
TODAY'S NEWS

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Iowa Rehabilitation Association

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President's Note

Michelle Dickerson

**President, Iowa
Rehabilitation As-
sociation**

Many changes have occurred over the past few years, impacting the field of Vocational Rehabilitation Counseling, at the local and national levels. Now is the time to stay informed, get involved, education yourselves and advocate. The Iowa Rehabilitation Association will continue to provide opportunities for you to do just that. Our state and national legislative chairs stay aware of issues that impact our community and share that

information with the board, which impacts the services and trainings we provide to our members. Our leadership continues to look for innovative and relevant ways to share information with you all. This year, we will be focusing our efforts on restructuring our outreach and education efforts. It is anticipated that we will not be holding our typical three day annual conference but instead will be providing a mini-conference, likely this summer. Plans are being developed and information will be shared as it becomes available. Members will be informed via email and website updates. Remember that there are additional resources available from the National Rehabilitation Association and they provide webinar trainings for CEU credits. We are also working on disbursing information about additional opportunities to obtain CEU's to our members. Additionally, if you haven't viewed the new CRCC Code of Ethics, please do so. And continue working hard!

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A Touch of Inspiration and Acknowledgement

So the day starts and it's off to the races. You meet with client after client.



But then you meet with that one client that will impact the rest of your day more than you thought possible. That client that just can't catch a break, that mom that's hit every dead end possible when trying to find supports for her child, that client that was told there was nothing out there for them or in second grade, told they'd never read... "so just focus on life skills." That client that you look at and know today may be a bad day, the light might be hard to see, the support may just not be there. But you...you... see something. You step outside of "doing your job" and you make a connection with your most human-like instincts. Your instinct to heal, to help, to care and to be present. Do you realize your power? Because you have the power to be somebody's super hero at that moment. You know how to save the day, if even for only that one hour. And you are selfless enough to instill your power upon your client to take control, and you instill hope.

Have you had that feeling before? Do you remember those moments where you offer a ser-

Michelle Dickerson

**President,
Iowa Rehabilitation Association**

vice people never knew existed? Or have you helped schedule that doctor’s appointment that helped finally get the meds right? Have you reminded that client who felt worthless in their accomplishments and realized the spark you brought back or that you’d never seen in them before? Do you remember that caregiver that found so much comfort in being in your presence that it made them cry when talking about how much they just want what’s best for their loved one? Have you listened as that once told second grader, explains she can now read novels in a week. Do you remember what it felt like watching that one young man graduate from college after barely getting through his first semester or thinking about how self-motivated that other client was that needed minimal support but couldn’t have done it without the stroke of your pen, in your hand, creating your signature to help them pay for the classes needed to make their dreams a reality?

You, my friend, were meant to be a Rehab Counselor. You were meant to be where you are, creating the magic you create, even on the toughest of days, even when it seems impossible. So continue on this journey with all of us, your co-workers, partners and supporters to do the work that is needed to make this world more civil, promote inclusion but most of all make a positive impact in the lives of those individuals you assist on their life’s journey. You are appreciated. And I hope you continue to have more super hero moments.

Federal Legislative Report

[Ellen Sokolowski](#)

President Trump was inaugurated as the 45th President of the United States on January 20, 2017. At the time of his inauguration, disability advocates were uncertain as to what his specific disability policies would be.

Federal Legislative Chair, Iowa Rehabilitation Association

He had not specifically noted any disability policies on the campaign trail, other than he expressed the opinion that Autism was caused by vaccines. Scientists in this field have demonstrated that this is not the case. President Trump is appointing a panel to look into this and has appointed Robert F. Kennedy, Jr., to this panel. This is significant as Mr. Kennedy is reported to have the same belief as the President.

“ It is important to keep disability issues in front of our elected officials, both at a state level and on the national level.”

President Trump nominated Betsy DeVos to be Secretary of Education. This was something of a controversial nomination as many in the education community as well as the disability community were against her nomination. Some Republicans in the Senate withdrew their support for her. Qualifications wise, she does not have any experience in the field of education and supports tax supported vouchers for parents to choose where they would like to have their children educated: public, private or charter schools. Two Republican Senators withdrew their support for her. The vote for her confirmation was a tie which had to be broken by Vice President Pence, President of the Senate.

We are presently in a Continuing Resolution regarding appropriations for this fiscal year. The Continuing Resolution is in effect until 4/28/17 at which time Congress should pass an Omnibus Appropriations Bill or continue with another Continuing Resolution. It is anticipated that the President is expected to submit his budget proposal in May, 2017.

The National Rehabilitation Association will be publishing its Position Papers for 2017. These are issues that the National Rehabilitation Association will be taking to members of Congress at the time of the Governmental Affairs Summit to be held in April.

It is important to keep disability issues in front of our elected officials, both at a state level and on the national level. Attending legislative coffees locally is one way to do this. E-mailing your legislator is another effective way of sharing your opinion. The bottom line is to let them know how you feel, let them know about the effectiveness of the Vocational Rehabilitation program and its impact.

State Legislative Report

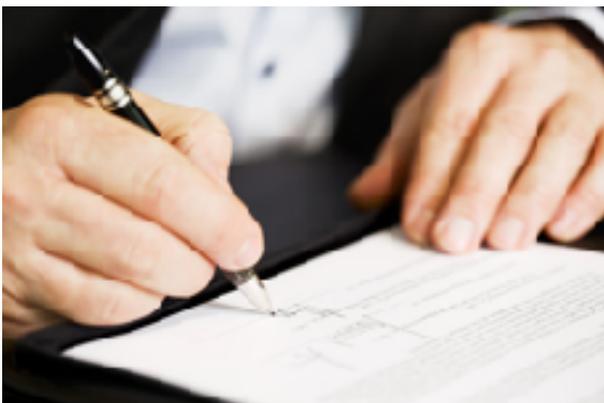
Jeffrey Morgan

The Iowa Legislative Session has gotten underway and, emboldened by a majority in the Senate and the House, Republicans have introduced and passed bills long on their agenda.

**State Legislative
Chair, Iowa Reha-
bilitation Associa-
tion**

Governor Terry Branstad has been appointed as the Ambassador to China and Lt Governor Kim Reynolds will take over the governorship duties after he is approved and relocates. The Governor presented his ideas for the budget to cover all state spending for the next two years, including 2 % increases to education. However the Legislature passed a 1.1 increase for this year. Because state revenues are so low, (Democrats say partly because of the tax breaks the governor has given big businesses) Gov. Branstad has proposed \$110 budget cuts in the following areas: \$25.6 million for the Board of Regents, \$20.3 million for DHS, \$15 million for the Department of Corrections, \$5.5 million for the Department of Education and \$3.8 million for the Department of Safety, among others.

On the day this is being written, the Senate and House passed a bill to serious change state employees' union contracts, stripping workers' ability to bargain for insurance and seniority benefits and evaluation procedures. Another planned measure is a bill freeze Iowa's minimum wage to \$7.25 which would roll back increase minimum wages set in 4 counties; Johnson, Polk, Linn and Wapello. This measure could affect all lowans, not only individuals with disabilities.



In other news, millions of dollars in losses are being reported for the three MCOs in Iowa

“Gov. Branstad has proposed \$110 budget cuts”

since Medicaid was privatized. Gov. Branstad plans to cover this shortfall by a \$33 million payment to the MCOS but he expects to see savings by the end of the next fiscal year. However it was a shock to hear that AmeriHealth, one of three companies, plans to significantly cut the rates they pay providers and institute other cost saving measures. The effect of this could be huge as AmeriHealth covers about 600,000 Iowans, including more than 23,000

with serious disabilities. Agencies are worried that they will not be able to provide services with these cuts.

Another cost saving measure Amerihealth is considering is to end contracts with current case management agencies and transition clients to in-house managers. For example, in Johnson county, this would impact the jobs of 23 case management employees and more than 500 clients who depend on those case managers to help them access services.

Both the new Collective Bargaining law and the decision to eliminate County Case Management might be challenged in court. Stay informed.

Brag and Steal Update

A few representatives from the IRA Board had been in discussion with APSE in regards to teaming up for a joint conference which would take place early fall. Unfortunately, the WIOA Conference was planned during the same week as the APSE Conference and it was determined by the IRA Board that it would be in our best interest to shift focus on membership this year and bring back the Brag and Steal Conference in the summer.

Members of the IRA Board are hoping to get a 1 1/2 day conference set for mid to late July in order to provide an opportunity for Rehabilitation and Placement Professionals to gather and obtain CEU credits for their profession. A theme and topics for the conference have yet to be determined, but the IRA is hopeful it will be able to pull together a conference that provides a good opportunity for members of the profession to gather, gain new skills and network. If there are any specific topics of interest or trainings members would like to have included in the conference we are happy to take suggestions.

Alice Castle

President Elect,
Iowa Rehabilitation
Association

