national, state, local).

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) was passed to recognize and protect the civil rights of people with disabilities and prohibiting discrimination on the basis of disability.

2020 is celebrating thirty years of the ADA.

Our current students with disabilities in our secondary and post-secondary program have grown up in an environment of equal access and continue to strive for employment and independence through the collaborative work occurring in our labor exchange system. Positive successes are occurring and the vocational rehabilitation work continues to be a solid return on investment for public monies.

100 years ago, the issues might have looked a little different, with returning soldiers from WWI attempting to acclimate back into society. IVRS continues to serve all individuals with any type of significant disability except for blindness, which is handled by the Iowa Department of the Blind. Current priorities as set by the State Rehabilitation Council include working with individuals who have intellectual disabilities, deafness, mental illness and autism. In 2014, with the implementation of the Workforce Innovation Opportunities Act, there has been a priority placed on students with disabilities and positively impacting the provision of Pre-Employment Transition Services in coordination with our education partners. It is a celebrated 100 years of history, but our mission remains the same:

*We provide expert, individualized services to lowans with disabilities to achieve their independence through successful employment and economic support.*

*David Mitchell, IVRS Administrator*

# From IVRS Bureau Chief Steven Faulkner

June 2020 marks the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Rehabilitation Act, enacted in the U.S. Congress in 1920. I felt this month might be a great time to bring you all up to date on Iowa's administration of this very important public law. Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS), is a division of the Iowa Department of Education, and IVRS and the Iowa Department for the Blind both arise from the Federal Rehabilitation Act. I don't know if you realize this, but the Rehabilitation Act of 1920 was the first program for Vocational Rehabilitation services serving the general public anyplace in the world! I am so proud to be a part of this great program, and I hope you are too! This public program was a truly American initiative, and even today, there are not many programs like this in the world. I am told that we hired our first rehabilitation counselor in Iowa in 1921, and that person served the entire state. Of course our target population and the scope of services was much more limited in those days — we served Americans with mainly physical disabilities. Our service package was mainly counseling and guidance, prosthetic or orthotic devices, tools for work, work clothing, and direct job placement. Since 1920, as you know, our program has expanded to where we are at today, serving Iowan's with any type of disability situation where those disabilities result in substantial impediments to employment, and we now offer a wide variety of services that can truly meet individual needs, resulting in optimal employment outcomes. Over the years since 1921, IVRS has helped thousands of Iowan's with disabilities to prepare for and get great jobs!

Now, the advent of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) in 2014 opened up great opportunities to further expand our service capacity through effective collaboration with the many employment partners in our state. One of my primary areas of focus since becoming RSB Chief in 2018 was to work to encourage those partnerships and facilitate the collaboration of the various partners of the Iowa One-Stop System so that even better outcomes for all Iowans might be realized. And then came COVID-19, and with the need for working remotely and for social distancing, everything we have worked so hard to



## What is the ADA?

The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) covers a wide range of disabilities, from physical conditions affecting mobility, stamina, sight, hearing, and speech to conditions such as emotional illness and learning disorders. The ADA addresses access to the workplace (title I), State and local government services (title II), and places of public accommodation and commercial facilities (title III). It also requires phone companies to provide telecommunications relay services for people who have hearing or speech impairments (title IV) and miscellaneous instructions to Federal agencies that enforce the law (title V).

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build suddenly was threatened. So, how have we done with all of this? I am so very proud to report that Vocational Rehabilitation Services is alive and very well in Iowa! Our 13 area offices rose to the challenge immediately so that within two weeks of March 1<sup>st</sup>, around 80 percent of our staff were working remotely, and all of our interactions with customers, staff, and partners became virtual. And, what have we found? In very many cases, we have found that attendance at our meetings has improved, and the effectiveness of those meetings has been maintained. And, persons with disabilities are still being placed in great jobs right here in Iowa! We are also learning lessons every day all over the state that will serve us well even after the pandemic is over, making us more flexible and accommodating to staff and the public, and even more relevant to our customers.

Below are some examples of the incredible creativity and teaming from a couple of our area offices:

*From supervisor Cynthia Whalen, we hear, "The Burlington Area (BAO) Office demonstrates outstanding teamwork and resilience. The team embraces the philosophy to succeed despite circumstances. This is apparent when the team in conjunction with our contract partners immediately worked to launch a plan to implement a virtual transition services job club program to transition students to job seeking, career exploration, and job retention skills for adults. BAO has shown the ability to rapidly pivot and use technology in a way to continue to provide valuable direct and pre-ETS (pre-employment transition services) to our job candidates."*

*From a contract partner in Decorah regarding our IVRS business services efforts out of Dubuque and Mason City we hear, "I really appreciate the business services team at IVRS. I know in Dubuque Jason is great and very helpful when it comes to getting job candidates working. Thank you Michelle and Kyra, this was what I needed!"*

*From supervisor Holly Mateer of Cedar Rapids:*

*"Staff have been active in planning and delivering content to support job candidates during this time. In our first transition sessions, we had 30 plus students and educators join us. They have created a Google form to have candidates sign up which supports tracking and communication with youth. Zoom also has a reports feature that allows them to track participants to support our documentation efforts. Our Youth Career Club is on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday; and planning on our Adult Job Club offerings on Tuesday & Thursday."*

Thanks to the creativity, resilience, and great enthusiasm of our staff for this work, we are finding new, and in some cases better ways, to provide needed rehabilitation services to Iowans with disabilities! And, did I mention small business plans, nearly 200 of them, are in active planning, and new business start-ups have occurred even during a pandemic! Oh yes, IVRS is alive and well and serving Iowans with disabilities!

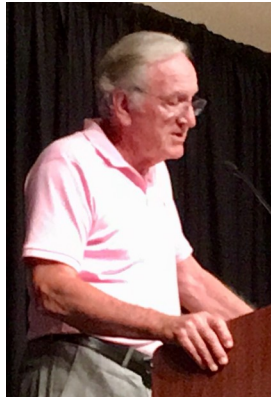
# Celebrating 30 Years of the ADA!

## Iowa Leadership

Iowa is fortunate to have had the leadership of Tom Harkin, who provided support for disability programs and authored legislation to improve the lives of persons with disabilities.

Harkin was a United States Senator from 1985 to 2015 and served in the United States House of Representatives from 1975 to 1985.

During his five senate terms he served as chair of the Senate Committee on



Tom Harkin

Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions.

Harkin authored the [Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990](#) and was its chief sponsor in the Senate. Harkin delivered part of his introduction speech in sign language, so his brother, who was deaf, could understand.

After leaving the Senate, Harkin founded the Harkin Institute at Drake University to study and advance public policy and social change.

Harkin demonstrates the ability of one person to make positive difference for thousands of persons with disabilities.

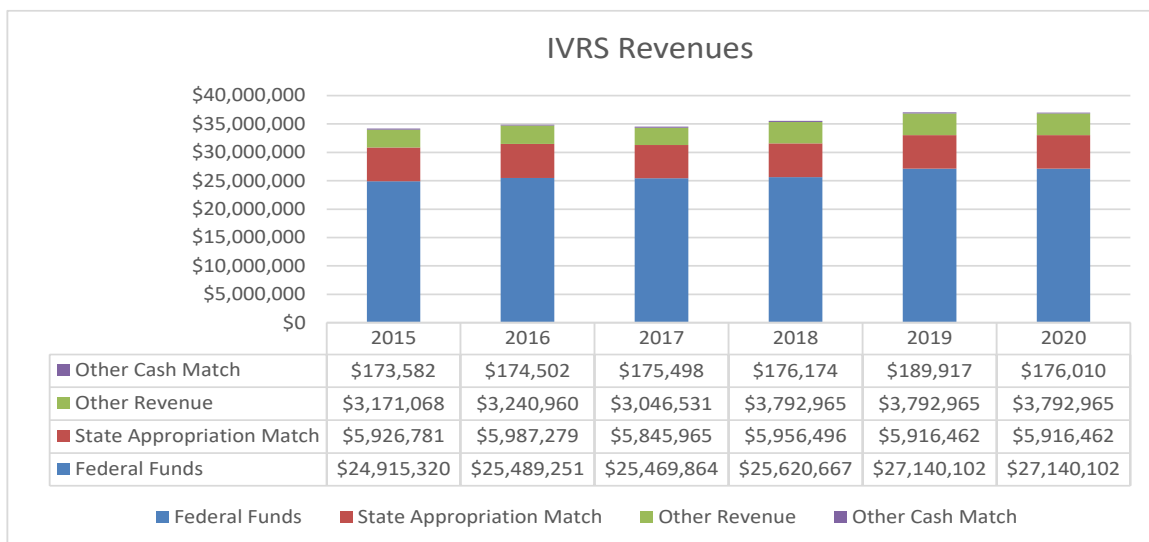


Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services

Finding solutions. Generating success.

*Making a Positive Difference For Every Person, One Person at a Time.*

## VR Brings Federal Funding to Iowans



IVRS brings in almost four federal dollars for every state dollar invested into the program.

The Federal Government matches the amount the state invests into vocational rehabilitation.



IVRS Successful Closures	
Program Year 2018	Program Year 2017
2,110	2,090

## IVRS turns Tax Users into Tax Payers

IVRS helped to successfully place 4,200 Iowans with Disabilities into employment during program years 2017 and 2018. Now, more than 4,000 people are working and contributing tax dollars. This decreases reliance on tax-funded programs and allows IVRS job candidates to achieve economic independence through employment.

IVRS job candidates are trained and supported in their places of employment to become valuable members of Iowa's workforce.

### Ruth Aldrich Farm and Home Publishers Inc.

Ruth has never been a stranger to hard work; she's done it her entire life. Ruth worked for a major production company for many years, working her way up to Shift Supervisor. Starting in 2006, Ruth noticed some back pain, but not being one to let that slow her down, Ruth kept working. Unfortunately, her back got worse, which led to her having to leave her job. Ruth went from being active to struggling to walk.



Ruth had a spinal fusion surgery, applied for disability, and received full benefits. She applied with Iowa Vocational Rehabilitation Services (IVRS) to help her find employment. It was obvious from the start that Ruth's days in the production field were over. For the first time, Ruth would need to find a job where she was sitting still.

In her home town of Belmond, IA a position for an Accountant was open at Farm and Home Publishers and Ruth applied. Farm and Home Publishers publishes rural maps, directories, and various advertising materials. Ruth interviewed for the position but she did not get the job due to her lack of education and experience.

IVRS Counselor Brian Warner followed up with a phone call to Farm and Home Publishers and asked if they would be willing to complete an On-the-Job Training (OJT). They remembered Ruth from her interview and were interested. Warner met with them and explained how the OJT works. While they did not have an accounting position available, they were looking for a proofreader. Warner wrote the OJT for two months, and then scheduled a date to reassess.

After about a week on the OJT, Warner got an email from office manager Camilla Gabrielson, who said, "I have visited with Ruth today, and we have decided to make her an official full-time employee with Farm & Home Publishers." She has been working with the Ticket to Work Employer Network (TTW EN) and plans to go completely off benefits.

## Independent Living Program

The Independent Living (IL) Program continues to provide services to individuals with significant disabilities who experience barriers to their independent living within their home and communities. What makes these individuals different from our VR Job Candidates is that these individuals do not have a vocational goal. The IL program is designed to help foster independence and inclusion of persons with significant disabilities even though they have no vocational goal.

The IL program primarily addresses architectural and environmental barriers to independence, with services generally fitting under the umbrella terms of rehabilitation technology and assistive technology. Assistance is typically provided for ramps, bathroom modifications, vehicle modifications, some durable medical equipment that is not covered by insurance, hearing aids, environmental controls, and augmentative communication devices. IVRS partners with Iowa Department for the Blind (IDB) and the Iowa Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) to help promote these IL services throughout Iowa.

For the first half of Federal Fiscal Year 2020 we have provided financial assistance for four bathroom modifications, one accessible ramp, one electric Hoyer Lift with attached scale, one scooter, one wheelchair lift, one power mobility device, and one containment fence.

IVRS reduces the usage of public assistance programs by assisting those on such programs to go to, or return to work.

A total of **654 VR job candidates** were receiving public support for living expenses (SSI, SSDI, TANF, General Assistance).

Of those, 114 now support themselves, a savings of **\$1,005,560 annually** for the state.

IVRS provides equipment to businesses and their employees so they can continue to do their jobs.

A letter to our Rehabilitation Counselor Steve Neuharth, Creston Service Unit

Dear Chuck and Steve,

I wanted to share these pictures of Jabe and Mitch farming this weekend. It is such a load off of my mind to have a way to safely get Mitch on the tractor. (The days of a rickety step ladder or pallet on the tractor loader are gone!) Jabe was able to easily get Mitch off and on the tractor, and Mitch worked for seven hours on Saturday, disking. Mitch is never happier than when he's on his 806. Thank you for all your hard work and patience on helping this dream come true! We appreciate it very, very much.

Donna



## Iowa Self-Employment Program assists Iowa business start-up.

Daniel Toops, an adult with Autism, has been working with IVRS and the Iowa Self-Employment program and owns a “fire-starter” business. Daniel makes JT FireStarters by hand. JT FireStarters are the easy and inexpensive way to start a fire in a fireplace, wood-burning stove or firepit. His product is sold in over 100 stores in the Midwest.

*Learn more about this business on Facebook under JT FireStarters.*



IVRS assists budding entrepreneurs to realize their dreams of starting their own businesses which ultimately provide job opportunities for others.

IVRS provides students with disabilities work –based learning opportunities, linking them to careers that will sustain them and their families

IVRS VIRTUAL PRE-ETS SUMMER PROGRAM

<p><b>Me Monday</b></p> <p>Join us on Mondays this summer to explore various topics about self-advocacy and work readiness skills!</p>	<p><b>Transition Tuesday</b></p> <p>Dig into college options and independent living topics on Tuesdays!</p>	<p><b>Working Wednesday</b></p> <p>On Wednesdays participate in activities that will allow you to look into different jobs and skills you will need to be successful on the job!</p>	<p><b>Tour Thursday</b></p> <p>Virtually tour job sites across Iowa on Thursdays!</p>
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During the summer IVRS gives additional focus to transition students who are preparing to leave high school and begin training for employment. Remote sessions are scheduled for 2020 so these students can Zoom in, or join a Google Classroom for these activities during closures, and there is an added benefit that students don't face potential barriers of transportation to and from events.

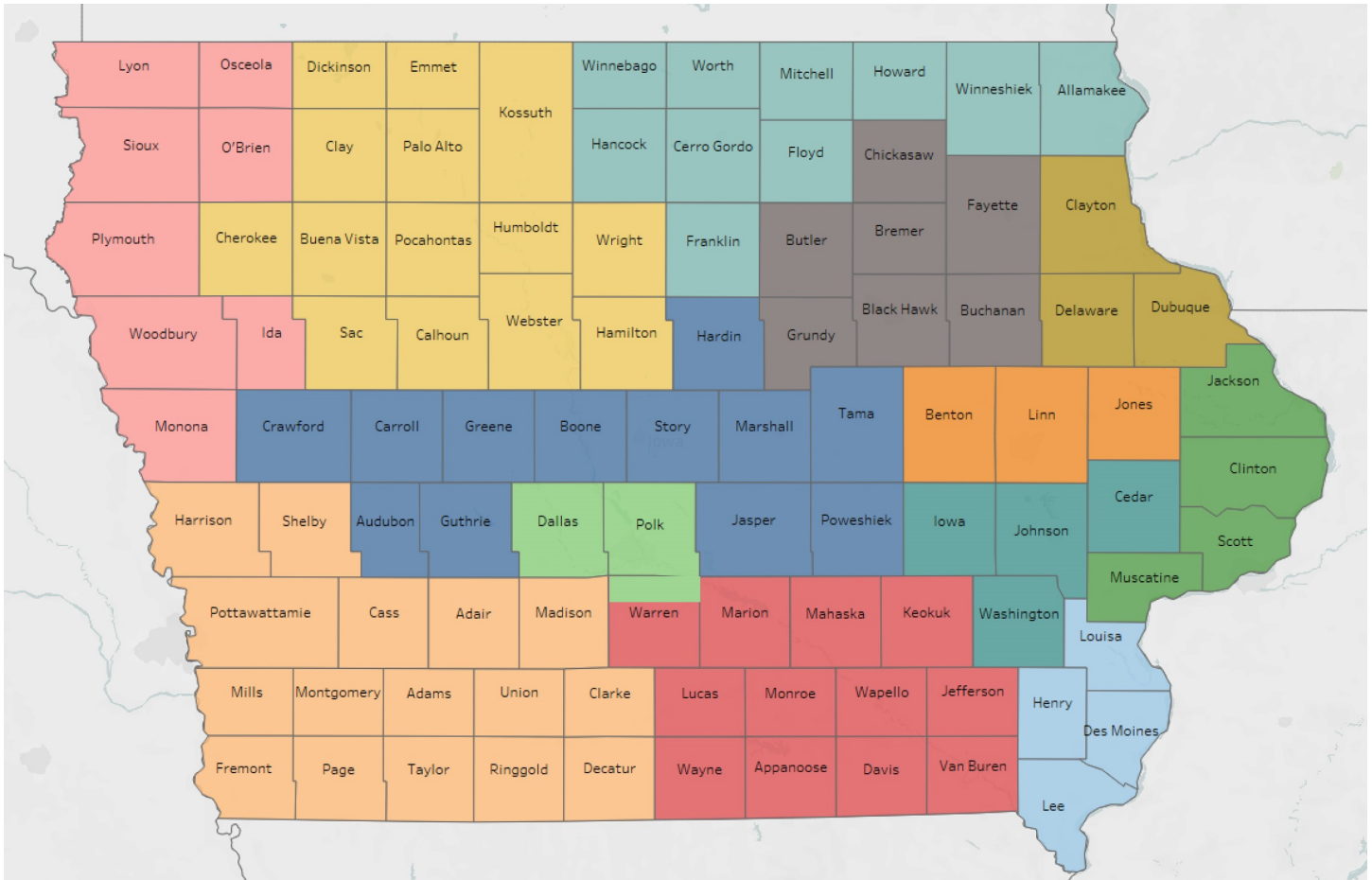
The IVRS Virtual Pre-ETS Summer Program for statewide activities will run Monday through Thursday from June 15th through July 30th. Job exploration activities will cover different business sectors, such as manufacturing, healthcare, etc.



# IVRS Area Offices

Contact us!

[www.ivrs.iowa.gov](http://www.ivrs.iowa.gov)



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