



PENNSYLVANIA REHABILITATION COUNCIL

Annual Report for Fiscal Year 2015-2016



The Mission of the Council is to inform and advise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Legislature and the Governor on the diverse issues affecting employment of people with disabilities.



This report covers the activities of the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2015 and ending September 30, 2016. Alternate formats and additional copies are available upon request. Contact:

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Current and past reports are also available on the PaRC website www.parac.org.

Pennsylvania State Law requires the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) publish an annual program report on a different time line than this product. Therefore, traditionally, the PaRC does not include OVR data in its report. The OVR Program report may be requested from:

Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
1521 N. 6th Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102

COVER PHOTOS: Collage of flowers.

**Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council Members
October 2015 – September 2016
(Including Category of Representation)**

David DeNotaris, OVR Executive Director, (Ex-Officio Member)

Mary Brougher – Business/Industry/Labor

Madonna Long – Business/Industry/Labor

Donna Partin – (Member at Large 2015-2016) - Business/Industry/Labor

Frederick Wright – Business/Industry/Labor

Vacancy (to be filled by Julia Blackwell) – Client Assistance Program

Passle Helminski – (Until July 2016) - Cognitive Disabilities

Vacancy – (to be filled by Passle Helminski)

Robert Mecca – Community Rehabilitation Provider

Vacancy (to be filled by David Mann) – Current / Former Customer

Jody Saitsky – General Advocacy

Vacancy (to be filled by Cindy Duch) – IDEA

Maureen Westcott – Intellectual Disabilities (Until July 2016)

Vacancy (to be filled by Pat Leo)

Heidi Tuszynski (Vice-Chair 2015-2016 - Chair, beginning October 2016) – Mental Health

Robert F. Fox, III – (Member at Large beginning October 2016) - Physical Disabilities

Kelley McKee – Rehabilitation Counselor (Until June 2016)

Vacancy – (to be filled by Juliet Marsala)

Bill Chrisner (Chair 2015-2016, ending October 2016) – Sensory Disabilities / Blind and Visual

Vacancy (to be filled by Leslie Kelly) – Sensory Disabilities / Deaf and Hard of Hearing

Matthew R. Seeley, Esq. – (Vice-Chair beginning October 2016) - Statewide Independent Living Council

Rebecca Davis – State Department of Education (Until January 2016)

Vacancy (to be filled by Lynn Dell)

Vacancy (to be filled by Joanne Ryan) – State Workforce Development Board

Silvia Buzzanco – Young Adult (Until April 2016)

Vacancy (to be filled by Claire Senita)



Colleagues:

It is hard to believe that another year has gone by already. However, this past year has been a significant one for people with disabilities who want to work and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). First, although it took a very long time to get the 2015/16 State Budget passed, it was worth the wait. OVR received a five-million-dollar increase after several years of level funding and several years of lost opportunities to match all the available Federal funds. Further, the State budget for 2016/17 included an additional two million dollars for OVR. All of these funds have significantly helped OVR to provide the services required under the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) and to match all of the available Federal funds as well as drawing down additional Federal funds that were unspent by other States. The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) believes that the Governor and the Legislature fully support the efforts of people with disabilities who want to work and have put up the money to demonstrate this support.

Perhaps even more importantly, the Governor has issued an Executive Order that makes Pennsylvania an "Employment First" state. Additionally, a plan to implement this Order has also been developed and released. Similarly, the State Legislature has introduced "Employment First" legislation in both Houses. The PaRC has been pushing to make Pennsylvania an "Employment First" state for over three years, and we are pleased that these efforts have reached fruition. We, Pennsylvanians' with disabilities have a lot to celebrate.

However, our work has just begun to ensure that every Pennsylvanian with a disability has and can realize the dream of being employed and a productive member of the community. We have to analyze the plan to implement the Executive Order and make recommendations to strengthen and improve it, if necessary. We need to compare and contrast the proposed legislation to determine how this "Employment First" movement can best be served. Additionally, the PaRC supports the introduction of legislation that will

ensure an expedited employment system for people with disabilities to secure employment in the State government sector. If Pennsylvania is really an "Employment First" state, then it should be a model employer and lead the private sector by example. Finally, even though OVR has received a much needed increase in funding, there is a need for additional funds to continue and expand the efforts now under way. Inflation, the increased cost of services, the increased emphasis on assisting young people enter the workforce under WIOA and complimentary State legislation, and the increased number of consumers applying for and receiving services makes it imperative that OVR receive another, approximately, five per cent increase in the 2017/18 State Budget.

In conclusion, I want to say that it has been an honor and a privilege to serve as Chair of the PaRC for the last three years. We have a lot to be proud of during this time; and that's because of the hard work of Council members and Staff in the pursuit of our Mission. With the help of the Council members, the Staff, and the entire disability community, Heidi Tuszynski, our new Chairperson, will continue the fight to see that all Pennsylvanians with a disability can obtain, retain and/or maintain employment. Please accept my thanks for the support and hard work that has occurred over the last three years and know that I am very appreciative of this.

Remember also that, "Together, we can and do make a difference.

W.D. Chrisner, III

Outgoing PaRC Chair





Greetings:

It has been an amazing journey the past few years serving as Member at Large, Vice-Chair, and now moving on to Chair the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC).

I am excited about using my education and experience in the upcoming year and all the wonderful opportunities this position will present. I am optimistic about seeing great things on the horizon and I am looking forward to working with our Legislators, Governor, OVR, and our community partners.

In the past three years, I have worked as a member on the following Committees: Executive, Legislative, CareerLink, Policy, and on the Ad-Hoc committee to update our By-Laws.

While working on the Executive Committee I was asked to strengthen PaRC's relationship with our Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC's). We worked on handbooks, membership issues, and defining goals and objectives for our CAC's. I am looking forward to a CAC workgroup forming in the next few months. Serving on the Legislative Committee has been one of the greatest experiences in my life. To see the Employment First Executive Order and Legislation come to fruition firsthand was amazing. Also to witness, for the first time in many years, OVR being fully funded and receiving federal match dollars was a great accomplishment for our Council. It's wonderful to learn that in this year's budget for OVR services there will be an extra two million dollars available to provide services to OVR customers. This shows firsthand that our Governor and Legislators believe in the potential of individuals with disabilities.

But, we can't forget the PaRC's commitment to work with our Legislators to form an all inclusive Disability Caucus and to improve our State Civil Service Commission. These two initiatives will help create many opportunities for our veterans and persons with disabilities in the future.

I am excited and energized to move the PA Rehabilitation Council forward into the 2016-2017 year. I am looking forward to working with my fellow council members, committee chairs, and executive team to provide some amazing opportunities for persons with disabilities.

Sincerely,
Heidi Tuszynski MS, NCC, LPC
Incoming Chair



Council Responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act as Amended by WIOA 2014

Review, analyze, and advise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) regarding the performance of its responsibilities, particularly those related to eligibility (including order of selection); the extent, and scope and effectiveness of services provided; and the functions performed by State agencies that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes under Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services.

Partner with OVR to develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities in accordance with the VR State Plan. The Council and OVR evaluate the effectiveness of the VR program and submits reports of progress to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Commissioner.

Advise OVR on activities authorized to be carried out under the VR State Plan. Assist in the preparation of the State Plan, and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations.

Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services and consumer satisfaction regarding functions performed, VR services provided, and employment outcomes achieved.

Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Federal U.S. Department of Education Commissioner of RSA on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the State.

Coordinate activities with other disability related councils within the State.

Establish working relationships between the Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and Centers for Independent Living.

Perform other functions consistent with VR services deemed appropriate by the Council.





What We Accomplished as a Council This Year (2015-2016)

This continued to be a year of transition for the Council and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) as the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) continued to be implemented.

The PaRC wants to thank Mr. David DeNotaris, OVR Executive Director and OVR staff for recognizing and continuing to build the strong partnership between OVR and the Council. A special thank you to Ms. Pam Brauchli upon her retirement this year for her many years of support to the Council as our OVR liaison.

Thank you to our Council members for the many volunteer hours of work they provided this year. Current members are having to work double time in order to accomplish their mandated responsibilities, due to the low number of members from not receiving our appointments. This has been an ongoing concern, but has become particularly difficult this year.

OVR continues to make strides in implementing the new requirements under WIOA and strengthening their partnerships with Education and Workforce Development and others. The recommendations from the "Defining Positive Customer Service in the State Vocational Rehabilitation System" that was completed in 2014 were deemed completed this year.

Overview of Committee Outcomes from their mandated work and other activities this year are listed by Committees.

The Council had five standing committees this year in addition to the Executive committee - Legislative and Public Awareness, Policy and Evaluation, Transition and Educational Services, CareerLink, and Customer Satisfaction.

Forty-nine conference calls were held by these committees this year. Listed below by committee is the major work and activities of each committee for the year.

- **Executive Committee –**

The PaRC completed and submitted their 2015 Annual Report to their fellow Pennsylvanians, the Governor, RSA Commissioner, State Board of Vocational

Rehabilitation, PA Legislators, Stakeholders and State Workforce Development Board in December 2015. To view the 2015 Annual Report and other reports from previous years, go to www.parac.org.

- The committee planned and held four quarterly Council meetings. Educational presentations on topics related to their Council responsibilities included: The Governor's Cabinet & Advisory Committee for People with Disabilities, OVR Disability Awareness & Etiquette Training, Employment First, and PA Labor & Industry. The Chair/designee provided quarterly progress reports of PaRC activities to the OVR State Board.
- Executive committee continued to monitor the Council's website and approved Council's new Facebook page to increase their outreach and advocacy.
- Executive committee reviewed/monitored the Council's budget on their conference calls as well as at quarterly full council meetings.
- Seven individuals were recruited and recommended to OVR and the Governor for appointment to the Council as well as four reappointments.
- Executive committee worked on revisions to the By-Laws and Mission Statement this year. Plans for the coming year's strategic plan meeting were developed.
- Quarterly conference calls are held with the local Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC) Chairs. Meeting agendas, minutes, and schedules, etc. continue to be shared on the PaRC website to support the local CAC groups. A meeting of the CAC Chairs/OVR staff/PaRC and staff is being planned for the coming year to support the CACs in strengthening their local committees.
- Council continued their working relationships with other disability related Councils and agencies in the state/country some of which are mandated including: OVR State Board, OVR Citizen Advisory Committees, Statewide Independent Living Council, Client Assistance Program, Parent Education Network, Local Workforce Development Boards, Disability Budget Coalition, Disability Rights PA, PA Transportation Alliance, Governor's Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, "I Want To Work," National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils, and White House Disability calls.
- A member attended the Disability History Awareness Conference at Millersville University this year.

Legislative and Public Awareness Committee – main activities/work

- Followed state and federal legislation that effects employment for persons with disabilities recognizing bills they support, oppose and watch. Members attended a public hearing at the Capitol on Employment First.
- Developed/updated position papers to use in state and federal visits with legislators regarding the needs of persons with disabilities in the state including increased funding for retraining the workforce population,

strengthening transition services, and improving services for veterans returning with brain injuries.

- In the state, Employment First Policy has been a main area of focus this year including sharing wording for legislation and sending letters to the Governor requesting support for Employment First. Expedited employment has also been an area discussed, as well as transportation and attendant care issues as related to employment. Also, members have been working with legislators to form an all-inclusive Disability Caucus.
- Members of the Legislative Committee visited/or provided information to approximately eighty plus state legislators and aides in Harrisburg this year to present the Council's position paper and discuss areas of concern regarding employment for persons with disabilities in the state. These visits continue to be planned in conjunction with PaRC quarterly meetings in Harrisburg.
- One member of the Legislative Committee participated in the National Rehabilitation Association's (NRA) Governmental Affairs annual conference in Washington this year and met with and/or provided information to federal legislators in Washington on Capitol Hill. Some members also participated in a NRA WIOA webinar with RSA Commissioner LaBreck.

Policy and Evaluation Committee – main activities/work

- Reviewed, made recommendations on the following OVR policies: Audiology, Supported Employment, Pre-employment Transition Services (PETS), Order of Selection, Small Business, College Policy, Low Vision, On the Job Training, and Subrogation.
- Members continued to monitor progress on the goals in the current State Plan with OVR at our quarterly meetings.
- Members have been working with OVR to see how changes in various policies such as the College Policy, for example, have impacted students by requesting statistical information to review and analyze.

Transition and Educational Services Committee – main activities/work

- Members participated in the PA Department of Education's annual conference and the Statewide Transition conference.
- A representative from the Bureau of Special Education, Department of Education participates and provides reports on their programs.
- With the passage of WIOA, there is even more emphasis on providing transition services to youth with disabilities. OVR has been updating the committee on current/future services they will be providing in this area during scheduled conference calls.
- Members were concerned that many students/parents don't know that OVR

services are based on an individual's eligibility. It is not an entitlement program. Emphasized that all brochures, etc. should note this clearly.

Customer Satisfaction Committee – main activities/work

- The committee continues to review the joint OVR/PaRC customer satisfaction surveys. Members reviewed and made suggestions to improve the surveys and are continuing to review the survey format with OVR, to identify additional areas of improvement as well as the survey results to monitor and evaluate progress.
- Members continued participating with OVR in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment meetings with Temple University staff and offer suggestions in this process. Information learned from the needs assessment is used by OVR and the PaRC in developing goals, priorities and planning.
- This committee also reviews the number and reason for appeals customers have with OVR on a quarterly basis. The committee also reviewed and recommended two individuals for the Impartial Hearing Officer positions as part of their duties.

CareerLink / WIOA Committee – main activities/work

- The committee continued to monitor concerns related to CareerLink accessibility with OVR staff during scheduled conference calls.
- A representative from Equal Opportunity participates on this committee's conference calls to discuss concerns and report progress.
- The committee is working towards better communication with all parties involved to ensure persons with disabilities in the state receive equal services. A member of the State Workforce Development Board participates on these calls.
- This committee also is working to ensure persons with disabilities, who need to take a civil service exam have the accommodations they need.





PENNSYLVANIA REHABILITATION COUNCIL 2016 Federal Position Paper

The mission of the Council is to inform and advise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Legislature, and the Governor on the diverse issues affecting employment of people with disabilities.

The Rehabilitation Act (WIOA) plays an important and necessary role in:

- supporting the employment of persons with disabilities and empowering them to become independent
- helping integrate the work place and community

The PaRC respectfully submits the following position paper for your review and consideration.

Implementation of the Rehabilitation Act **(Title IV of the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act)**

The Rehabilitation Act as it exists provides states the freedom to administer programs which are responsive to the needs of its customers. It is essential that a dedicated funding stream from the federal government continue in Pennsylvania. In 2015 alone, the federal, state and local taxes paid by competitively employed customers of OVR throughout Pennsylvania averaged approximately \$51,613,205.00.

The Rehabilitation Act must be strengthened through implementing regulations to provide customers greater flexibility and control over the services and programs available to them.

During this implementation period of the reauthorized Rehabilitation Act, we urge you to support the following:

- Keep public Vocational Rehabilitation a mandatory program with single source funding.
- Dramatically increase funding to help support states such as Pennsylvania who are handling an increased need for vocational rehabilitation services for the veterans returning from active duty.
- Increase the number of individuals pursuing master level degrees in vocational rehabilitation and their retention by restoring and increasing federal funds to support the education and training authorities of the Act (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, Title III, Section 302). Further, we

support the restoration of changes to the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) that reduced the standards/requirements to be a "qualified rehabilitation counselor" working with business customers on behalf of consumer customers, but especially for rehabilitation counselors working directly with consumer customers.

- Continue screening returning veterans for brain injury, provide immediate services and require all commercial health insurance to cover brain injury rehabilitation for everyone.
- Increase funding for retraining/rehabilitating, the workforce population (adults 45 and older), who need to keep working to remain financially independent.
- Promote career development and job advancement through the opportunity for post-employment continuing education and training by expanding the definition of and funding for "post-employment services" to include "training and other services necessary for career advancement and upward mobility". This is necessary because of the increased emphasis on "transitioning" in the Act as reauthorized.
- Clarify when individuals must be advised of the right to request review of a decision made by vocational rehabilitation, and when they must be informed of the services available through the Client Assistance Program (CAP).
- Protect the due process rights of individuals who may want to request review of a vocational rehabilitation decision by requiring notification of state established timeframes in which a request for mediation or review must be filed.
- Require training of all impartial due process hearing officers and staff. For example, training varies from state to state, and even from hearing officer to hearing officer. As a result, in Pennsylvania some hearing officers are attorneys, while others are not. Some may have life experience in dealing with the Rehabilitation Act, while others do not.
- Expand the role of the CAP to allow for advocacy and assistance even after an individual has achieved their employment outcome, and to allow CAP to provide legal representation to individuals in any matter related to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services and/or efforts to gain, regain or maintain employment; only to the extent that this does not conflict with the requirements and responsibilities of the PAIR Program.

Transportation

Transportation is an extremely important policy issue for people with disabilities. The lack of transportation options in many communities and the persistent gaps in compliance continue to create significant barriers to employment opportunities. Accessible, affordable and safe public transportation are key components for ensuring people with disabilities can effectively participate in the workforce.

- The PaRC supports changes to the public transportation system that will ensure the opportunities for people with disabilities to successfully obtain and retain employment. People with disabilities should have equal opportunity to utilize public transportation.

The Able Act

- The PaRC supports an amendment to include all people with disabilities regardless of age at onset of disability.





**PENNSYLVANIA REHABILITATION COUNCIL'S
LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE
2016 STATE POSITION PAPER**

The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) is mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1998, as amended by WIOA 2014, to review, analyze, and advise the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) regarding the performance of its responsibilities, particularly those related to eligibility (including order of selection); the extent, and scope and effectiveness of services provided; and the functions performed by State agencies that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes under Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services.

Members are appointed by the Governor to the PaRC for their expertise related to specific categories of representation, as required in the Rehabilitation Act.

One of the goals of the PaRC's Legislative Committee, is to educate and advocate for legislation to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, as related to training and employment in the state of Pennsylvania.

With this in mind, the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council's Legislative Committee respectfully submits the following position paper for your review and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council's Legislative Committee



Maintaining Full Funding for OVR Services to match all available Federal Funds

The Commonwealth must match Federal Title I funding awarded to OVR with 21.3% state dollars. These funds are used to provide services to OVR customers in the 21 district offices, which include six offices in the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS), as well as to provide administrative and operational support to OVR and the Hiram G. Andrews Center.

In past years, the fiscal code included language that earmarked almost \$2.5 million that cannot be used to match the available Federal funds, to non-profit commonwealth organizations. These earmarks have the effect of reducing funds available to OVR to draw federal funds, and limits OVR's ability to provide services to persons who have disabilities. Given the inclusion of the earmarks, OVR needs \$47 million in the "Transfer to the Vocational Rehabilitation Fund" appropriation in the Labor and Industry Program portion of the budget in order to draw down and utilize all available Federal Funds and provide fully funded state services for people who have disabilities.

Action Requested

Funding for the "Transfer to the Vocational Rehabilitation Fund" needs to be at least \$47 million due to the use of the earmarks (which do not have a federal match) for non-profit commonwealth organizations. This will allow OVR's level of funding to remain constant with previous years and make sure OVR is able to draw down all available federal funds.

Collaboration of Services for Persons with Brain Injuries in Pennsylvania

There is no bridge for continuation of services to individuals with brain injuries in Pennsylvania. People are being missed who have potential and never receive services because they are rejected too quickly.

Action Requested

Collaboration is needed between all state agencies working with persons with brain injuries to ensure that there is no break in services from in-home services to employment services. Additional dedicated funding is needed for this population.

Adequate Funding of the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH)

The ODHH was established in 1986, as a state agency that works to ensure all government programs and services are accessible to adults and children who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing. The ODHH primary functions

are advocacy, information, referral, and training. With the passing of Public Law 492, the Sign Language Interpreter & Transliterator State Registration Act (Act 57-2004) ODHH is responsible for the implementation, management & enforcement of the Interpreter registration program, effective July 2005. The law was passed to protect consumers and create a minimum standard for interpreters working in the Commonwealth.

ODHH accomplishes these functions and fulfills Act 57 by collecting demographic information, having three ODHH Representatives covering specified service areas across the state, maintaining an on-line resource directory, providing individually and system advocacy, participating in advisory meetings, and following through with the duties assigned by Act 57 by having a web-based software application to track required information, expirations, penalties, and an improved searchable registry for public use.

ODHH is administratively responsible for the statewide Advisory Council for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (ACDHH). ODHH provides support, keeps records, plans meetings, processes and reimburses members for travel and accommodations as needed. The 17-member council is comprised of nine public members, four of which are mandated by law to be deaf or hard of hearing, and eight members representing state departments (Aging, Education, Health, Public Welfare, and Labor and Industry), the Legislature, and the Governor's Office.

Action Requested:

Continued funding through General Government Operations of the ODHH existing staff (director, administrative assistant, and three regional representatives) is absolutely necessary in order to carry out the above listed functions on a statewide basis.

PaRC supports the following regarding Centers for Independent Living (CILs)

After analyzing the Centers in Pennsylvania, as well as reviewing the practices and policies of some other states, the PA Council on Independent Living and Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council requests that the State of Pennsylvania establish a base level of funding of \$300,000 for Centers for Independent Living. This base would include any federal funds a Center might receive under Title VII, and Pennsylvania General Revenue Funds. No Center would be established for less than this amount, and those Centers who currently receive less than this amount would be provided funding increases to bring them up to this level.

Locally, CILs, which are non-profit organizations, are controlled by boards of directors, the majority of whom have disabilities. In addition, the majority

of staff have disabilities. CILs serve all those who are touched by disability directly or within their family unit regardless of their age or diagnosis. Core services include information and referral; independent skills training; peer mentoring; and individual and grassroots advocacy. CILs are also instrumental in assisting many individuals not served by other programs in obtaining employment. Many reach out to businesses to educate them about disabilities. Many also assist individuals in transitioning from costly nursing facilities to much less expensive home and community based settings and services.

CILS have seen dramatic cuts over the last several years. They can no longer do more with less. It is time for the Administration and Legislature to make a commitment to the disability community by funding CILs at a level where they can remain a viable, robust and integral part of the community.

Action Requested

Line item appropriation of \$2.7 million.

PA should have an official “Employment First Policy”

Employment is the first priority and preferred outcome of people with disabilities. Employment First is a concept to facilitate the full integration of all people with disabilities in the workplace and community. The PaRC fully supports the establishment of an Employment First State for all people with disabilities.

An example of the wording for either legislation or an Executive Order is, “It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that competitive and integrated employment shall be considered its first option when serving persons with disabilities who are of working age to obtain employment. This policy applies to programs and services that provide services and support to persons with disabilities. All State Offices and Departments shall follow this Policy. However, the Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and the Department of Labor and Industry, in particular, shall take all necessary steps to ensure that this Policy is effectively and cooperatively implemented in all the programs and services at the State and local levels.

PaRC can help acquire other State laws like were done in Delaware, Kansas, Vermont and Washington.

“Competitive employment” means work in the competitive labor

market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting; and for which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.

“Integrated setting” means with respect to an employment outcome, a setting typically found in the community in which applicants or eligible individuals interact with non-disabled individuals, other than non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those applicants or eligible individuals, to the same extent that non-disabled individuals in comparable positions interact with other persons.

Action Requested

The PaRC fully supports the establishment of an Employment First State by enacting legislation or by an Executive Order. Other states have done this.

Expedited Employment

The PaRC supports the concept of Expedited Employment for people with disabilities in both Civil Service and Non-Civil Service positions of the state in order to make the Commonwealth a model employer.

Action Requested

The PaRC supports the introduction and passage of Expedited Employment legislation.

Transportation

Transportation is an extremely important policy issue for people with disabilities. The lack of transportation options in many communities and the persistent gaps in compliance continue to create significant barriers to employment opportunities. Accessible, affordable and safe public transportation are key components for ensuring people with disabilities can effectively participate in the workforce.

The PaRC supports changes to the public transportation system that will ensure the opportunities for people with disabilities to successfully obtain and retain employment. People with disabilities should have equal opportunity to utilize public transportation.

Action Requested

All private ride share providers, like Uber and Lyft, as well as all taxi service providers must be required to provide accessible vehicles on demand to

people with disabilities. Also, they should likewise be required to show that all drivers have been educated/trained on the requirements of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act; especially with respect to the provision of service to individuals who use service or guide dogs.

The State must work with Amtrak and the Federal Government to ensure that all train stations in the Commonwealth are physically and programmatically accessible, which is not the case today.

The Rural Shared Ride System should be regionalized to enable transportation providers to cross County lines to assist people with disabilities who use these rides to obtain, maintain, and/or regain employment.

Disability Caucus

The PaRC supports the development of a Disability Caucus in both chambers of the Legislature.

Action Requested

The PaRC encourages both the House and Senate to establish a bi-partisan caucus to review and support legislation that would enable people with disabilities to have equal opportunity in all aspects of their lives and to be productive and contributing members of their communities.



State Plan Attachment for FY 2016

Attachment 4.2(c): Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council

Approved by the PA Rehabilitation Council on October 29, 2014.

This attachment is the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council's (PaRC) input to the State Plan. The following documents were used to develop these recommendations to Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR):

1. The PaRC's annual report (FFY 2014)
2. PaRC Customer Satisfaction Survey
3. Review of items in last year's Attachment 4.2(c)
4. Comments received at 2014 State Plan Meetings
5. Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring Report
6. Statewide Needs Assessment
7. Workforce Development Statistics

Commendation

PaRC commends the leadership of OVR for their partnership with PaRC in regard to policy development and review and Council representation on workgroups. PaRC praises OVR leadership for encouraging and supporting stakeholder input such as their involvement in the PADES and Transition conferences, and the customer satisfaction advisory committee.

Transition

Issue: Support for students between ages 14 to 21 is critical to creating an expectation for employment after school is finished.

Recommendations:

- a. Work with Youth Leadership Network and Youth WIBs
- b. Continue relationships established with Department of Human Services (and ODP), and Department of Education
- c. Continue evaluating Early Reach program for effectiveness

Training for OVR staff and Counselors of Consumer Customers

Issue: Important that the public face of OVR be one that is understanding and helping individuals to achieve employment goals.

Recommendations:

- a. Continue working on improving Consumer Customer satisfaction
- b. Work towards implementation of recommendations from "Defining Positive Customer Service in the State Vocational Rehabilitation System" report

CACs Citizen Advisory Committees

Issue: The CACs are the connection between OVR and Consumer Customers. Each district has their own process for the meetings and for notification about the meetings.

Recommendations:

- a. OVR to take a more active role in the guidance and development of the CACs
- b. OVR to issue a memo to DA on expectations on utilizing and promoting CACs and citizen involvement (for example including a calendar of PaRC meeting schedule and request to not schedule local meetings at the same time)
- c. OVR to gather best practices from the CACs that are effective and well attended by consumer customers and share with all CACs
- d. Continue to advise CACs on use of PaRC's website for agendas and minutes

Information Sharing

Issue: It is important to get information to consumer customer quickly and in a manner they can access. This will allow greater involvement and lead to a positive customer experience.

- a. Use current technology to get word out
- b. Make sure all communication is accessible
- c. Make sure captioning is available in all public meetings OVR holds
- d. Review lead times for dissemination of information to make sure it is far enough ahead

Partnership with PaRC

Issue: PaRC and OVR have mutually benefited from a collaborative relationship as the advisory body in reviewing policies and priorities.

Recommendations:

- a. Continue involvement in OVR leadership with Council
- b. Continue seeking involvement in policy review and implementation

OVR Staff and Counselors as role models

Issue: People with disabilities need to see Counselors and Management and staff of OVR that have disabilities. This is a benefit to both Consumer and Business Customer to see the possibilities of people with disabilities.

Recommendations:

- a. Continue and increase outreach to people with disabilities and cultural minorities in Counselor and leadership roles within OVR
- b. Review data (such as what is found in Attachment 4.10) to see if numbers are increasing





Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council

Committee Goals for 2016-2017

Customer Satisfaction Committee

Goal #1: Partner with OVR to review, evaluate and make recommendations based on results on the combined Customer Satisfaction Survey.

- Evaluate data on a quarterly basis.
- Evaluate questions and recipients on an annual basis.

Goal #2: Partner with OVR to develop, implement and review the comprehensive statewide needs assessment survey.

- Required every 3 years. This can be done all at once or in stages over 3 years. Temple University is working with OVR and the council on the survey.

Goal #3: Partner with OVR to review due process issues to assure good quality outcomes for consumer customers. OVR will share same report that goes to OVR Board on a quarterly basis.

Executive Committee

Goal #1: Continue to improve relationships and collaboration with the PA State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Citizen Advisory Committees and other stakeholder organizations in the Commonwealth to avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served.

Goal #2: Continue to provide leadership and guidance to new and all members and committees in accordance with the mission and bylaws of the Council and the Rehabilitation Act as amended by WIOA 2014.

Goal #3: Continue to increase public awareness in Pennsylvania about OVR services and the Council's mission and responsibilities through increased attendance and participation by council members at stakeholder meetings, youth organization and disability and civic organizations.

Goal #4: Continue oversight of the following: PaRC budget, quarterly meeting agendas, annual report, website/social media, strategic planning, annual retreat, member recruitment and election of officers.

Legislative Committee

Goal #1: Increase the PaRC's advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities in regards to obtaining and maintaining employment

Step to achieve goal:

1. Continuously monitor, review, and prioritize pending State and Federal Legislation that directly or indirectly impacts on the employment of people with disabilities. This would include making recommendations to the Executive Committee and/or the Full Council to oppose or support particular State or Federal initiatives.
2. Make at least one trip to Washington to meet with the PA delegation to Congress, to position the PaRC as a resource to federal legislators concerning legislation and services for persons with disabilities.
3. Visit state legislators in Harrisburg at least twice a year and their district offices to advocate for legislation that has an impact on the disability community, particularly related to employment.
4. Continually monitor information, resources and disseminate information to the PaRC's Legislative Network through Legislative updates and Legislative Alerts.
5. Educate and train new committee and Council members on how to advocate with legislators on the local level and nationally.

Goal #2: Increase advocacy on behalf of the returning disabled veterans who are seeking employment and employment supports through Pennsylvania state services.

Step to achieve goal:

1. Invite speakers, to at least one Full Council Meeting, time permitting, from different veteran's organizations to educate Council members on how to advocate for support services and encourage reciprocal participation by Council members in their organization.
2. Meet with Veteran Advocates in District Offices to gain a better understanding of the needs of returning Veterans seeking employment.

Goal #3: Develop collaborative relationships with other organizations which have similar missions and mutual legislative goals, to maximize our combined legislative impact for people with disabilities.

Step to achieve goal:

1. Work with the SILC, Workforce Development Boards, PACARES, the OVR Board, the Pennsylvania Youth Leadership Network, the Disability Budget Coalition, the Governor's Advisory Council and any other organizations as deemed appropriate.

OVR Policy & State Plan Committee

Responsibilities

1. Development of the Council's section of the VR Portion of the Combined State Plan titled Input of State Rehabilitation Council.
2. Review and provide feedback to Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) on the Combined State Plan during the development process.
3. Combined State Plan Public meetings attendance.
4. Support and attendance for Public Forums related to OVR and/or the employment of people with disabilities.
5. Review, analyze, and provide feedback to OVR and Council as a whole on OVR policies and procedures.

Goals

Goal #1: Maintain a positive working relationship with the Department of Labor and Industry, OVR and Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations.

Steps to achieve the goal:

- A. Receive statistics from the Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations for the Council's section of the VR Portion of the Combined State Plan titled Input of State Rehabilitation Council.

Goal #2: Development of the Council's section of the VR Portion of the Combined State Plan titled Input of State Rehabilitation Council.

Steps to achieve the goal:

- A. Using the current OVR timeline for development of the Combined State Plan draft, the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) and OVR will mutually establish deadlines for PaRC involvement and input. As draft is completed, copies will be shared with the Full Council for any final comments.

Goal #3: Input of the State Rehabilitation Council on the VR Portion of the Combined State Plan.

Steps to achieve the goal:

- A. Identify, seek, and review specific input into the Combined State Plan from the various OVR advisory bodies, previous public hearing comments, and PaRC and OVR customer satisfaction survey results.
- B. Review and discuss with OVR the status and progress with the current Combined State Plan, at every full Council meeting.

Goal #4: Monitoring of OVR policies and procedures.

Steps to achieve the goal:

- A. Participate in OVR workgroups formed to draft new policies or revise existing policies.
- B. Assure that the PaRC staff has complete and current counselor manuals, numbered memoranda, etc. in the office reference library.
- C. Review any numbered memorandums sent to the PaRC.
- D. Ensure CAC's access to OVR policies and procedures for review and comment, so that the PaRC may have an opportunity to review and use those comments in its own consideration.
- E. Periodically evaluate Policy changes to check outcome.



- ❖ If you are interested in becoming a PaRC member, please review the standards below that members have developed.

PaRC Standard of Expectations

Active Participation:

In order to fulfill its federal requirements, the Rehabilitation Council must have active participation by its members. Active participation is defined as:

- Attend all four (4) of the scheduled full Council meetings in any fiscal year. Severe weather and personal emergencies are understandable exceptions.
- Participate on at least one standing committee or ad-hoc committee during the fiscal year.
- Respond to action items during or between Council meetings. Examples may include, but are not limited to:
 - Review of support documents for meeting action items.
 - Review and return of surveys, draft documents, etc. when requested.
- Attend Office of Vocational Rehabilitation public meetings, State Board meetings, Consumer Advisory Committee meetings, etc. when feasible.

Represent the Rehabilitation Council in Meeting and Work Groups:

Although members represent diverse constituencies and points of view, it is important for the Rehabilitation Council to speak as a single entity in meetings and work groups. The Council recognizes that individuals may also wish to convey additional opinions or information during discussions. In order to assure consistency without restricting members' actions, the following guidelines were adopted on April 14, 1999:

If a Rehabilitation Council member is serving on a rehabilitation related work group, committee or is giving testimony as a ***designated and official spokesperson of Council***, the following guidelines will apply:

- The Council member shall state that s/he is representing the Rehabilitation Council.
- The Council member shall state the Council's official position on the subject being discussed if one exists or is known. If the Council's official position is unknown or has not been developed, the Council representative shall indicate that s/he will request the Council's office to forward the position or ask the Council to review the subject and render an official position if one is needed.
- The Council member may have a different, personal opinion on the subject being discussed. If this is so, the Council member should state that it is a personal opinion and not the official position of PA-Rehabilitation Council.
- The Council member shall not commit financial support and/or other resources of the Council to any non-RC committee, workgroup, function, etc., without the previous authorization of PA-Rehabilitation Council.
- In order to receive reimbursement for expenses occurred while acting as a designated Council spokesperson, the member shall follow established procedures for obtaining reimbursement.

These objectives are meant solely to improve and expedite the accomplishments of the Rehabilitation Council, so as to better the lives of persons with disabilities. Your cooperation and time are appreciated.

If you are interested in becoming a member and can meet the expectations, please complete the Appointment Request Form on the next page and return to: Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council Office, 925 Linda Lane, Camp Hill PA 17011. Also, forward a word document of your resume and two references familiar with your disability related work/experiences to racucpca@parac.org.

When the Appointment Request Form, Resume and References have been received in the office, the PaRC members review them and make recommendations to the Governor's Office. The Governor appoints all members.



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council

Office Location: 485 St. John's Church Road, Shiremanstown, PA 17011

Mailing Address: 925 Linda Lane, Camp Hill, PA 17011

APPOINTMENT REQUEST FORM

NAME		*SS #
* HOME ADDRESS (include geographic region – i.e. western PA, southeastern PA, etc.)		
PHONE	FAX	EMAIL (if applicable)
EMPLOYER (if applicable)		
ADDRESS		Underline the category/categories that you could represent on the council (underline as many as apply):
PHONE	FAX	
(responding to these questions is voluntary) ARE YOU: A PERSON WITH A DISABILITY? ___ YES ___ NO If Yes, Nature of Disability _____ A FAMILY MEMBER OF A PERSON W/ A DISABILITY? ___ YES ___ NO If Yes, Nature of Disability _____		State Independent Living Council (SILC) Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) Client Assistance Program (CAP) OVR Customer (Past/Present) Human Resources Investment Council (HRIC) State Dept. Of Education Rehabilitation Counselor Community Rehab Provider Education Service Provider Business/Labor/Industry Physical Disability Cognitive Disability Sensory Disability Psychiatric Disability Intellectual Disabilities General Advocate
**ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING (if applicable)		
OTHER AFFILIATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS		
BRIEFLY DESCRIBE HOW YOUR SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, ETC. MATCH THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REHABILITATION COUNCIL.		

SIGNATURE	DATE

**Please Attach a Resume or Brief Biography and two written references. Documents should be emailed to racucpa@parac.org in word document format.*



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council

925 Linda Lane Camp Hill, PA 17011

voice (717) 975-2004 or (888) 250-5175 tty (888) 559-2658 fax(888) 524-9282
email racucpca@parac.org www.parac.org

Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2017

- ❖ March 1, 2017 (Wednesday)
Harrisburg – Hilton & Towers

- ❖ May 3, 2017 (Wednesday)
Harrisburg – Hilton & Towers

- ❖ August 23, 2017 (Wednesday)
Harrisburg – Hilton & Towers

- ❖ October 25, 2017 (Wednesday)
Harrisburg – Hilton & Towers

These meetings are open to the public. For more information or for persons who require special arrangements including a sign language interpreter, real time captioning, or alternate format, contact the PaRC Office at (717) 975-2004.

We welcome any questions or comments you may have and appreciate your interest in the work of the Council.

Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council

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Mailing Address

925 Linda Lane
Camp Hill, PA 17011

1-888-250-5175 (Voice)

1-888-559-2658 (TTY)

Email: RACUCPCA@PARAC.org



PaRC Council Members

Back Row (L to R): Donna Partin, Maureen Westcott, Fredrick Wright, Heidi Tuszynski and W.D. Chrisner III.

Front Row (L to R): Passle Helminski with her service dog, Mary Brougher and Robert Mecca.

Submitted to:

The Pennsylvania Legislature

The Rehabilitation Services Administration

Tom Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania

The State Board of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

The PA Workforce Investment Board

In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended
by WIOA 2014.

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