

**Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting  
Monday, September 28, 2020  
MINUTES DRAFT**

**Attendees:**

**Suzanne Erb/Networks for Training & Development, LaKeysha McLaurin/BVRS, Kathy Fogel/BVRS, Damon Johnson/BBVS, Alexander Shay/BBVS, Lynn Heitz/ASB, Joan Nelson, Ramona Griffiths/Invisions/Visions for Equality, Steven Wall/BVRS, Andrew Pennington/CAP, Alexis Jones/ASB, Wayne Trout/Former BVRS Staff, June Waters-Base/Families First, Joy Nelson/Invisions/Visions for Equality**

**WELCOME:**

Suzanne Erb opened the meeting at 10:20 A.M., starting by thanking all for joining the call, apologized for all technical difficulty and moved forward with introductions of all on call.

**MINUTES OF LAST MEETING:**

Suzanne proceeded to ask all have they had an opportunity to review the minutes from last meeting. She asked are there any additions or corrections. All agreed YES, they have reviewed and NO there aren't any additions or corrections.

Motion to accept the minutes as is was put on the floor by Suzanne Erb which a motion for acceptance was made by Lynn Heitz and second by Andrew Pennington and minutes were accepted by all on call.

**BVRS REPORT (Kathy Fogel/ADA, BVRS Philadelphia)**

Going over the ACT26 report for the 4<sup>th</sup> Quarter from April 1, 2020 to June 30, 2020.

588 Job Referrals were made to employers on behalf of students with disabilities in high school.

916 high school students with disabilities working part-time for summer jobs.

158 high school students with disabilities working part-time on summer jobs and receiving job coaching services

For the year the office successfully helped 314 individuals reach their employment outcome. This is about 70% of our goal, so we are happy to have done this.

For the agency for the year the state was able to successfully help 6,696 people which is about 86% of what our goal was to meet.

With regards to NDEAM events which is coming up next month, the actual title for this year is “*Increasing Access & Opportunity*” some things have already started back in September that OVR was invited to like Amazon Virtual Job Fair, Philadelphia Virtual Job Fair that our business services team has been sharing with the office.

Coming up in October or November, we are changing the platform, so we had to change the date, thus we have a tentative date now, but the whole stage is really cool now, because we are having a Statewide Virtual Job Fair to include adults and youth. So its all BVRS and BBVS throughout the state, with workshops on Job Searching In The Virtual World, Resume Writing, a workshop on OVR Services, Access To Employers In Local Areas & Across The State for our customers, there will be training for employers on Disability Awareness and some other things. That Friday will be Student Youth Day, so our students will be able to virtually go in and have conversation and chats with employers that they are interested in or actually have an interview.

Tasha Carter our Business Services Representative is working with Rose??? on an event for October 14<sup>th</sup>, so right now we are working on getting referrals from our staff who are working on which for the event there will be a breakdown during the day of how to apply the application process. There’s a Track to Trades Initiative that Lowes has where if you work for Lowes you can join and Lowes will pay for possible training in carpentry, plumbing or electrical, HGAC or appliance retail and going to each of the participants?????. We are also working on some other things and training for our staff from the deaf and hard of hearing scale.

The date for the event was asked by someone to be verified which Kathy provided. This was followed by Suzanne Erb asking for the date of the Statewide which Kathy answered that it is a tentative date the ending of October or beginning of November. Suzanne requested that as soon as the date is confirmed could she be made aware, so that she can announce it at the Employment Stakeholders Meeting, on October 1<sup>st</sup> which Kathy assured Suzanne she would.

Kathy continued with, briefly, the new Job Retention Initiative which started July 1, 2020 where we are identifying potential job retention customers early in the process. Preapplications that are in jeopardy of losing their jobs. We have a team that is equipped with 2 supervisors and a business services counselor that have a rapid response, within 3 days to identify the customer through a screened form that the intake completed, do a verification with the employer and then provide services so that they can keep their jobs. We are very excited about this.

Question was asked about Lowes from someone is there a particular pay and what are the qualifications and/or how do they go about the process? Kathy answered with for us, OVR, our business services team is working with Lowes so we are building our referrals from our customers. Our counselors are sending us or letting their customers know who are applying for this job virtual hiring event.

Andrew Pennington asked where are the referrals at in the Philadelphia district office right now are they coming in normally or are they slowed down due to COVID? Kathy responded with they have slowed down more, but asked for LaKeysha, Damon, Shay to jump in, with the Order of Selection. We probably are assigning several applications a week to our counselors. LaKeysha agreed and Damon chimed in asking Shay to back him up with for BBVS it has slowed down. We are getting referrals, but not as many as before COVID. Shay agreed with Kathy that it seems like a bizarre situation regarding the effect of the Order of Selection. It was like a slow down since. Kathy came back confirming Shay with “YES” it is more of the Order of Selection.

Andrew then asked is the Philadelphia district office doing anything to counter this slow down with outreach or anything like that aside from these job fairs? Kathy responded with well we always have provider meetings at least every other month, so that they know that we are trying to get our customer referral base going. We have counselors at CareerLinks that go at least every other week and are getting customers that way. Shari and Kathy will be at the Networks for Training Symposium presenting and we will have an outreach that way. There is a workgroup that was initiated by Shannon Austin and the state. I think 8 workgroups actually and one of them was working on referrals and a process to make sure that we continue to get referrals, but that it is like a standard operating procedure, like the whole state operates the same way to get our referrals. So this is being worked on as we speak.

Wayne Trout asked do you have the staffing compliment to be able to handle additional referrals? Kathy replied with this is something that she LaKeysha and Shari are working on now with Stephanie Perry, Shannon Austin and Hattie McCarter. We are maybe in Phase III of this. There is a hiring freeze that we hope to have this ready for the end of December, so that we know how many and who we are going to be recruiting for by the end of this year.

LaKeysha confirmed with Kathy and stated we are in the middle of working on this and alerted all that there is a statewide reset of the compliment that was initiated last year which she believes was in December by Stephanie, Hattie and Shannon. So this has been rolled out in phases, thus once this is completed our compliment will be reset. As for now we have 21 active VR counselors in their seats out of a compliment of 25.

Lynn Heitz asked is the hiring freeze more due to COVID19 or the Closure of the Order? LaKeysha responded that we were informed that the hiring freeze was effective at the onset of COVID mitigation, so we are assuming that it is in relation to COVID19, because that is when we were informed about hiring freezes from our executive team.

## **BBVS REPORT (Damon Johnson/District Administrator BBVS Philadelphia)**

The thing with BBVS we are participating in a statewide job fair. We also invited our students and customers to participate with the Lowes event, although they probably won't be able to do any jobs with Lowes, but just to get the interview experience and feedback and things to help them in preparing for an interview, thus we invited our customers to participate and work with Tasha Carter and the business services team of BVRS.

In regards to our staffing updates, we are now down to 1 Social Worker and 1 Social Worker Supervisor, as of July of this year. Our second Social Worker retired and as a result I submitted a RTF for 2 Social Workers, given the compliment of the office. Yes, we are under a hiring freeze, but I was instructed to do a justification and request for these positions, because this is sort of an emergency situation, thus right now it was submitted as of this past Friday to the Bureau Director to be reviewed and moved up the chain to Executive Team and OA for approval to meet our staffing needs.

### ***GOALS***

Our goals for the year have been met.

The VR goals have increased by 11. Last year it was 58 and this year it was 69.

The Social Worker goals were reduced from 45 to 32.

VRC & O&M goals were reduced from 36 to 25.

These goals are based upon the number of bodies in a seat. The one Social Worker will have to meet the 32 goal closure which she is half way there now at 16 and the 4 Instructional Staff has to do 25 closures per person and didn't have time before the meeting to give current count on where they are on these closures. So the goals formula for this year was they did numbers based upon over 2 years and under 2 years. So we have 3 staff over 2 years which resulted in them getting a goal of 17 per person and the 2 professionals at or under 2 years gets a total of 9.

As far as the Instructional and all the other staff, they are continuing to do customer check-ins. We did this in June so they are continuing to follow-up with the customers monthly, to check and see how they are doing and to see if there is anything we can do to assist further while in this telework/COVID state.

As far as the O&M and VRC training, effective August, we received an email from our Bureau Director stating that any student who is in college and requesting O&M services on campus, we can contract out and +that's what we have been doing contracting out to contractors who are able willing and have their credentials up-to-date to assist with the O&M services.

Damon sat on a workgroup for the VRT/O&M and Instructional staff to possibly go out into the field in the near future. Guidance has been developed, drafted and waiting for approval for them to possibly go out into the field provided safety measures permit in the future. A date hasn't been set. He is not even sure where it is in the process, except it is at the Executive level.

Suzanne Erb asked do you have numbers in actual employment of people who received jobs in the last fiscal year? Damon stated that the whole Philadelphia office staff completed their VR goals, so the counselors had 58 closures and they met that, the Social Workers exceeded their goals the VRCs and O&Ms met their goals.

Suzanne asked again for clarity how many were employed in this past fiscal year that actually got jobs? Shay chimed in to state that we don't have that breakdown at present. Damon followed up with, YES, he doesn't have that breakdown by category.

Suzanne went on to state that she would be very interested in knowing this breakdown with the unemployment rate situation, it might be very valuable information for people to know.

LaKeysha questioned for clarity Suzanne in asking are you requesting how many people were assisted, because if so the answer is 58 or are you asking for a specific breakdown of where they were employed or what kind of employment supports they received? Suzanne responded that she would be curious to know how many people actually got jobs, but you may not be able to give me this information. However, I think it would be really great if we could find out how many people actually received jobs and actually keep their jobs and not just the goals. Goals are great and she is glad that they were met, but it would be good to know how many people actually got jobs and or were able to keep their jobs.

Lynn Heitz stated that she believes under the Workforce Innovation & Opportunity Act that this is some recording OVR is going to have to do, because when she left, it was just how many people did you get competitively employed, but there was a 3 month, 6 month and I believe 1 yr for checking for retention, so I am not quite sure how Central Office is planning on handling that, because I left before that was all decided. RSA is going to want that information at some point, so it remains to be seen how Central Office is going to handle this.

Lynn continued by asking Damon can you tell me how many VR customers are currently on the waiting list and how many are in referral status with Philadelphia BBVS? Shay replied with waiting list which we call Status 11, we have 61 cases. As far as referrals, is 29 which includes all programs.

Shay went on to acknowledge and thank ASB for being a tremendous referral source over the last months. We have been getting a lot from you with Marcia and Alexi.

Lynn then went on to ask how is BBVS handling job retention or job jeopardy cases? Shay responded, inviting LaKeysha and Kathy to chime in, that they rolled out a whole new process OVR wide with regards to job retention, so in our office he has taken on the role of a Job Retention Supervisor where we would see the referral and expected to respond within 2 to 3 business days, talk with clerical and when they see that highlighting if it is a job retention case or what the customer believes it is at the moment. He has to fill out the referral with the customer on the phone and determine if related to the

disability causing the impediment to employment or maintaining it and have the ability to provide that accommodation or service to help them. Now if they meet all these checks, then we move them on to the counselor taking the application, determine eligibility, then speak with the employer and get a release from the customer to authorize us to speak in more detail with the employer do you believe this person is at risk of losing his/her job, due to this disability, YES or NO if YES, then we go through all the checks and basically bypass the Order of Selection, but thing is the services that they will get at that time is only related to the job. Thus if they need other things we have been instructed, per my understanding, is that you have done everything you can related to the job, you close the case successfully and then reopen it. Now if they don't meet that criteria of job retention, like if its just general layoffs, not really related to a disability, unfortunately they will have to get on the regular Order of Selection. The process has changed slightly since you were here. They recognize this area to assist the individuals that are in jeopardy of this and this is statewide BVRS and BBVS. He has handled a couple so far.

Lynn continued by stating that ASB has referred a couple different individuals which Shay stated that they weren't applicable. He wanted to do something else, thus Lynn requested to speak with him off this call, because she knows that there were at least 2 or 3, but what can ASB do when they are doing the referrals and sending them over to BBVS, is there anything we can reflect in the referral that this is a potential job retention case? Shay replied, that just stating that would be a great help. He also stated he recalled one of the ASB referrals lost a position which they had at one time and then they lost it and another individual he is employed, but he wants to expand into another field. His job is not in jeopardy. Some of the others referred didn't seem like they wanted to work which is a key thing, thus Marsha clarified that anyone under 55 is interested in working and she is sorry that that wasn't spelled out.

Suzanne thanked Damon and Shay for a thorough report.

Suzanne asked are there any more questions for either BBVS or BVRS? Someone asked for more clarity on "Job Jeopardy" to the point of is this someone who is in jeopardy of losing their job? Shay confirmed with YES, but due to a disability. That was a key thing that they had to learn.

Suzanne then asked how do you know if the performance deterioration is disability related, because the company may not be transparent with this and just say performance? Shay stated this is where counseling and guidance with the customer comes in to play where he would speak with the customer before to complete the screen segment then hand off to them to do the application to the counselor, but it is also important for the customer to allow us to speak with the employer and then we are operating off the truth.

Lynn stated what if they don't know, I mean they don't have medical reports. They may have no idea what the cause of it is, but all they know is the performance is deteriorating? Shay stated that it is the customers responsibility to advocate for themselves and of course we can help. It is a risk that they are taking to disclose this information. However, so far we have been successful with employers in this area.

Someone asked if the employer thinks it is related to the disability are they given an improvement plan, to see if this experience can be mitigated? Shay stated that this depends on the employer. Kathy chimed in to give a couple examples from BVRS to help.

*We have one individual who needs a prothesis to work and push the patients around and he has given us permission to contact his employer to discuss his situation and that we are working on getting him a new prothesis. Without this his job would be in jeopardy, because he wouldn't be able to walk and perform his job duty.*

*We have a teacher who needs hearing aids and without the updated hearing aids she would not be able to hear her students, thus we were able to verify with her employer that she needs the hearing aids to continue performing her job.*

Shay added for BBVS a customer who expressed difficulty using her computer and she needed assistive technology and related training to help her access that material, because I believe she was a customer service representative and this was directly related to her disability for vision.

Another concern was addressed about someone on the call who has a son who learning disabled and he was working at AMAZON. He was in jeopardy of losing his job and he spoke with them and it got to the point where he ended up being terminated. In my efforts to advocate for him, he didn't put on his application that he was disabled and that was his choice, but I am concerned that they didn't have an improvement plan in place for when he was in jeopardy of losing his job. Disability or no disability. I understand in this case where it is directly related to the disability, there can be some intervention if the employer is on board with it, but for those cases where the employee doesn't have a disability that is easily remedied by maybe assistive technology of some sort, I am curious as to how do they go about navigating through that scenario.

Wayne responded that he thinks it very much depends on the scale of expertise of the counselor intervention. They have to look at all aspect from the employee's performance as well as the employer's expectations. They have to do the essential functions of the job and what the counselor is trying to do is to determine how can that be done and what type of modifications could be accomplished. This why it is so important for those potential customers to be referred and assisted quickly.

Kathy thanked Wayne for his comments and went on to say, also when we are contacting the employer we try to have a job description to review and discuss the essential job functions that Wayne just spoke about and one of the accommodations would be is the employer willing to have a Job Coach come in and work with the customer as another option.

Lynn encourage the lady's son to take aa look at the next time in getting a job, talk over with the employer, once the decision has been made to hire, about some of the things that he finds difficult to do and actually doing an upcoming symposium ASB is doing a whole segment on "Disclosure" and she will talk about it more when we are done this portion of the meeting.

Suzanne once again asked if there were any further questions for either BBVS or BVRS? There were none.

## UPDATES/ANNOUNCEMENTS

Suzanne went on to discuss some things going on with Networks. As many of you know Networks has been doing an Employment Support Symposium annually, and this year is no exception. We were going to have one in the Spring, but because of COVID19 that sort of through everything off kilter, thus we decided to do a virtual one and its sort of going to take place over the period of the whole several months. We are going to have an Autumn portion and a Spring portion. The Autumn portion is taking place beginning in October, and it's beginning with the Stakeholder Event which I believe can be registered for separately from the symposium, thus I suggest that to find out more information is to go to the Networks site which is [www.networksfortraining.org](http://www.networksfortraining.org) and sign up. There is no fee for the Stakeholder on Thursday, but there is a fee for the actual conference, and if you have any trouble registering, let her know. The better email to reach her at these days is her personal email, since her other email has been experiencing problems. The email to contact her is [suzerb1@comcast.net](mailto:suzerb1@comcast.net) and the best phone is 215-313-0550. There is going to be a number of really good topics that are being discussed. Everything is virtual and zoom linked for this conference. When you sign up for the conference, you will be able to access the recordings from the conference later which is a real advantage of going. This way even if you are not available the day that your particular session that you are interested in is scheduled, you can still listen to the recording.

Question was asked about registration information or link for the symposium? Suzanne responded should she send to everyone, or Kathy, LaKeysha, Damon, Shay what do you suggest? LaKeysha responded by saying that our staff are generally registered through our Central Office, so we don't have it, but if you don't have it we can get it for you from Sarah and send it out to the group, but Central Office handles this for us. Suzanne stated that she understands we have a lot of people coming and she will release the email today. She went on to say there will be interpretation and access to powerpoints prior to this session.

Steven requested link be sent to him to reflect in meeting minutes. She then requested that she and Steven go over the entire CAC list of members to edit and update, as well as delete old members and for those that are not active to try and recruit them back with an "Are You Still Interested" email which she has volunteered to write. Steven indicated that he would get with Pat Petrone to work on this.

Joan Nelson shared that her email is on the listing and she does short radio segment on disabilities every Monday and if anyone is interested in sharing information live on your individual organizations, from 1 p.m. to 2 p.m., please make contact with her she would love to help bring more awareness to your organization and its services. Gospel Highway 11/ 1100AM. [jtn213@gmail.com](mailto:jtn213@gmail.com)

Lynn Heitz shared updates for ASB. We are currently hosting 14 remote group programs per week. Individuals here or registered with ASB can participate in as many of them as they want. We are also providing remote instructions in IOS Devices, JAWS Training, Braille Instruction, Home Management and we also have created videos demonstrating



some cooking techniques using non-visual techniques. We are getting a lot of referrals and Ms. Jones is our new Participant Navigator who was on the call and had to jump off to handle an intake. New referrals will be sent over soon from ASB. NFB of Pennsylvania has sued the Department of State Pennsylvania, because of the mail-in ballot for the June primary. The Department of State has bought a system called Democracy Live. Democracy Live is an accessible valid marketing tool and the National Organization is actually going to be doing a demonstration with Democracy Live on how it actually works. What you and your people would need to do is to register for the mail-in ballot and within 24 hours of submitting that registration, they would again need to go and register for the accessible ballot. It would come in their email. They would be able to market, but the downfall is that they would have to print it out and send it back. Now the state is supposed to be mailing out the envelopes to individuals who are requesting the accessible ballots, so that it can be returned quickly through secure mail. Then individuals can either mail it by U.S. Post, drop it off at a box or take it to their local elections board headquarters office and drop it off. Also the NFB of Pennsylvania is holding its annual convention this year in Pittsburgh, PA. We are doing a combination of in-person and remote. However if anyone needs more information about getting this accessible ballot, you can email [Joe.drentch@nfbp.org](mailto:Joe.drentch@nfbp.org)

Suzanne gave an additional announcement stating that the Pennsylvania Council of the Blind is also hosting our state convention in October and it will be entirely virtual, so people can investigate both conventions without leaving your couch this year.

Suzanne requested information from Lynn on Democracy Live be forwarded to her email, as well as all on the call.

Suzanne asked for selection of date for next meeting or shall we do a dootle? Damon suggested a dootle would be most appropriate.

Suzanne asked for motion to close which Damon motioned and it was 2<sup>nd</sup> by a female on the call.

Meeting adjourned at 11:40 A.M.