



Speakers

Discovering Opportunities for Vocational Rehabilitation During the COVID-19 Pandemic

December 2020



Shannon Austin, Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

Shannon Austin has more than 20 years of combined experience in human resource management, workforce development, and vocational rehabilitation. She was appointed the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation executive director in May 2019. The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation is a state agency under the Pennsylvania Department of Labor & Industry that assists individuals with disabilities seek and maintain employment and independence. Austin has worked tirelessly to develop and nurture strong collaborations between government agencies, private businesses, and community partners to bring about true inclusion in the workplace. She also championed numerous public-private collaborative projects and created effective working relationships with employers, community partners, and professional organizations to address the needs of individuals with disabilities. Austin holds bachelor of science degrees in business administration, organizational leadership, and behavioral and social sciences, and she earned her master of science degree in rehabilitation counseling from West Virginia University. Austin is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in instructional management and leadership at Robert Morris University. She has completed the Executive Leadership Academy program/the Advance Leadership Initiative at Carnegie Mellon University Tepper School of Business for successful African American leaders to help their organizations understand the competitive advantage gained by cultivating diverse and inclusive leadership teams.



Kathryn Hayfield, Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services

Kathryn Hayfield was appointed commissioner of the Virginia Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services in 2018 by Governor Ralph Northam. At the department, she leads the agency's efforts to provide and advocate for resources and services to improve the employment, quality of life, security, and independence of older Virginians, Virginians with disabilities, and their families. Prior to her appointment, she served as assistant commissioner and director of Virginia's Vocational Rehabilitation program at the Department for Aging and Rehabilitative Services, overseeing efforts to secure employment for Virginians with disabilities. Before that, she was assistant commissioner of the former Community Based Services Division, now part of the Division for Community Living. Though Hayfield has a long history of public service in state government, she also worked in the private sector as an early advocate for supported employment programs and workforce programs for people with mental health disabilities. She is proud of the agency's strong partnership with community providers, including employment services organizations, brain injury services providers, Area Agencies on Aging, and Centers for Independent Living. Some of her most valued work has been with

the Virginia Assistive Technology System to improve access to assistive technology for youth and adults with disabilities and older adults. Hayfield holds a bachelor's degree in social work from Lock Haven University in Pennsylvania and a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from Virginia Commonwealth University.



Dacia Johnson, Oregon State Commission for the Blind

Dacia Johnson is the executive director of Oregon's Commission for the Blind. Serving a seven-member, governor-appointed commission, Johnson leads the agency responsible for providing individuals people with vision loss the services and support they need to attain and maintain employment in the pre-employment transition for high school students and throughout their lives. The agency also provides critical independent living rehabilitation training to Oregonians as they experience age- or disease-related vision loss so they can remain living safely and independently in their homes. Under Johnson's leadership, the agency developed and implemented a performance measurement system that informs the commission and leadership of their progress toward the agency's goals. The agency successfully serves more than 1,500 Oregonians each year from vocational rehabilitation and Older Blind programs. Johnson has more than 25 years of experience providing rehabilitation services, spending the past 20 in positions of senior leadership. She currently serves as president for the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind and president-elect of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation. Johnson holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Western Oregon University and a master's degree in rehabilitation counseling from Portland State University. She also holds the Certified Rehabilitation Counselor credential.



David Mann, Mathematica

David Mann is a senior researcher at Mathematica. He has played a key role in projects examining employment and benefit receipt for people with disabilities, especially vocational rehabilitation customers, Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance beneficiaries, and young adults with childhood-onset disabilities. He has helped develop and evaluate Social Security Administration initiatives that promote employment for Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Insurance beneficiaries, including Ticket to Work, the Benefit Offset National Demonstration, and the Work Incentive Simplification Pilot. Mann helps oversee Mathematica's work for two Rehabilitation Research and Training Centers, which are funded by the National Institute on Disability, Independent Living, and Rehabilitation Research to produce knowledge that can improve the well-being of people with disabilities. He was principal investigator in disability employment policy for the U.S. Department of Labor's Clearinghouse for Labor Evaluation and Research, which improves the accessibility of research evidence for policymakers and stakeholders. Mann, who joined Mathematica in 2011, publishes in peer-reviewed publications such as the Journal of Human Capital, the IZA Journal of Labor Policy, the Journal of Disability Policy Studies, and the Social Security Bulletin. In 2020, Mann was appointed to the Pennsylvania State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation by Governor Tom Wolf. He holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Pennsylvania.



Purvi Sevak, Mathematica

Purvi Sevak is a senior researcher at Mathematica. She has expertise in the role vocational rehabilitation plays in helping people with disabilities achieve their employment goals. She currently works with state vocational rehabilitation agencies to help them leverage data and technology to improve service delivery and outcomes for youth with disabilities as they transition to adulthood. This includes developing and supporting the Vocational Rehabilitation

Program Evaluation Coach, a free web-based tool that assists VR agencies with evaluation to inform program improvement. Sevak recently co-edited a special volume of the *Journal of Vocational Rehabilitation*, a collection of studies on the role of individual and environmental factors in influencing employment of people with disabilities. Her published research has included studies examining program participation in Supplemental Security Income, geographic variation in employment and program use, barriers and facilitators to employment, retirement and savings behavior, and the ability of intensive care management to improve outcomes for Medicare beneficiaries with complex health needs. She has been at Mathematica since 2013 and was previously a professor in the economics department at Hunter College in the City University of New York. Sevak holds a Ph.D. in economics from the University of Michigan.



Paul Shattuck, Mathematica

Paul Shattuck is a senior fellow at Mathematica. He is a nationally recognized expert in autism spectrum disorders, and he pioneered the understanding of autism in adulthood and the measurement of autism outcomes. His other research interests include improving community systems and services, understanding the long-range impact of social determinants of health, and examining the intersection of climate change and public health. He currently focuses on approaches to measure and improve the performance and equity of systems of care for vulnerable populations using collaborative community engagement. He is also collaborating with foundations on a range of health and disability topics. He has an abiding passion for helping translate scientific findings into useful guidance for policy and practice in the areas of health and social services. He is also a member of Mathematica's Equity Community of Practice. Before joining Mathematica in 2020, Shattuck was a professor at Drexel University, where he was the founding leader of the A.J. Drexel Autism Institute's Life Course Outcomes Program, the National Autism Data Center, and the Transition Pathways Community Partnership Initiative. He oversaw an integrated strategy for conducting, translating, and disseminating research to improve community-based services and inform national policies aimed at helping teens and adults on the autism spectrum. He has a Ph.D. in social welfare from the University of Wisconsin-Madison.



Steve Wooderson, Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation

Steve Wooderson became the chief executive officer of the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation in 2010. His experience in vocational rehabilitation spans more than 35 years of service in the vocational rehabilitation program. Wooderson started as a vocational rehabilitation counselor in south-central Missouri in 1981, and he enjoyed a 20-year career with the Missouri vocational rehabilitation agency. In 2000, Wooderson moved to Iowa to become the rehabilitation services chief and was then appointed the administrator of Iowa vocational rehabilitation services in 2002. He has served at all professional levels in the public vocational rehabilitation program, which gives him a unique perspective of the local, state, and national implications of vocational rehabilitation service delivery. During his tenure in Iowa, he served as adjunct faculty in the Drake University rehabilitation counseling program. Since his tenure with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation, he has led the way to an international partnership with allied vocational rehabilitation service providers in western Europe and been a featured trainer and speaker with the European Platform for Rehabilitation headquartered in Brussels, Belgium. Wooderson has represented the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation and the U.S. public vocational rehabilitation program by presenting and meeting with members of the Vietnamese Ministry of Labor, social services providers, and higher education officials in Hanoi, Vietnam. He is a certified Dale Carnegie trainer and a retired Army Reserves Lieutenant Colonel.

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