

CHARTER: 2025 Vocational Recovery Advisory Committee (VRAC)

I. PURPOSE of the Charter

The purpose of this charter is to establish the vision, mission, strategies, and core values of the **Vocational Recovery Advisory Committee (VRAC)**. The charter also sets parameters for the size and make-up of the committee, defines the processes for selection of members, sets expectations for membership, and establishes a regular cadence of meetings.

II. VRAC VISION

VRAC members envision a continuously improving system that empowers workers to heal and return to work through work disability prevention.

III. VRAC MISSION

VRAC members collaborate to identify, prioritize, and take actions to elevate vocational services within the Washington workers' compensation system.

VRAC members will do this through the following strategies:

- Contribute to a high-performing team:
 - Build and maintain strong, positive relationships and trust with one another.
 - Work towards the welfare of the system rather than personal advantage.
 - Hold the committee accountable for reducing work disability (reduce delays, duration, confusion, and set clear expectations).
- Participate in continuous improvement projects to better our system:
 - Explore creative ways to promote best practices in vocational services
 - Follow best practices in project management and participate in sub-committee work.
 - Seek, analyze, and take appropriate action on feedback.
- Demonstrate leadership within the vocational community:
 - Help community to embrace changes through effective change management
 - Build and maintain good relationships with agency, provider groups, and external organizations.
 - Assist in raising risks and concerns to be addressed and resolved within the system.
 - Use data to better understand issues and work collaboratively to find solutions.
 - Promote a model of continuous improvement (PDCA).

IV. FOCUS AREAS

Projects and initiatives undertaken by VRAC are done in the spirit of continuous improvement. They can be categorized or aligned to one or more focus areas:

- **Best Practices:** Discovery and implementation of new methods or techniques superior to other alternatives because the outcomes are superior to those achieved by other means.
- **Process Improvements:** The incorporation of feedback, and the exploration of, existing workflows, products, and/or tools to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- **Developing Partnerships:** Management and cultivation of collaborative working relationships with other members of the workers' compensation system to meet shared goals and objectives.

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V. VRAC CORE VALUES

Members of VRAC will utilize the following ethics and ideals to guide the decision-making process, build positive, productive relationships, and solve problems:

- **Full Participation:** Speaking up and saying what’s on your mind. Being courageous enough to raise difficult issues, share “first draft” ideas, and become more adept at discovering and acknowledging the diversity of opinions and backgrounds within the committee.
- **Respect:** Seeing the best in each other, checking our assumptions, and uplifting others.
- **Worker-centricity:** Placing the needs of worker as the focus of the committee’s work.
- **Influence:** Encouraging, motivating, and guiding others to think or act in a specific way for the betterment of the system.
- **Open-mindedness/Learning:** Embracing challenges as opportunities, assuming good intentions, seeking feedback for improvement, and maintaining an attitude of humility. Continuous personal growth, intellectual curiosity, and lack of pre-judgement.
- **Transparency:** Being authentic in the way we message ourselves. Lacking hidden agendas or conditions, providing availability of full information required for collaboration, cooperation, and collective decision making.
- **Inclusion/Cultural Competence:** Cultivating a feeling of belonging among all members through positive behaviors and attitudes. Including and respecting everyone’s beliefs, opinions, values, and thoughts regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, background, or social group.
- **Passion:** Internal energy, motivation, and enthusiasm for our areas of expertise.
- **Innovation:** Fostering growth, adaptability, creative problem-solving, and the desire to continuously improve.

VI. MEMBERSHIP (size and make-up)

Members of VRAC will be representative of the following:

- Return to Work Partnerships
- Claims Administration
- International Association of Rehabilitation Professionals (IARP)
- IARP Management Group (IMG)
- 5+ years of vocational services experience and currently in a vocational firm owner, manager, or informal leadership role, representing the firm.

VRAC will be comprised of the following make up:

Role/Representation	Term
Program Manager – Quality Assurance (Chair)	Ongoing
Chief of Return to Work Partnerships (Executive Sponsor)	Ongoing
Chief of Claims Administration for Insurance Services	Ongoing
Quality Assurance Validation Team (5)	Ongoing
Return to Work Partnerships Consultants/Advisors/Training Developers (4)	Ongoing
Vocational Services Specialists Supervisors (3)	Ongoing
Vocational Firm Owners, Managers, Supervisors, or Quality Assurance Leadership Representatives (14)	Ongoing
TOTAL: 29 members	

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Additional internal L&I stakeholders may be invited to participate in VRAC “as needed.” Stakeholders include, but are not limited to:

- Early Return to Work Consultation
- Vocational Dispute Resolution Office
- Pension Adjudication
- Private Sector Rehabilitation Services
- Therapy Services
- The Office of the Medical Director

VRAC sub-committees may sometimes expand VRAC participation to include Claim Managers, Regulatory Analysts, Project Managers, Business Analysts, and additional vocational providers.

VII. SELECTION OF VOCATIONAL PROVIDERS

The VRAC Chair will solicit interest from the vocational services provider community through GovDelivery and on the Vocational Services webpages at least three months prior to the end of the year. Providers will submit an interest form to include the following:

- Name
- Vocational Firm Name
- Position within the firm (owner, manager, supervisor, QA leader, etc.)
- Professional affiliations (IARP, IMG, Boards, etc.)
- Written response on why they are interested and how they can add value to the committee
- Description of leadership role within the vocational firm, along with firm owner/manager sign-off, if not in a formal leadership role

The VRAC Chair will appoint a Selection Sub-Committee to review interest forms and make recommendations. The sub-committee will consider the following when making a recommendation to add a provider to VRAC:

- The provider’s interest and experience outlined in the application.
- Past participation in advisory committees (VRP, VTSG, etc.) or test groups with L&I.
- Current participation in professional organizations.
- The size and location of the firm.
- Details on any complaints received within the past five years.

The sub-committee will consider a balance of representation from small, medium, and large firms across all geographic locations within the state in making its recommendation.

Recommendations must be approved by the VRAC Sponsor, who may seek guidance from the current committee to finalize any decisions.

All providers who submitted interest forms will be contacted when the decisions are final.

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VIII. VRAC MEMBER RESPONSIBILITIES

VRAC members are undertaking a position of public trust and are responsible for being an active participant. The time commitment to VRAC:

- Minimum of 4 hours per month.
- Participation in sub-committees can add hours to time commitment.

Members are to:

- Attending VRAC meetings.
- Preparing for the meetings in advance, completing any assignments and/or research.
- Upholding the committee's core, shared values.
- Collaborating to establish committee priorities.
- Volunteering for sub-committees to develop ideas, raise risks and issues, and/or produce deliverables.
- Holding each other accountable for working towards system-level solutions.
- Fostering positive, productive relationships between L&I and the larger vocational community.
- Providing a 60-day written notice to the VRAC Chair if they can no longer participate as a member.

VRAC Chair Responsibilities: Program Manager (Vocational Services Quality Assurance)

- Prepare VRAC agenda for meetings.
- Schedule VRAC meetings and share meeting calendar for both ZOOM and in-person meetings.
- Work with internal team to ensure meeting room is set-up appropriately for in-person meetings.
- Facilitate the discussion of topics on the VRAC agenda, assign a note-taker, and summarize action items.
- Help VRAC members identify annual priorities and create and monitor work plans.
- Keep the larger vocational community apprised of VRAC work.
- Create working sub-committees, as needed, to move initiatives forward.
- Keep VRAC Sponsor updated, informed, and consulted on agenda topics, escalating concerns, feedback, or other issues.
- Additionally, the Chair may remove a member of the committee and provide them with written notification, including an explanation for the action.

VRAC Sponsor Responsibilities: Chief of Return to Work Partnerships

- Build consensus on VRAC vision, mission, strategies, and core values.
- Determine program priorities and coordinate to related functions in agency
- Agree to and sponsor VRAC priorities
- Engage L&I leadership to actively support VRAC priorities
- Approve work-plan and regularly review progress
- Represent agency in determining risk tolerance
- Help secure agency resources and remove barriers
- Actively participate in meetings

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IX. VRAC MEETINGS

VRAC will meet monthly (or at least hold 10 meetings per year) and may also meet at other times by recommendation of the Chair. Sub-committee work is an expectation for all members, which may require additional meeting time between VRAC meetings.

Meetings will be held at such time and place as the Chair determines in order to conduct all business necessary for the administration of VRAC. The committee will meet in-person at least once per quarter.

X. APPROVAL AND EFFECTIVE DATE

The signature below indicates approval of the charter.

Signed: *Caitlyn Jakel* Date: 1/8/2024

Chief of Return to Work Partnerships for Insurance Services
Washington State Department of Labor & Industries