

DRAFT

Harrisburg District Office Citizen Advisory Committee Minutes
Tuesday, January 18, 2022

In attendance:

Norma Flinchbaugh, consumer

Cynthia Gibbs-Pratt, consumer

Jessica Hanula, VR supervisor, Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services
(BBVS)

John Horst, Assistant CAC Chair and consumer

Patrick Kane, VR Supervisor, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
(BVRS)

Ricardo Lupian, Consumer

Cathy Long, Secretary, CAC, and consumer

Minh, Consumer

Bobbie Simmons, consumer

Rodger Simmons, CAC Chair and consumer

Rodger called the meeting to order and roll call was taken.

A word about this meeting date. We tried to meet on the day designated for this meeting in December but ran into technical difficulties. People using a computer could get in, but no one could attend on the phone. Therefore, we changed the meeting date to hopefully have a successful meeting in January. Although this meeting was short and sweet, we did meet and got our business done. A motion to accept minutes from September, 2021 was made by Bobbie Simmons. John Horst seconded the motion and the motion was carried unanimously.

BBRS Report - Pat Kane. This agency's goal is 223 successful closures, Status 26. They have 123 successfully closed cases so far this fiscal year. That is 55% of their goal, and just a few weeks past the mid-year point of the fiscal year. FYI, The fiscal year funds from July 1st, 2022 through June 30, 2023. Congratulations to BVRS. Counselors and customers have been working together and the numbers prove it. BVRS and this Committee is proud of their efforts.

Staffing. The current District Administrator has taken on a new role. She has been working in an out-class position in Central Office and works under the Bureau of Central Operations, and Ralph Roach. This change occurred

just before Christmas. The Acting District Administrator is Amy Moore. She was Assistant District Administrator and has presented to this committee in the past. We hope to hear more from Amy at our March meeting. A VR counselor, Mary Ann Benedetti, retired with 32 years of service. Interviews were conducted and a counselor has been selected to hire. Paperwork is going through the system, and Pat hopes to possibly introduce this new employee to this Committee in March. BVRS also has a summer internship opportunity between OVR (Office of Vocational Rehabilitation) and the Office of Administration. College students are eligible, provided they have at least one semester of their college completed, and will continue to be going to college in the fall of 2022. Application cut-off was two days ago. Pat does not have numbers to give us about how many applied. There are internship opportunities in Pittsburgh and Philadelphia as well.

In July BVRS is doing the Early Reach Academy again That will occur 07/18/2022 and 07/25/2022. This is for high school students who are planning to attend college. The events will be held virtually, and hoping to do some in-person activities. Central Office is helping to plan and are supportive of this project.

the Office. State workers are back in the office but no customers can visit their workers in the office at this time. Nevertheless, the work continues virtually.

BBVS report - Jessica Hanula. Staffing. they also lost their District Administrator and Ruth Lotz, Assistant District Administrator, is stepping up to the plate as Acting District Administrator. Anyone see a pattern here? Ruth has served as Assistant District Manager for a good nine years, so she is more than qualified to do the District Administrator's job. I am certain Amy Moore is equally as qualified to lead BVRS Harrisburg District.

BBVS is currently interviewing for two social workers. 14 candidates applied. In a few days interviews will be over and after selecting the candidates, then their paperwork goes through the hiring process as well. We are really happy to hear this, because one lone Social worker conscientiously provided all the services for Independent Living Older Blind, all the Specialized Services-Adult and the Specialized Services Programs for adults and children. This lone Social Worker and her supervisor had a caseload of around 400 people and new referrals. One VR counselor is on medical leave. This leaves two counselors to cover the

eight county area. One Clerk Typist 3 retired a few months ago. Waiting for a Local Office Fiscal Assistant position to be filled.

BBVS goals. VR goal is 35 and year to date at three closures. Counselors and customers are actively working together. Jessica believes BBVS will meet its VR goals by June 30, 2022.

Independent Living Older Blind program has 12 closures. Vision Rehabilitation Therapists have 34 successful closures with a goal of 72. Orientation and Mobility Instructors have a goal of 106 and they are at 38 closures. BBVS is also participating in the college internship program and customers have been encouraged to apply. Several have applied and will be considered for the internship.

Strive On, a virtual program, will be presented virtually. This is for students expecting to go to college. That ended the report.

Cynthia Gibbs-Pratt expressed her gratitude for the services she received through the Independent Living Older Blind Program. Just before Thanksgiving she received several low vision devices which have greatly assisted her in her daily life. She is also receiving JAWS training with Londa Peterson at Vision Resources of Central Pennsylvania and doing well.

Reports from other agencies or organizations. Pennsylvania Council of the Blind will hold its Conference and Convention again this year virtually. It will occur the last weekend in October, 2022. More details will be shared at our next CAC meeting. Also, Pennsylvania Association for the Blind, in concert with the American Council of the Blind is holding its seminar where this year's legislative imperatives will be presented, and appointments with legislators will be made on Zoom. This effort will begin on March 12th and the official meetings will end on March 16, 2022. Then within a two-week period we should have been able to conclude our appointments with legislators in Washington. John Horst also reported that Melissa Carney, Director of Advocacy and Engagement has taken another job. PCB is in the process of selecting a qualified person to continue Melissa's work.

That ended our meeting. We will next meet on March 22, 2022. Note: the up-coming meeting was scheduled for March 15, 2022, but Rodger,

Bobbie, Cathy, and Cynthia are all actively involved in the Legislative seminar discussed above.

If anyone has suggestions with regard to who you want to hear from other than Pat and Jessica, please contact Rodger Simmons at rsimmons5@comcast.net or call him at 717-885-3055.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Long, Secretary