



CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes

January 31, 2018

12:00 – 2:00

Allentown OVR

IN ATTENDANCE:

Michelle Mitchell
Susan Firman
Jane Styer
Susan Storm
Amy Beck – on the phone
Barbara Lipiro
Anthony Alberici-Bainbridge
Lannette Fuarez
Margaret McKenna

ABSENT:

A motion to accept the November 1, 2017 minutes with corrections was made by Sue Firman and Amy Beck seconded it.

AGENCY REPORT:

Susan introduced Barbara Lipiro and Anthony Alberici-Bainbridge. Barbara began January 2, 2018 and Anthony began January 8, 2018. Barbara who is a VR Trainee was involved in childcare for 29 years. She has a Masters in Social Work degree. Anthony is an intern here and in his final semester at Penn State to obtain his Masters in Vocational Rehabilitation. Yvette Erving, who also began January 2, is new to the office as a VR Trainee was out in the field the day of the meeting and has her Masters in Social Work.

Sue Firman asked Susan to explain the intern process. The internship is for four months with Penn State, but the internship for the state is 6 months. The trainees, Barbara and Yvette, are required to complete a full year of training.

We have had a large amount of vacancies. We had anticipated ten at the last time we met, but we ended up with 11 as of a result of a retirement in November. Anthony can only be assigned up to 75 cases while he is an intern. The other two who are in training, Barbara and Yvette, will not be able to assume a full case load for a year.

Cases are being triaged. Supervisors are taking counselor calls. Michelle asked if there is ever a state of emergency at a district office? Susan said she has never heard that term, but she's heard of district office going to mandatory overtime. We're waiving that because we pretty much have it here. Mandatory overtime is not feasible now. It's very bad for morale. Central office is aware of our needs. We send weekly updates to them.

Michelle mentioned that it might be a good idea to have a repository of people even from Central Office who could have temporary housing here maybe for 6 months to help the district offices get back on their feet. That program would be a great way to share the training they received while working at a district office. She asked about our annuitant. She is traveling during the winter and may return in March. Overtime is not offered for management.

We ask counselors who are leaving the office to check their customers at least 2 weeks prior to leaving and provide a list to their supervisors with the status of their customers and who needs to be seen, etc. This gives us a place in which to begin.

Michelle asked is there any way to have an automated message that can go out to the people when they call in advising them of the status of their application? There are probably a lot of people who don't know how to advocate for themselves by using the proper language or knowing what to ask?

Amy offered that millennials are not looking to stay on a job for years and years. Brooke is attending a retention and recruitment work group now. AFSCME and SEIU are part of the meeting that Brooke is attending. Amy said she could invite the MSWU interns to make a visit.

The new ERC (Early Reach Coordinator) is scheduled to begin Monday, February 5, 2018. This additional position will help with the transition students in the Carbon and Monroe counties. There is another position that is being listed to widen the net. The one on the horizon is a civil service position that is a Psychologist Assistant position. Civil Service is now neo.gov

There was discussion about filling the positions with people who don't necessarily have a master's degree in vocational rehab. The job ads that are being used now are encompassing people who have degrees in social work and psychology. These people when hired will be in training for a year rather than 6 months like the ones who are coming in with a vocational rehabilitation counselor degree.

Jane Styer asked what is being delayed or held off due to the lack of personnel. Susan replied that planning for the NDEAM usually begins in February and we haven't started the planning for that event yet. There is also the question of what if we did interactions with specific caseloads and their referrals, to try to drum up referrals. We won't be doing as much of that in vacant caseloads. We have staff, it's not that we're not doing that. For example, up north There is an opportunity to have more fun during lunch breaks, especially on staff meeting days. This in answer to Michelle's question regarding staff morale.

OLD BUSINESS:

PaRC (Pennsylvania Rehab Commission) have been hosting teleconferences that they wanted to have with the CACs. The last few teleconferences have been cancelled and no new dates are scheduled now. As part of the last correspondence, they asked all CACs to look at the citizen advisory handbook. The one that was revamped in 2013/2014. Michelle would like to receive feedback on the Handbook. They feel that the CAC is very essential to the whole process. They want those of us to be informed about we do as a CAC and what our role is as a CAC and to remember how we function. It's not about rules and regulations. Michelle can email changes to the PaRC up until the time they begin to make changes.

New Membership:

Some ideas about increasing CAC membership were: Sue Firman suggested it may be a good idea to address the entire study body instead of the just the Disability Office at the University. It was also suggested to meet with the CPs in Northampton county to inform them of the CAC and what they are doing in the community. Other suggestions were to change the time and location of the meetings for those who work during the day and find it too difficult to take time off from work in the middle of the day. Another suggestion was to contact some of the employers who have been working with OVR to see if they might be interested in participating in the CAC.

Easter Seals – Margaret

Margaret suggested having the meeting at different locations like colleges, etc.

Susan spoke about Corey Nelson LOU – CBWA

NEW BUSINESS:

CAP Update – Margaret McKenna

Julia Blackwell is the newest member of (Client Assistance Program) CAP, who is going to be on the college policy work group. She's going to review the policy to make changes and to determine why changes are made, etc. The group will be checking statistics to determine who graduated with an Associate's degree, Bachelor's degree to see how many people were able to get the jobs they were after. This way you will have an idea of what needs to be changed. For example, five thousand people went to college, but only two thousand are working and only one thousand in their goal jobs. Someone offered, those stats would have to be measured against what is the national average.

The CAP's caseload per person is normally between 50 – 70 customers. Their largest county is Philadelphia. Their office is in very proximity to the Philadelphia office, which will be even closer once the Philadelphia office moves to their new location in May. Margaret McKenna inquired about OVR sending people for training and what kind of training is offered? Also suggested checking to see if there may be people in our customer base who are interested in pursuing a

position within OVR. CAP is not the police. We have the same goals as OVR to get someone who has the skills and interest to work competitively. They would like to mediate for a pleasant outcome for the customers.

Counselors should feel comfortable in referring a customer to the CAP if they know there is a potential problem with resolving an issue. Or, they can contact the CAP and advise them that a customer may be calling because there is nothing else they can do to rectify the problem.

Margaret stated they are trying to reach out to the (Center for Independent Living) CILs to refresh their contacts. Consumers who are involved in the federally funded CILs get the same type of advocacy services as the OVR clients. Amy replied that she and Margaret have worked together over the years to bring about good results for the clients. Margaret offered the CAPs services when there are things going on at the OVR in the spring, such as transition fairs, etc.

Future Planning

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NEXT AGENDA AND MINUTES DUE 3/21/2018

NEXT MEETING: April 25, 2018

LOCATION: ALLENTOWN OVR

ADJOURNMENT