



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council

55 Utlely Drive, 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

CareerLink/WIOA Committee Meeting Written Review Draft Minutes for October 12, 2021

Members Present (P) Not Present (NP)

Rob Wallington (P) Passle Helminski (P) Juliet Marsala (P)
Sue Soderberg (P) Kara Donatucci Pham (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: Cheryl Novak, Lee Ann Stewart

State Workforce Development Board (SWDB) Staff Present: James Martini, Tracey Turner

PaRC Staff Present: Michelle Gerrick, Chris Todd

CALL TO ORDER

- This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Mr. Rob Wallington called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda today.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

Mr. Rob Wallington made a motion to approve today's agenda. Ms. Passle Helminski seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Mr. Rob Wallington made a motion to approve past meeting minutes. Ms. Passle Helminski seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Discussion and possible action items:

OVR Updates

- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart reported that she had no OVR updates at this time but did request updates for CareerLink activities from Mr. Doug Rand, OVR Acting Business Services Division Chief. She will provide those updates upon their response and suggested he be invited and included in future CareerLink Committee meetings and correspondence.

Discussion of Nondiscrimination Plan for Equal Opportunity Compliance in the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Programs

- **In relation to CareerLink training and accessibility**

- Mr. Robert Wallington initiated discussion regarding the certification process for CareerLink accessibility that was previously brought to the attention of PaRC members by Mr. Steve Pennington. He asked attendees who the PaRC should contact to get more information about this process from either the Office of Administration (OA), the Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) or other agencies.
- Mr. James Martini informed attendees that OVR is partnering with EEO to go to each of the 62 CareerLink sites to complete certifications to ensure accessibility for the physical locations and their operations and offered to put together a more detailed report of that process.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart informed attendees that the OVR Business Services team are available to do accessibility checks. Each CareerLink location is run by Workforce Development Boards, are their own entity and not a Commonwealth facility. Many locations have been closed during Covid-19 pandemic and she or Mr. Doug Rand will report more information at the next meeting with specific details regarding OVR involvement regarding accessibility.
- Mr. Rob Wallington asked if there is a date planned for the full re-opening of all CareerLink sites.
- Ms. Passle Helminski reported that there is not currently a known full re-opening date scheduled. Reported inaccessible facilities at the Oil City CareerLink location and that each location should have full accessible facilities.
- Ms. Tracey Turner reported update status she received from Workforce Board staff regarding the accessibility reviews that were paused during Covid-19 restrictions; TVs that include Closed Captioning and phones that are TTY accessible are being added at facilities or are in the process of being added.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala asked if standards, best practices are being reviewed regarding accessibility of website technology, pdf's, and other technologies.
- Mr. James Martini reported that online resources and website accessibility could be added to their Local Workforce goals.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala asked if Section 508 reviews and plans are being completed to ensure all the CareerLink's technology is accessible.
- Ms. Sue Soderberg reported that the accessibility checklist has been shared in the past by Mr. Ralph Roach and will share that document with members.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala asked if an evaluation has been completed or if there is planning for; the effects of Covid-19 on CareerLink facilities' operations, standards/best practices, gap analyses for planning for future pandemics, and other preparations to ensure services would be provided.
- To address member questions regarding accessibility references/policies/planning, Mr. James Martini and Ms. Tracey Turner provided the following information from Workforce policy documents/communications with attendees through chat:
 - This is what we have in the WIOA combined state plan - "Additionally, the commonwealth is assessing specific areas within the one-stop system. For example, Pennsylvania's Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, or OVR, will conduct accessibility reviews of all of Pennsylvania's one-stop centers. After the review of each site, OVR will provide a report outlining non-legal best practices on compliance requirements of the American with Disabilities

Act Accessibility Guidelines (ADAAG) standards, and a set of recommendations and resources to address any accessibility requirements."

- This is also included in the WIOA Plan - "PA CareerLink® centers will be physically and programmatically accessible to all customers, including individuals with disabilities. The commonwealth mandates that all PA CareerLink® service locations provide reasonable accommodations, reasonable modifications, architectural accessibility, programmatic accessibility, and website accessibility for individuals with disabilities. Each office is equipped with assistive technologies and accessibility features; staff members are trained on the maintenance and operation of available assistive technology devices."
 - Accessibility of PA CareerLink® Sites: PA Department of Labor & Industry (L&I) partners are currently working with OVR staff throughout this calendar year to conduct a 'no-cost' accessibility review of each PA CareerLink® site in Pennsylvania, using the Americans with Disabilities Act Compliance Assessment Toolkit to assess standards for parking lots, drop off points, doorways, walkways, restrooms and all program areas open to the public, as well as using requirements outlined within WIOA, Section 188: Nondiscrimination.
 - Additionally, there will be reviews of one or two PA CareerLink® sites for Section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, for technology and on-line communication compliance. Reviews will examine the types of assistive technologies and user-based requirements available with PA CareerLink® resource center computers and software. Following these reviews, OVR staff will provide a report to the L&I's Bureau of Workforce Development Administration (BWDA) outlining best practices on compliance requirements of the ADAAG standards, as well as recommendations and resources to resolve any accessibility requirement issues. BWDA staff will work with each local board to review any recommended improvements. OVR staff will also offer training opportunities for those local board monitors that are interested in learning how to conduct these reviews. There has been great cooperation on both sides, so far, between participating PA CareerLink® and OVR staff.
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- Mr. James Martini reported that multiple Workforce Board policies are currently being updated regarding accessibility and technology and that he will be happy to take this opportunity to gather updates and report back to the committee with this information.
 - Ms. Passle Helminski informed Mr. James Martini that CareerLink facilities that are being leased should be inspected for accessibility before leases are signed, inform property owners that full accessibility should be on the lease, and provided examples where facilities were not accessible.
 - Mr. James Martini reported that he would include this information for either policy or guidance with the Workforce Development Board.
 - Ms. Lee Ann Stewart reported that there is a meeting being set up that will re-initiate the CareerLink accessibility checks.
 - Ms. Juliet Marsala stated that ADA standards are minimum standards and hopes that we will always do more whenever possible and feasible regarding accessibility

for the communities that PaRC represents to ensure equitable access rather than minimal access.

- Ms. Passle Helminski asked that with high staff turnover rates, how CareerLink staff are being trained regarding accessibility to ensure that customers with disabilities are being given access to services.
- Mr. James Martini stated that these are great questions and important issues that need to be addressed and would invite SWDB staff to PaRC meetings in the future that could better answer them. Reported that CareerLink does onboarding training, a CareerLink 101 for new employees.
- Ms. Tracey Turner reported CareerLink 101 trainings are still being provided to ensure new staff are given foundational information.
- Ms. Kara Donatucci Pham asked if the SWDB and attendees had video training capability and offered to share her agency's resources regarding service dog and other accessibility training resources.
- Ms. Passle Helminski brought up concerns that CareerLink sites have turned away people seeking services that were veterans or had service dogs and asked what could be done through training to ensure that does not happen.
- Mr. James Martini stated that in addition to proper training to prevent those situations there could also be improved communication, intentional and thoughtful connection, and integration between OVR, SWDB, and CareerLink sites.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala stated the great importance of inclusion of people with a disability and that everyone be provided services at a CareerLink if they chose to seek those services as a fundamental starting point.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala brought up concerns regarding the potential of a stigma for those experiencing or developing Long-Covid (recognized by the ADA as a disability) and what can be done to raise awareness of the condition through training for OVR and CareerLink staff.
- Mr. James Martini informed attendees he has sent invitations to his peers at the SWDB to attend future committee meetings to address what is currently in place regarding the many member questions and concerns brought up at today's meeting.

Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) is celebrating their 20th anniversary

- Mr. Robert Wallington asked if attendees had any ideas on how to support the celebration of the 20th anniversary of the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP).
- Ms. Michelle Gerrick asked if there was a consensus of what members would want to share on the PaRC Facebook page to honor the ODEP anniversary.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala recommended possibly sharing the ODEP blog series with the theme "Driving Change" on the PaRC social media site and reaching out to PaRC Social Media Committee to assist with this.

Discussion on the updates of the ADA in the workplace

- **New Federal Court decisions relating to Reasonable Accommodations in the workplace**
- **Current accommodation issues that have arisen regarding COVID-19**

- Mr. Robert Wallington reported on the new ADA guidelines that no longer preclude those who may not have a long-term disability from being covered under the ADA as they may have been in the past. Expressed that awareness of these guidelines are instrumental for those who may be experiencing a short-term disability to receive accommodations in the workplace under the new ADA guidelines.

Schedule Next Call

- The next meeting was previously scheduled for **January 11, 2022 from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM**

Adjourn

Ms. Passle Helminski moved to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Juliet Marsala seconded the motion. All were in favor.

The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) is in search of a person or agency who can create an engaging and interactive website that attracts an audience seeking valuable and useful content related to the employment of people with disabilities.

The mission of the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) is to inform and advise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Legislature, and the Governor on the diverse issue affecting employment of people with disabilities. All members of the Council are appointed by the Governor.

This project must fulfill a number of important duties and responsibilities including but not limited to:

- A website within \$3000 - \$4500 budget
- Build an informative and engaging website that increases visitor numbers, time spent on the site, and return visits
- Ability to track website visitors
- Design the site's layout and organize the information in a way that is visually pleasing and easy to use
- Encompass all disabilities by creating a fully accessible site where all people can perceive, understand, navigate, and interact
- Integrate social media platforms to help drive traffic and a greater awareness of the mission of the PaRC
- Knowledge and creating a SEO (Search Engine Optimization) system
- Storage area for weekly newsletters on website with public accessible link
- Responds well to client's requests
- Possess excellent communication skills
- Strong portfolio and experience preferred

Please send serious inquiries with 3 portfolio examples to Michelle Gerrick at michelle.gerrick@parehabilitationcouncil.org