



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council

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OVR Policy/Customer Satisfaction Committee Draft Minutes for November 9, 2021

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

William Del Toro Vargas (P)
John Seely (NP)
Susan Tomasic (NP)

Passle Helminski (P)
Deb Arcoleo (P)
Robert Wallington (P)

Michelle Paonessa (P)
Paul Fogle (P)

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

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd

Interpreters Present: Cindi Brown (moderator), Libby Berlin

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Mr. William Del Toro Vargas called the meeting to order at 10:05 AM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

Ms. Passle Helminski made a motion to approve today's agenda and the approval of the past meeting minutes. Mr. Rob Wallington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

Policy Committee Elections - Committee Chair Nomination/Re-nomination

- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas asked members for nominations for Committee Chair and encouraged all members to participate.

Mr. Robert Wallington made a motion to nominate Mr. William Del Toro Vargas for Policy Committee Chair. Ms. Passle Helminski seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Unopposed Mr. William Del Toro Vargas will remain Policy Committee Chair.

OVR Updates

- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart provided update on the State Plan and reported 7 public comments and there were no changes in the State Plan required. OVR legal team also reviewed the

comments and agreed no changes were required. Recently spoke with Ms. Shannon Austin/OVR Executive Team and was informed that there are several additions/changes being made to the State Plan including a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Workforce Development Board and other initiatives that are looking into hiring new positions within OVR. This information will be shared in detail at the Full Council meeting. This will require 30-day Public Comment and Public Meeting period during the combined State Plan timeframe, from Mid-December to Mid-January. This information will be highlighted and provided to members in preparation to PaRC FC meetings with a goal to have final votes at the end of January. This means the 2-year Modification of the State VR Plan will not be voted on at the November FC Meeting.

- Ms. Michelle Paonessa asked what does the Public Meeting look like and who typically attends.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart explained that before COVID these meetings were held in District Offices and are now held virtually. Summary highlights are read directly from the State Plan and then time is allotted for Public Comment. Meetings are widely published/announced in Newspapers, Social Media, stakeholder lists, Council invitations, and other platforms.
- Ms. Michelle Paonessa asked if ASL, interpreters and captions are available.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart explained that there are always sign language interpreters and Computer Aided Real-Time Transcription (CART) available.
- Ms. Passle Helminski commented that the Council is well represented at these meetings.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart anticipates updates and reports regarding the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) from Temple at the next FC meeting including information from the Pre-employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) survey. In March OVR leadership and the Council will be invited to meet for discussion about the next CSNA cycle that begins in October 2022.

Review and Discussion of the 2-year Modification of the State VR Plan

- This item was previously discussed.

Review Committee Goals

- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas read the following Policy Committee goals; maintain a positive working relationship with the Department of Labor and Industry, OVR and Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations, support the development of the Plan, monitoring of OVR policies and procedures, partner with OVR to review, evaluate and make recommendations based on results on the combined Customer Satisfaction Survey, partner with OVR to develop, implement and review the comprehensive statewide needs assessment survey, and partner with OVR to review due process issues to assure good quality outcomes for consumer customers. Mr. William Del Toro Vargas asked members for any additions or changes to the goals.

Ms. Passle Helminski motioned to approve the Policy Committee Goals. Mr. Rob Wallington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Discussion/Review of OVR Customer Satisfaction Surveys

- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart apologized for the delay in the sharing of the Customer Satisfaction Surveys due to waiting for Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRs) response to customer's comments on the surveys and ensured members that those concerns were addressed, the situation was mutually resolved, and no additional follow up was required.

Reported that OVR staff has resumed following up with Customer Satisfaction Survey comments after a brief delay due to staffing changes/resignations.

- Ms. Michelle Paonessa asked if there were specifications on the surveys that indicated customers were deaf or hard of hearing and how we could reach out to them.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart answered that the surveys are not identified by disability, there is statistical information collected about different disability groups that are receiving services as required by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and is available to be shared. Surveys are generated by Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS), can take a look at including that information if you feel it is important, have made changes to those forms in the past, and asked Ms. Michelle Paonessa if there was a specific reason for knowing the disability of the customer completing the survey.
- Ms. Michelle Paonessa asked for more information about CWDS.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart explained that CWDS is a large case management system that is used through out all state agencies not just OVR. OVR uses it for tracking and targeting customer information. Normally counselors enter information into CWDS however it is a public facing tool and that anyone can apply directly for services using CWDS. There are security and confidentiality laws in place that not everyone has access to all information.
- Ms. Michelle Paonessa asked why information was kept confidential if customers and counselors are the only individuals accessing the information and how would customers know if they needed to make corrections if they did not know what was being entered into the system on their behalf, especially if they use sign language.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart answered that she would need to have IT answer specific questions about security and confidentiality, there are Federal Regulations regarding confidentiality, and that customers do have access to their profile information in CWDS.
- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas informed members that customers do have access to all of their own profile information on CWDS, have access to their own Individual Plan of Employment, and can make changes to the profile themselves.
- Ms. Michelle Paonessa asked if customers know if they have access to this information.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart informed members that customers are given a disclosure form of rights and responsibilities when they first receive services and are informed about the CWDS.
- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas stated that Ms. Michelle Paonessa reminded him of an important question in that how we know what surveys are completed by which bureau, not by disability which he completely approves, to improve services.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart explained that each survey is identified by Bureau of Blind and Visual Services (BBVS) and BVRS, and the length of the services provided, 6-month, 12 months, etcetera. Hiram G Andrews Center (HGAC) does their own Customer Service Satisfaction Surveys as they are their own department.
- Mr. William Del Toro asked if Council could have access to the HGAC surveys within the last year and if available pre-COVID and would like to know more information as to why they are not available if that is the case.
- Mr. Robert Wallington stated that he too would like survey information regarding HGAC.
- Ms. Michelle Paonessa asked because OVR is so broad how we would know which delineation is which and to know specific groupings, and if there are languages available if the customer takes a survey at home how would they know the language and is the process explained to them.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart explained that the surveys are randomly generated through CWDS upon cases being closed successfully and unsuccessfully. Each bureau is specified on the survey; BBVS, BVRS, and transition services.
- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas stated that he received a survey a few months ago and it was not accessible, Council has discussed accessibility issues with the survey in the past, and

asked what technology is being used to ensure surveys are accessible for BBVS customers.

- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart stated that surveys are randomly generated through email, recognizes that is a limitation if the customer does not have access to a computer or email, has spoken with Mr. Rod Alcidonis about an alternate format for someone that has a visual impairment, surveys were mailed out in the past, and the current system is probably related to a personnel resource issue/not having enough employees to support the survey process.
- Mr. William Del Toro asked if that technically is a violation of the ADA accessibility because surveys are inaccessible and if should they be done through the mail until those issues are resolved.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart stated that she does not always work directly with BBVS but believes they are still sending out paper surveys through the mail and was incorrect in saying they are no longer doing that and was previously referring to the results of the braille and large print copies that were not being sent to Council. There is a button to request an alternate format for surveys in the CWDS so the surveys are always being made accessible and will research a way to have results of alternate formats made available through CWDS.
- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas stated that if the email version of the surveys are troublesome returning to the mail version could be used and that if letters and other correspondence are still being done through mailing with the CWDS the surveys should not be a hardship and should be sent through mail.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart stated that OVR is still sending mail surveys for customers that are requesting that format. Through CWDS the public facing system information, is being offered through alternate formats and customers can request multiple forms and information including their own Individual Plan for Employment (IPE). Information from the results of alternate format surveys is not currently being merged with the surveys received within the CWDS and OVR needs to find a way to do that and knows that it is currently a resource issue for OVR.
- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas stated that a lot of customers are not aware of the CWDS and would obviously not know if they did or did not receive a survey because they are not aware of this information system.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart explained that is one of the challenges that OVR faces, not everyone has access to technology, OVR appreciates information provided by the surveys, and given the current lack in personnel resources are prioritizing use of those resources.
- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas informed attendees that he would be willing to help form a sub committee with OVR and CWDS to have a discussion to problem solve these issues with the surveys and improve the system.

Schedule next Committee meeting

- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas asked staff start a poll to determine the date and time for the next Committee meeting to ensure quorum.

Adjourn

Ms. Passle Helminski moved to adjourn meeting. Mr. William Del Toro Vargas seconded the motion. All were in favor. Meeting was adjourned.