

# RPEN News

July, 2017

Rehabilitation Program Evaluation Network

Edition 2, Volume 1

## President's Message

In the wake of WIOA, program evaluation is at the forefront of national and local discourse. Indeed, as a discipline, program evaluation is perhaps, more than ever, appreciated for what it is: a vital component of effective vocational rehabilitation. To this end, this issue of *RPEN News* highlights an emerging community of practice, namely Aware VR CoP, whose efforts have resulted in a thriving dialog about the role and use of AWARE VR™. In addition, our featured evaluator, Matt Markve, offers tools he finds most valuable as a program analyst.



On a slightly different note, this issue invites readers to nominate key evaluators for our featured evaluator section. We also invite readers to submit best practices articles. Finally, I hope you find our second edition to be a resource of support to the valuable work you, and all our readers, do.

Respectfully,

Saara T. Grizzell, Ph.D., CRC, LVRC  
RPEN President 2017

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## Upcoming Events

**Summit Pre-Conference**  
Sponsored by WINTAC  
September 5<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
1 to 6 PM  
Double Tree Hotel  
Omaha, Nebraska

**Summit Conference**  
September 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>, 2017  
Double Tree Hotel  
Omaha, Nebraska

**NRA Annual Training Conference**  
October 27-29, 2017  
Omni Corpus Christi Hotel  
Corpus Christi, Texas

## Featured Evaluator

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Every quarterly newsletter features a program evaluator/RPEN member. This edition features an interview with Matt Markve, a program evaluator with the Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation.

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*Q: Please tell the readers a little about yourself.*

I graduated from the University of New Mexico with a BS in Psychology and from the University of Northern Colorado with a MA in Rehabilitation Counseling (2002) and a PhD in Human Rehabilitation (2013).

I began working with people with disabilities doing direct service provision back in the early 90s. I started out in group homes and transitional residential settings serving people with developmental disabilities in western South Dakota. I eventually became a job coach, which was easily the most fun I've ever had while getting paid. I moved on to work as a substance abuse educator and counselor in northern Colorado and eventually took a job working as a trainer at the Region VIII Rehabilitation Continuing Education Program, which

eventually became the Region 8 TACE Center at the University of Northern Colorado (UNC). During my 11 years at UNC I had the opportunity to engage in a variety of side projects including a teaching a variety of courses and working with SVRAs in the Dakotas, Montana, Wyoming, Colorado and Utah. Perhaps the most impactful experiences I had at UNC involved opportunities to engage with VR program evaluators and attend the annual Summit conferences, where I found I had an affinity for the people and the work. This led me to apply for the Program Evaluation Analyst position for the Idaho general VR program (IDVR) where I have been since March of 2015. I now live in Boise with my two corgis, Ein and Tonk. I enjoy tacos.

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*Q: Reflecting on your accomplishments within the past five years, which ones are you most proud?*

The first would be becoming gainfully employed as a Program Evaluation Analyst after the TACE Centers were disbanded. My unexpected unemployment forced a number of decisions

Presenting RPEN's  
Featured Evaluator,  
July 2017:



*Matt Markve*

Idaho Division of  
Vocational Rehabilitation

“Each stakeholder brings unique concerns and perspective and taking the time to listen, reflect and ensure understanding has consistently resulted in a better product/analysis/outcome, regardless of what I may be working on.”

pertaining to career direction, and I was pleased to be offered the Idaho job because I could remain an active part of the greater VR program evaluation community.

The second accomplishment was successfully writing the Idaho WIOA Combined State Plan along with my manager, Teresa Pitt, and Idaho combined plan partners. Idaho is a smaller state where 'all other duties as assigned' takes on a life of its own. As a result, I hit the ground running with Teresa who was also new to IDVR and was thrown headlong into combined plan development. We worked tirelessly within our WIOA Advisory Group to create something truly new to Idaho, and continue to work together to implement these new requirements.

The third accomplishment was a side project issued to me by administration, where I was given the freedom to construct and deploy a research project. The Idaho Legislature's Joint Senate Finance – House Appropriations Committee issued intent language to the Division requiring a review of the level of fees for services and how that rate impacts recruitment and retention of CRP staff and the safety and

effectiveness of services provided.

It was clear from the language that understanding stakeholder perspectives was going to be the central focus of the project, so I talked with my former boss, Dr. Scott Sabella, about similar projects he had done, and blatantly stole his approach to form the foundation for the qualitative part of my review. This qualitative narrative, combined with a historical rate and inflation analysis resulted in a 5.7 percent increase for Idaho's Extended Employment Services program.

***“It was the first time I've had to present at the statehouse and the first time I've ever talked legislators into giving more money to a social welfare program.”***

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*Q: What program evaluation practices do you utilize and find most helpful in your work?*

The single most helpful tool in my toolbox is reflective listening. Because Idaho is a (relatively) small state, I get to interact with a variety of stakeholders (customers, CRPs, administration, field staff, Title I-IV WIOA partners, the SRC, advocacy groups, legislators, TA providers, RSA, etc.). Each stakeholder brings unique concerns and perspective and taking the time to listen, reflect and ensure understanding has consistently resulted in a better product/analysis/outcome, regardless of what I may be working on. Depending on the need, this could be anything from an informal conversation to a semi-structured interview to a structured iterative survey/focus group cycle. The common and unique concerns people bring to the process provide invaluable context to quantitative analyses, particularly in a time of shifting baselines and priorities for VR programs.

# The AWARE VR Community of Practice

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Authors: John Stem, MS, CRC  
& Pamela Laing, MS, SPHR

Since becoming law on July 22, 2014, the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) has served as a change catalyst the likes of which many vocational rehabilitation (VR) professionals, including those responsible for program evaluation, quality assurance, and performance improvement, have not previously experienced.

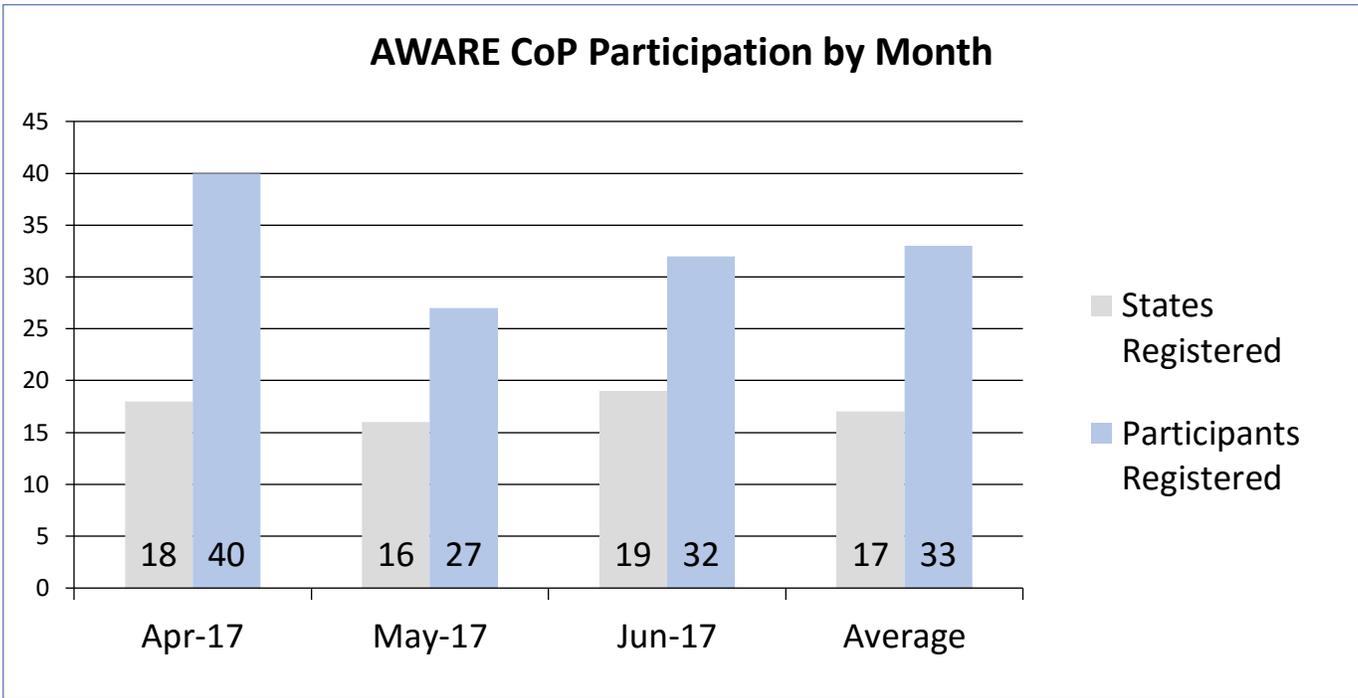
Immediately, state VR professionals, in collaboration and consultation with RSA, workforce partners, technical assistance centers, and national professional associations, engaged in often overlapping dialogs regarding unified and combined state plans, competitive integrated employment, pre-employment transition services, career counseling for subminimum wage earners, and, of course, common performance measures. Concurrently, VR agencies began preparing their case management systems to comply with the revised RSA-911 reporting requirements published in September 2016 in RSA Program Directive 16-04, and most recently revised

June 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017. For agencies using [AWARE VR™](#), electronic records management software developed by [Alliance Enterprises, Inc.©](#), this process has involved participation in monthly group meetings organized by the developer; adapting, testing, and installing several new versions of the software; and training and retraining staff. With the deadline to comply with the new federal requirement to provide quarterly RSA-911 reports for open and closed cases fast approaching, state VR representatives began to more frequently ask one another follow-up questions after participating in the monthly group meetings with Alliance Enterprises.

In March 2017, Pamela Laing, Program Manager, Opportunities for Ohioans with Disabilities, and John Stem, Program Manager, Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services, while engaged in just such a dialog, decided to invite other state VR agency staff using AWARE into the

conversation, resulting in the AWARE VR Community of Practice (CoP). Over the next three months, this CoP has enjoyed the participation of state agency representatives from 22 states across the nation, and an average of 33 participants from 17 states have participated in each monthly meeting.

Preliminary feedback has been enthusiastic, and participants have begun suggesting strategies for increasing the effectiveness of this Community of Practice. For instance, participants are investigating options for establishing an on-line forum for initiating or continuing discussions between monthly meetings. Beginning in August, future meetings will be held every fourth Thursday of the month from 1:30-3:00 EST. All state agencies using AWARE VR™ are invited to participate. To pre-register, contact Pamela Laing at [pamela.laing@ood.ohio.gov](mailto:pamela.laing@ood.ohio.gov) or John Stem [john.stem@maryland.gov](mailto:john.stem@maryland.gov).



## Nomination and Submission Guidelines

*Nomination Guidelines: RPEN members are welcome to nominate themselves or other colleagues for the "Featured Program Evaluator." To do so, please send an e-mail to [terry.donovan@wintac.org](mailto:terry.donovan@wintac.org) with the following: the name and place of employment of the person being nominated (nominee) and an explanation as to why the nominee is being nominated. The RPEN board will then evaluate submissions and inform the nominator/nominee of the board's decision. Please note that the nominee must be a member of RPEN.*

*Submission Guidelines: RPEN members are welcome to submit an article for publication in this newsletter. Please submit your article to the following e-mail: [matthew.markve@vr.idaho.gov](mailto:matthew.markve@vr.idaho.gov). Articles are limited to no more than 400 words (including references), and one table, graph, or figure. Please include information about the author (name, place of employment, job title, credentials).*

## What is RPEN?

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Established in March 2011, the Rehabilitation Program Evaluation Network (RPEN) is a division of the National Rehabilitation Association (NRA) that strives to promote, integrate, and elevate the role of program evaluators in the field of vocational rehabilitation through education, training, and collaboration.

## Benefits of RPEN Membership

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RPEN members enjoy a variety of benefits, such as: continuing education program evaluation trainings at discounted rates, opportunities to collaborate and exchange ideas with other program evaluators, attendance at an annual membership meeting, a biannual subscription to the *Journal of Rehabilitation Administration*, and a quarterly subscription to the RPEN newsletter.

## How to Join RPEN

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There are a variety of ways to join RPEN (online, by phone, or by mail):

**Join online:** Visit the NRA website ([www.nationalrehab.org](http://www.nationalrehab.org)), and follow the links to become a member. You will be asked to fill out a membership form. On the membership form check the box for the RPEN after selected your general NRA membership. There are **two** annual RPEN membership levels, namely: student: \$15, and professional: \$30.

**Join by telephone:** Contact the National Rehabilitation Association office at (703) 836-0850.

**Join by mail:** Send a membership application form and check to:

National Rehabilitation Association  
PO Box 150235  
Alexandria, VA 22315

## Summit Navigators

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Darlene Grooms, Ph.D., CRC, LPC  
Associate Professor  
Human Development & Child Studies  
Oakland University, Rochester, Michigan

Steven W. Collins, Ph.D.  
Chief, Bureau of Planning and Performance,  
Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Tallahassee, Florida

Kathe F. Matrone, Ph.D., CRC  
Director, Center for Continuing  
Education in Rehabilitation  
University of Washington, Seattle, Washington

Elizabeth Moody, MPA  
Strategic Planning Director  
Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Tallahassee, Florida

Scott Sabella, Ph.D., CRC  
Assistant Professor  
Counseling, School, and Educational Psychology  
University of Buffalo  
Buffalo, New York

Michael Shoemaker, M.A., CRC, LVRC, CPM  
Founder of RPEN and Navigators  
Utah State Office of Rehabilitation  
Salt Lake City, Utah

John Stem, MS, CRC  
Program Manager  
Maryland Division of Rehabilitation Services  
Baltimore, Maryland

David Vandergoot, Ph.D.  
President, WorkLife Resources, Inc.  
Asheville, North Carolina

## RPEN Board

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President:  
Saara Grizzell, Ph.D., CRC, LVRC  
Assistant Professor  
School of Rehabilitation Services and Counseling  
University of Texas – Rio Grande Valley  
Edinburg, TX

Past President:  
Matt Markve, Ph.D., CRC, Program Evaluator  
Idaho Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Boise, Idaho

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KY Office of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Louisville, KY

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Terry Donovan  
Training and Technical Assistance  
National Disability Institute  
Washington, DC

Secretary:  
Elizabeth Moody, MPA, Planning Director  
Florida Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Tallahassee, Florida

NRA Representative:  
Jeff Stevens, Ph.D., Chief of Planning / Evaluation  
Division of Vocational Rehabilitation  
Department of Health and Human Services  
Raleigh, North Carolina