



# MOCCASIN TELEGRAPH

AIVRTTAC- Meeting the needs of AIVRS programs through the provision of Universal, Targeted, & Intensive TA



**“ I want to acknowledge the unwavering interest and commitment of the AIVRTTAC project staff, consultants, and partners to assure that quality, culturally appropriate, and responsive TA services were provided to our primary customers. ”**

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Hello Everyone!

Time sure does fly by, doesn't it? The AIVRTTAC Project and the AIVRS Programs have just concluded the fiscal year. We hope that the planting of your program seeds (goals and objectives), with daily care of guidance and encouragement (consumer IPE implementation), result in a harvest of all your joint efforts which are celebrated (successful consumer employment outcomes). We also hope that you took care of yourself by spending quality time with your family, extended family, and friends throughout the year. Some programs may have already conducted their team strategic planning and are excited and energized to start a new program year!

I want to acknowledge the unwavering interest and commitment of the AIVRTTAC project staff, consultants, and partners to assure that quality, culturally appropriate, and responsive TA services were provided to our primary customers— – the AIVRS Programs serving tribal members with disabilities to prepare for gainful employment. Our VR Training and TA Specialist Marc Espino left the project to embark on an exciting journey to pursue doctoral degree in rehabilitation counseling at the University of Wisconsin-Madison starting the fall of 2018. Marc expressed that “it has an been honor and pleasure to serve the AIVRS programs for the past two years... In a traditional and spiritual way, I believe [the] Creator continues to set a path before me to continue to be a service to the AIVRS community and assist American Indians with disabilities obtain employment....”. We all wish the best of everything for Marc!

This newsletter highlights plans for the dissemination of the AIVRS Program Toolkit – The First 90 Days. In addition, other new and exciting products specifically developed for the AIVRS programs will be made available such as the Consumer Case File Review Tool, AIVRS Memorandum of Agreement Template, and the AIVRS Policies and Procedures Template. The project staff has already conducted one “talking circle” to obtain feedback from the AIVRS Programs to determine the quality, usefulness, and relevance of one of the new products, and will certainly conduct others.

As always, we look forward to working with AIVRS Programs and our partners.

Respectfully,

Lee Gaseoma



Institute for Human Development

The Institute for Human Development is a research and training program located on Northern Arizona University. Our program is part of a national network of University Centers for Excellence in Developmental Disabilities (UCEDD). In Arizona, we are designated as one of two Arizona University Centers on Disabilities.

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## NEW & CURRENT

# AIVRTTAC PRODUCTS

The AIVRTTAC team has been busy developing products that will be valuable for AIVRS programs and staff. Below is a brief description of some of the newer products. For a comprehensive list of AIVRS products go to: <http://aivrttac.org/products-and-tools>



### **Director's Toolkit – The First 90 Days**

The Director's Toolkit contains helpful hints and resources for AIVRS Directors as they begin their journey into the AIVRS Community. The Director's Toolkit – The First 90 Days focuses on work that needs to be completed during your first 90 days as a Program Director. Topics in the toolkit include Program, Tribal, State, Federal, and Resources. Each section contains subsections with helpful information to assist Director's establish a solid foundation starting day 1 on the job. Audience: AIVRS Directors.



### **AIVRS Case File Review Tool**

The AIVRS Case File Review Tool is designed for use by AIVRS staff in monitoring the vocational rehabilitation (VR) service process, provision, and documentation. The AIVRS Case File Review Tool addresses Eligibility, IPE development, and IPE use and can also be used to gain a greater understanding of the VR Counselor's work with consumers, as well as areas where policy might be improved. The AIVRS Case File Review Tool can be completed electronically or printed and completed by hand. Audience: AIVRS staff



### **AIVRS Memorandum of Understanding**

This document provides a template for use in developing the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) specific to an AIVRS Program and State Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Agency. The purpose of the AIVRS Program Memorandum of Understanding is to establish a formalized partnership with the state Vocational Rehabilitation Agency. The MOU is jointly developed between the two VR agencies with the goal to establish and implement collaborative strategies and identify the roles and responsibilities of the AIVRS Program and the state VR Agency to serve American Indians/Alaska Natives with disabilities to prepare for gainful employment. Audience: AIVRS Program Directors and State VR Administrators.



### **Developing Your AIVRS Policies and Procedures Manual, Table of Contents**

This product is intended to be used by AIVRS Program Directors in the development of a policies and procedures manual specific to your AIVRS Program. This Table of Contents Template provides an outline or framework through which you will develop policies and procedures essential to the effective and efficient operations of your AIVRS Program. By establishing clearly defined policies and procedures, program staff will more effectively a.) provide culturally appropriate and responsive vocational rehabilitation services for tribal members with disabilities and b.) comply with federal requirements and, as appropriate, tribal requirements. Audience: AIVRS Program Directors and staff



### **AIVRS Orientation Checklist for New Staff**

This checklist provides an easy-to-follow checklist for topics to cover during new staff orientation. Audience: AIVRS Program Directors and staff



### **Delivery of Services to American Indians and Alaska Natives with Disabilities, E-Learning Module**

This universal training is for individuals interested in learning about the Delivery of Services to American Indians and Alaska Natives with Disabilities. This self-paced training module is designed to provide current vocational rehabilitation information. At the end of the module, participants will be provided a proficiency check to assist learners in self-evaluation. This training module is your private tutor, so relax and enjoy the process of learning. Audience: AVIRS staff, VR staff, interested individuals



### **Create Your Own AIVRS Program Overview**

This PowerPoint gives AIVRS Program Directors and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors a template that helps you create your own PowerPoint, highlighting your AIVRS program and important components of the approved grant proposal. Audience: AIVRS Program Directors and staff, VR Counselors



### **Creating an AIVRS Advisory Committee**

“Creating an AIVRS Advisory Committee” provides important information about the value of establishing an advisory committee. Functions of the committee are presented, as well as the difference between an advisory committee and advisory board. Key items for success are noted. Audience: AIVRS staff

## TALKING CIRCLE REPORT

All American Indian Vocational Rehabilitation Services (AIVRS) Program Directors and staff are invited to participate in our online AIVRS virtual talking circles (TC). Through the mutual sharing of knowledge, experiences, and insights of the AIVRS community, the purpose of the TC is to cultivate promising and innovative culturally appropriate VR practices. The talking circles use the “oral tradition of storytelling” to discuss topics relevant to AIVRS programs that impact program performance and employment outcomes for AIVRS consumers.








This is an excellent opportunity for the AIVRS programs to work together to discuss and identify solutions to reoccurring problems, share best practices to assure the provision of culturally appropriate consumer services, provide peer-to-peer support, and identify strategies for continual program capacity building and improved partnerships with key service providers.

The topics can include, but are not limited to: case management, grant management, data collection and reporting, personnel development, and other topics that are determined by the TC community. For selected talking circles, AIVRTTAC will also highlight tools and resources developed to be used by the AIVRS community. The TCs occur on a quarterly basis. Please look out for the “save the date” announcement for the next TC. We look forward to your participation and invite you to send us recommendations for topics to cover!

The first AIVRS Community talking circle occurred in September 2018 on the topic of Grant Management. Overall, it was a success! Thank you to Carol Bergquist, Director of Hannahville VR Program, for facilitating the event. During the talking circle, AIVRTTAC presented the “Create Your Own AIVRS Grant Overview” tool and facilitated the group discussion to assess the relevance and usefulness of this product. The tool is designed for AIVRS Program Directors and Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors to become familiar with the important components of their approved grant proposal and to develop strategies to achieve their proposed goals and objectives in a timely manner. Stay tuned for release news? If you missed the first talking circle, you can find the recording of it on our website at [www.aivrttac.org](http://www.aivrttac.org).

# RECRUITMENT FOR NEW ITA SITES

All AIVRS Programs! AIVRTTAC staff are currently recruiting for new Intensive Technical Assistance (ITA) sites for Year 4. ITA includes personalized services through an ITA Agreement between the AIVRTTAC and an AIVRS program. ITA duration is based upon the AIVRS program needs (e.g., development of policies and procedures, development or amendment of cooperative agreements with the State VR Agency) and involves onsite and offsite coaching and guidance to address specific program needs. The outcome of ITA should result in improvements in policy, program, practice, and/ or operations, as well as AIVRS program performance and consumer employment outcomes. The ITA process includes:

-  AIVRS Program Director completes the Request for ITA Form
-  AIVRTTAC schedules a call to review the ITA request with the AIVRS Program Director
-  AIVRTTAC informs assigned RSA Project Officers about the AIVRS program ITA request
-  Once the ITA request is approved, the AIVRS program is assigned an ITA Team
-  First onsite ITA visit is conducted with the AIVRS program to finalize the ITA Agreement, review the five-year AIVRS program grant proposal, conduct training in the use of the Consumer Case File Review Tool (with consumer consent or redaction of personally identifiable information), review program forms to determine alignment with the VR process, and conduct community tour to meet tribal leaders, program administrations and local service providers
-  Follow-up ITA coaching and guidance is provided to AIVRS programs based on the work plan that is part of the ITA agreement
-  ITA phase out plan is determined by the ITA Team and the AIVRS Program Director

For additional information and materials, on the ITA criteria and process, please go to the following link: [www.aivrttac.org](http://www.aivrttac.org).

**He who would do great things should not attempt them all alone.**

- Sebeca Proverb

# OP-ED: REFLECTIONS AS AN AIVRTTAC CONTENT EXPERT CONSULTANT



**DR. CAROL BERGQUIST**

Since 1995, I have had the pleasure of serving as the Program Director of the Hannahville Indian Community's Project VISIONS, our federally funded AIVRS grant. For 23 years I have personally experienced the life changing role that vocational rehabilitation services have played in the lives of hundreds of Native American people with disabilities, living on or near our reservation. Because Hannahville is a membership community, we know both the short term employment and lifelong career outcomes of every person VISIONS staff has served, and any life challenges encountered along the way. In the vast majority of instances, yesterday's participants are today's tribal leaders, and/or major contributors to Hannahville's cultural, political, educational and economic fabric. Every day I witness powerful proof of the incredible difference AIVRS has made with the people of Hannahville.

Although I have been connected with the national community of AIVRS programs for 23 years, through RSA Teleconferences and Project Directors' Meetings, involvement with CANAR, and personal and professional relationships with other Directors and staff, I was not knowledgeable about the impact of AIVRS within other Native communities until I began to work with AIVRTTAC. For the past two years, I have

been a member of the AIVRTTAC Team serving as a Content Expert. Through this position I have had the opportunity to interview Project Directors, prepare an on-line e-learning training module, facilitate an "electronic" Talking Circle, and conduct onsite visits with AIVRS programs that requested intensive technical assistance services. My engagement with the AIVRTTAC Team throughout these experiences was truly enriching.

Through these experiences I learned more about the positive impact AIVRS programs have made in other communities across Indian Country. In gathering perspectives for the AIVRTTAC Webinar "Promising Practices for Providing AIVRS Services", I interviewed experienced Directors from all regions and heard about their successes in transforming a typically bureaucratic Federal-State VR system into Native American/Alaska Native friendly and culturally appropriate VR services for Native people with disabilities. I also learned about how AIVRS common measures and outcomes were achieved utilizing different, yet equally effective, strategies and surprisingly the strong influence of physical location and geography on VR services and employment. This is an indication that the AIVRS programs are using culturally appropriate and sensitive VR practices to prepare Native consumers for viable employment outcomes.

Providing Technical Assistance was accomplished through exchanging documents, developing training materials, facilitating teleconferences, coaching and training, conducting site visits, all while working in partnership with the AIVRS staff requesting TA and their tribal leadership. Although I enjoyed the entire process of learning about other projects, my favorite component was the AIVRS program site visit. Site visits were action packed and intense, but it was during the face to face contact with the people where I felt the most effective in sharing the skills and knowledge I have acquired over the years. Although I am a humble person who does not think of myself as a "content expert", it was during this time my belief in the efficacy of both the art and science of VR, and my love for AIVRS, was enhanced, communicated and appreciated. Through developing a strong belief in the effectiveness of VR, AIVRS programs will flourish and grow.

*"It was during the face to face contact with the people where I felt the most effective in sharing the skills and knowledge I have acquired over the years."*

Facilitating an "electronic online" AIVRS Talking Circle posed a challenge for me, but once again I was amazed by the skills of the AIVRTTAC Team. The topic was "Grant Management" and the event was the first in a series of Talking Circles that will be developed. Several AIVRS staff participated including directors, counselors and others, who submitted topics or questions to be discussed. Although quite different from a more traditional Talking Circle, where people are sitting in a circle face to face, we were respectful of the process. The Talking Circle format provided for the richness of shared knowledge and perspectives from many and learning for all.

I am grateful for my many experiences with AIVRTTAC. By taking this opportunity for reflection I became aware of how much more I have received than given, since that initial RSA grant award arrived in Hannahville in 1995. Across time and place, my dedication to the vitality of vocational rehabilitation services and its importance to the growth of Native people and their communities has never wavered. Each day I am mindful of the importance of the work we do.

## PRAIRIE BAND POTAWATOMI VR PROGRAM ...STORY OF INTENSIVE TA

In April of 2017, AIVRTTAC launched Intensive Technical Assistance (ITA) services. The Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation (PBPN) Vocational Rehabilitation Program is the only AIVRS funded program in the state of Kansas, and was the first program to invite AIVRTTAC to their homelands to receive ITA services. At the time, both PBPN and AIVRTTAC were infants learning how to crawl through the ITA process together.

Through ITA, PBPN Vocational Rehabilitation Program worked to improve their relationship with the State VR Agency and increase their presence on the State Rehabilitation Council, through which they could provide resources that are more comprehensive to their consumers. Through their improved partnership with the state, they were also able to access training opportunities for their VR counselors, improving staff capacity and resulting in more consistent services provided to consumers. The PBPN program demonstrated the resilience to overcome the hurdles such as staff turnover, through improved applicant search and hiring processes.

Continuing to strive for improvement, the PBPN VR Program is working to expand services by further engaging businesses, and creating partnerships that will provide jobs to AIVRS consumers. They are actively working with employers to expand on-the-job training (OJT) and work experience opportunities for eligible consumers. AIVRTTAC wants to express a warm appreciation and big thank you to the PBPN VR Program for their efforts and commitment to stick with us throughout the ITA process. We learned so much from you, and your contributions have helped us to improve our services to other AIVRS programs who requested Intensive Technical Assistance.

The program staff include: Keirsten Hale, Administrator; Sarah Cowan, Director; Samantha Wahwassuck, VR Counselor; Julia Griffith, VR Counselor; and Nevika Kitchommie, Program Assistant.

**"The Prairie Band Potawatomi Nation Vocational Rehabilitation program would like to thank AIVRTTAC for their continued support throughout the ITA process. When the ITA agreement was initiated, PBPN VR was experiencing high turnover and inexperienced staff. AIVRTTAC provided support and encouragement that enabled us to hire and train a new AIVR manager, VRC and support staff. We have gained invaluable information about all facets of AIVR through on-site visits and weekly support calls. We continue to move in a positive direction and can attribute our success to AIVRTTAC. Thank you AIVRTTAC!"**



Left to Right: Samantha Wahwassuck, Sarah Cowan, Julia Griffith, Nevika Kitchommie

# AIVRTTAC TEAM

The AIVRTTAC Team is a cadre of experts focused on preserving the dignity of Native people with disabilities. The Team is about assisting with “Native nation building” and the preservation of culture in the provision of vocational rehabilitation services.

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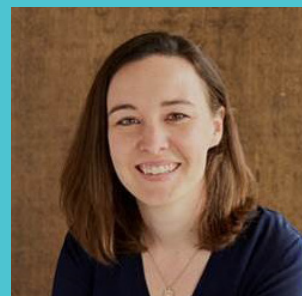
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The following Content Expert Consultants have been involved in providing ITA and Targeted TA to the AIVRS programs: **Dr. Carol Bergquist**; **Michelle Wilson** (Chickasaw); **Paula Seanez** (Navajo); **Wayne Dagle** (Blackfeet); **Rebecca Holland**; **Betty Bernalley** (Navajo), and **Sara Lizak**.