



# Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council

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## ZOOM Conference Call Meeting

### Full Council Meeting

August 25, 2021

### Approved Minutes

#### Council Members: Present (P) Not Present (NP)

Jeanette Alexander (P)	Deb Arcoleo (P)	Cindy Duch (P)
Paul Fogle (P)	Passle Helminski (P)	Michele Leahy (P)
Juliet Marsala (P)	Anthony McCloskey (NP)	Michelle Paonessa (NP)
Steve Pennington (NP)	Kara Donatucci Pham (P)	Laura Princiotta (NP)
John Seely (P)	Susan Soderberg (P)	Susan Tomasic (NP)
William Del Toro Vargas (P)	Rob Wallington (P)	

**Guest Speakers Present:** James Kayer (Office of Equal Opportunity), Amy Sunnergren (Office of Equal Opportunity), Sandy List (Office of Equal Opportunity)

**Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present:** Beth Ann Fanning, Cheryl Novak, Lee Ann Stewart, Douglas Rand, Lisa Pletz, Mark Maurer, Beth Harris, Shannon Austin, Jennifer Cave, Douglas Rand, Rod Alcidonis

**Project Staff Present:** Michelle Gerrick, Christopher Todd

**Moderator of Zoom Present:** Nichole Wade

**CART Present:** Yvonne Gordon

**Interpreters Present:** Jessica Bentley-Sassaman, Rebecca Nice

**Guests Present:** Emily Gindlesperger (National Federation of the Blind of Pennsylvania), Lynn Heitz (National Federation of the Blind), James Martini (PA Workforce Development Board), Tracey Turner (PA Workforce Development Board), Dale Verchick (Disability Rights PA), Andrew Pennington (Pennsylvania Client Assistance Program), Eva Weiss (Temple University), Julia Barol (Association of People Supporting Employment First)

#### CONVENE THE MEETING – Ms. Passle Helminski, Chair

- Ms. Passle Helminski asked for a moment of silence to honor the life of a friend and former council member Ms. Mary Brougher
- Roll Call was taken by the moderator of the meeting
- Ms. Passle Helminski welcomed all participants to the meeting

- Ms. Juliet Marsala read the PaRC Mission Statement

## **AGENDA ADDITIONS**

- Ms. Passle Helminski proposed the addition of nominating Mr. John Seely as Chair of the Legislative Committee and discussion for members to attend the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Virtual Fall Conference

## **APPROVAL OF TODAY'S AGENDA**

*Ms. Cindy Duch motioned to approve today's agenda with additions. Ms. Juliet Marsala seconded the motion. All were in favor.*

## **OFFICE OF VOCATIONAL REHABILITATION (OVR) DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Ms. Shannon Austin, OVR Executive Director**

- Ms. Shannon Austin echoed the heartfelt sentiments of Ms. Passle Helminski about her feelings regarding the passing of her good friend, disability rights advocate and former PaRC member Ms. Mary Brougher. She asked that members and attendees celebrate the life of Ms. Mary Brougher through continuing to fight for the rights of those that can't fight for themselves and spoke of all the important work she did as an advocate.
- More than 5,000 individuals receiving services from OVR were placed into employment during the 2020-2021 Fiscal Year.
- The Order of Selection is now open and there are no longer individuals on the waiting list.
- Pursuing internal marketing strategies to increase referrals, consumers, employers, job placement, and job training.
- Participated in outreach in Philadelphia from 8/18/21-8/20/21 to create a coalition that will increase job placement, services for youth in transition services, and communication with stakeholders in that area.
- Roll out of three provider agreements that employed students for various jobs such as bill collection, daycare, community beautification, lawn care, and painting. Programs also included work tours, job interviews, post-secondary education opportunities for youth in the Pittsburgh area and throughout the state.
- Hiram G. Andrews Center (HGAC) has an upcoming graduation ceremony, will continue to accept new students for the fall semester, and is holding a vaccination clinic in September.
- Office for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH) Support for Service Provider (SSP) services increased service hours, built partnership with Commonwealth Media Services that distributed over 6500 communication cards to medical providers. Partnered with statewide walk-in vaccination clinics, partnership with Unified Justice System for effective language access plans.
- Roll out of diversity, equity, and inclusion programs within OVR employee resource groups that is focusing on pride, multicultural group, women's group, and disabilities group.

- Pennsylvania Department of Education has a new website with access to all transition programs, transition conference webinars, links to various resources and stakeholders. Created new positions for the 29 Intermediate Units along with paid part-time positions for youth ambassadors (students age 14-21).
- Members expressed interest in attending events the next time OVR participates in outreach in the Philadelphia region.
- Mr. Paul Fogle asked about services for adults that have lost employment due to the pandemic.
- Ms. Shannon Austin reported that OVR continues to provide services to adults and has worked with Unemployment Compensation to employ over 325 people in their call centers that pay over \$14.00 an hour and will continue to place people receiving OVR services in those jobs.

**PRESENTATION: Discussion regarding the CareerLink accessibility and how the needs of individuals with disabilities are being served: Jim Kaye, Director of Equal Opportunity Bureau, Dept of Labor & Industry; Sandy List, Equal Opportunity Specialist II, Equal Opportunity Bureau, Dept. of Labor & Industry; Amy Sunnergren, Equal Opportunity Specialist II, Equal Opportunity Bureau, Department of Labor & Industry**

- Ms. Sandy list reported on the Office of Equal Opportunity's (OEO) role in preventing discrimination and promoting inclusion in the workplace as part of their responsibilities in conjunction with the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry.
- Relevant laws that fall within their jurisdiction include Workforce Innovation Opportunity Act (WIOA) Title 29, Title VII of the Civil Rights Act, Age Discrimination and Employment Act (ADEA), Equal Pay Act, Americans with Disabilities Act sections 501 and 504, along with other state and federal laws that apply.
- Mr. Jim Kaye reported OEO is homed in on Section 188 of WIOA that pertains to non-discrimination and equal opportunity regulations in the workplace that now require annual compliance reviews. OEO staff used the data from these reviews to improve accessibility and communication within the CareerLink and Unemployment Compensation Centers (UC) for both physical and programmatic accessibility issues.
- During Covid-19 pandemic OEO increased use of CareerLink Center staff, UC staff, employment officers at all locations throughout the state to increase awareness, fulfill obligations, improve, increase training resources, and share best practices regarding inclusion and accessibility issues.
- Created OEO newsletter to share these resources and offered to add attendees to distribution lists for quarterly newsletters.
- OEO provided support for UC and CareerLink to remain accessible during the pandemic and with modernization efforts through increased phone access, website accessibility, translation accessibility, chat and videophone functionality and access.
- Developing revised non-discrimination plan due in July 2022 with U.S. Department of Labor that will be available on their website. Updated CareerLink survey to make diversity, equity, and inclusion a high priority resulting in improved services and training.
- Retained Deloitte to work with Bureau of Workforce Partnership for digital intake project at CareerLink sites. Invited PaRC member to be point of contact for focus group for Mr.

Steve Wolf coordinating these efforts. Offered contact info and continued partnership with PaRC members going forward.

**QUARTERLY PROGRESS REPORT ON STATE PLAN GOALS: Ms. Lee Ann Stewart, OVR Division Chief of Policy, Staff Development & Training**

- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart reported the most current data available for the 4<sup>th</sup> quarter 2019 Fiscal Year performance measures; median income for 5,946 receiving services is about \$2,000 a month, measurable skills gains was 17.1% with a target to increase to 21% by 2021
- Updates to State Plan are being drafted including PaRC input for Schedule A description, working with Ms. Beth Harrison for legal advice before it is shared for public comment beginning 10/1/21 for 30 days, plan to have a public meeting mid-October for discussion, State Board approval should be in December 2021, State Plan should be approved by June 2022 and go into effect 7/1/22. Draft will be sent to council and board by October 1, 2021. State Board meeting minutes and info should now be available on the OVR website.

**OVERVIEW OF COMPREHENSIVE STATEWIDE NEEDS ASSESSMENT (CSNA) AND HOW THE PaRC IS INCLUDED IN THE PROCESS: Ms. Lee Ann Stewart, OVR Division Chief of Policy, Staff Development & Training**

- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart reported the CSNA is required every 3 years by WIOA in every state, this information is used to make an assessment for the state plan goals and development to meet deliverables such as improving services for unserved and underserved individuals, services targeting individuals with autism spectrum disorder, mental health issues, and opioid addiction.
- OVR and Ms. Eva Weiss from Temple University have worked together to research and create this survey. Ms. Eva Weiss reported mining data from various resources such as Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), State Department of Education, and other State Plans from around the U.S.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala raised concerns about insensitive language used in the survey and key populations not involved in the survey such as veterans. She would like to have PaRC members more involved in the creation process of the CSNA, moving forward.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart informed members that the pandemic created some issues with holding focus groups virtually and informing members earlier in the process, apologized for that not happening sooner, and agreed to take that into consideration the next time surveys are being reviewed. Member comments were used in the revision of the survey before it was sent out. Ms. Eva Weiss provided a link to the survey for members to review.

**PaRC FISCAL REPORT:** Mr. William Del Toro Vargas provided the following fiscal report:

**April 2021 - \$579.78 costs associated with committee conference calls, website fees, and registration fee for NRA's Online Disability Employment Summit**

**May 2021 - \$3025.02 costs associated with committee conference calls, presenters during new member orientation, public notice ad May FC meeting, website fees, interpreters for May FC meeting**

**June 2021 - \$3885.34 costs associated with Special Meeting (public notice ad, website fees, zoom moderator, interpreters, CART), committee conference calls, audio teleconference/assisted operator during May FC meeting, CART for May FC meeting, amazon order of 30 paperback copies of State Rehab Council - Voc. Rehab Partnership under WIOA and Inclusion Sponsorship of Disability Pride of Pa**

**First Quarter Expenses = \$3,609.12**

**Second Quarter Expenses = \$3,791.46**

**Third Quarter Expenses = \$4,454.99**

**Fourth Quarter Expenses = \$7,490.14**

**TOTAL EXPENSES YEAR IV (July 1, 2020 - June 30, 2021) = \$19,345.71**

**FUNDS NOT SPENT YEAR IV = \$63,654.29**

*\*\*Expenses have been much lower this past year due the restrictions that Governor Wolf had issued in response to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. All meetings, conferences, and trainings have been virtual. As a result, there were no expenses related to travel accommodations in Year IV, which is the Council's largest expense.*

**PaRC's BUDGET YEAR V (July 1, 2021-June 30, 2022) = \$83,000**

### **COUNCIL WORK TIME**

**Discussion to determine if the PaRC committee meetings should adhere to the provisions in the Sunshine Act**

- Mr. Paul Fogle surmised that the financial costs for public notices would not be a detriment to the council budget.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala questioned the committees being held to requirements of the Sunshine Act due to their role in shaping policy and making decisions. She also advocated for committees to not change to a full council attendance for communication purposes.
- Members agreed that until there was more information from United Cerebral Palsy (UCP) attorneys that all committees should follow all requirements of the Sunshine Act and asked the chair to include this for the vote of the Full Consent Agenda.

### **Discussion/concerns about returning to in person meeting in November**

- Ms. Juliet Marsala said that it was important to recognize uncertainty about the COVID-19 virus and the variants that are rapidly spreading especially among those who are unvaccinated. She said her preference is to remain virtual for Full Council. Ms. Cindy Duch and Mr. Paul Fogle agreed with Ms. Juliet Marsala.
- Ms. Michele Leahy disagreed and suggested using a hybrid of both in-person and virtual for the next meeting as an option but would agree with the consensus of members.

- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas said that he believes in safety first and does not think most members would be comfortable with in-person meetings in November and prefers to remain virtual.

*Mr. Paul Fogle made a motion to have the November 2021 Full Council meeting virtual. Ms. Jeanette Alexander seconded the motion. Ms. Michele Leahy abstained. The motion passed.*

*Mr. Rob Wallington made a motion for Mr. John Seely to Chair the Legislative Committee. Mr. William Del Toro seconded the motion. All were in favor.*

*Ms. Juliet Marsala made a motion for PaRC to sponsor members who would like to attend the CSAVR conference. Mr. Rob Wallington seconded the motion. All were in favor.*

## **DISCUSSION/APPROVAL OF FULL CONSENT AGENDA**

- **Draft Minutes of June 21, 2021 Special Meeting/Committee update and motions 2-year modification of State Plan (Policy Committee has reviewed and is recommending no changes to Description A in the State Plan**
- **Recruitment – Executive Committee has reviewed appointment forms, resumes and letter of references and is recommending forwarding the following applicants to the Governor for appointment to the Council**
  - **Sensory Disability – Lynn Heitz**
  - **Community Rehabilitation Provider – Julia Barol**
  - **Young Adult – no current applicants**
- **The Hilton Hotel could not accommodate 3 out of the 4 PaRC Full Council meeting dates in 2022, therefore, 3 new dates have been chosen based on the Hilton’s availability.**

<b>Dates that were approved on the previous consent agenda</b>	<b>Dates that were changed based on the Hilton Hotel’s Availability</b>
Wednesday, February 16, 2022	Wednesday, February 23, 2022
Wednesday, May 11, 2022	Wednesday, May 18, 2022
Wednesday, August 3, 2022	Wednesday, August 3, 2022
Wednesday, November 2, 2022	Wednesday, October 19, 2022

*Mr. Rob Wallington motioned to accept the Full Consent Agenda. Ms. Michele Leahy seconded the motion. All were in favor.*

## **PUBLIC COMMENT**

- Ms. Emily Gindlesperger asked about concerns regarding a youth who is blind and is receiving OVR transition services.

- Ms. Shannon Austin reported challenges in relation to providing OVR transition services through the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS). Mr. Rod Alcidonis also reported on these challenges to provide services that are tailored to the blindness population along with plans to expand those opportunities.
- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas reported to members that there was no favoritism regarding who was involved in the recent visit with OVR in the Philadelphia region and informed members of the activities of Ms. Shannon Austin's visit to the Philadelphia community's employment sites, individuals receiving services, foster care agency providers, transition students, educators, and other agencies about the many OVR services and needs.
- Ms. Michele Leahy expressed interest in having presenters from the Office of Developmental Programs and the Office of Long-Term Living to discuss waivers, employment, assets, and the Estate Recovery Act to gain a better understanding of recent changes.
- Mr. Paul Fogle brought up concerns about the scheduling of the Full Council meeting during the SILC meeting.
- Ms. Passle Helminski informed members that this was the only time Full Council met during the SILC meeting due to a scheduling conflict with moderators.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz expressed concerns about BBVS and BVRS services and the importance of providing and expanding transition services for students who are blind.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala suggested having a speaker from the Office of Income Maintenance policy departments as a guest speaker for members to better understand how employees with disabilities can remove barriers and disincentives to pursue better higher paying jobs.
- Ms. Julia Barole thanked members for their consideration of her application to the PaRC and spoke of her experience with many state agencies that support Employment First.

## **ADJOURN**

***Mr. Paul Fogle made a motion to conclude the Full Council Meeting. Ms. Cindy Duch seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

The meeting was adjourned at 11:57 AM