

**CAC MEETING – Friday, February 4, 2022**  
**Meeting was held via Teams and phone beginning at 10:00 a.m.**

**Attendance**

In attendance: Michael Zaken; Tom Burgunder; Carla Hayes; Chris Hunsinger; Emily Gindlesperger; Lynn Fox, WPSBC; Andrew Pennington from CAP; Greg Lazure from PATTAN; Bob Nagy; Barb Peterson from Blind and Vision Rehabilitation Services of Pittsburgh; Larry Shock, ADA – BBVS Pgh; Harold Longmore, VR Supervisor – BBVS Pgh; and Spero Pipakis.  
Had an issue with the dial in. Also, couldn't use Teams.

**Approval of November 2021 Minutes**

Motion to approve the minutes.  
Emily moved and Tom seconded  
Approved.

**Recording meeting**

Larry will check into that. The administrators of the enterprise license may have disabled that feature.

**Staff Updates**

Sarah Vogel left 1/28/2022 and took off a week earlier. Stephanie Van, VRT, retired on 1/21/2022.

Larry is retiring in the Summer 2022 and there is a temporary District Administrator, Danielle Dawgiello. She is coming in on Monday, 2/07/2022. The hope/plan is that she will become permanent by Summer 2022. Danielle was a counselor in 2017 – August 2019 at BBVS Pgh. She went to BVRS, Washington PA as a supervisor.

BBVS has one VRT, two social workers, two counselors, two O&M, one CT2, one CT3, a VRC Supervisor and a Social Worker supervisor.

**Hiring Update**

Since December 2021, positions have been posted and we have interviewed 7 candidates for two VRC positions, but they all withdrew. Most of them chose to go to other offices. Positions will be reposted. We had 3 interviews for two CT2 positions – one accepted and one declined.

For the Social Worker positions, we had 8 candidates. Four withdrew and two were selected. One was given a conditional offer and has accepted. Still waiting for conditional offer for the second. Five O&M candidates were interviewed and two were selected. One applied for an Intern position. Still waiting for

clarifications from HR. The O&M position is time. We are also attempting to hire one candidate who is dual qualified as a VRT as well as O&M. Accepted her as an O&M, not a VRT but don't know where the offer is now.

Two candidates for VRT and one accepted.

Few candidates for VRT and more for VRC.

### **Harold – VR Program**

Our only two VR counselors have between 175 and 250 cases.

**Question:** Are other offices able to work in tandem or getting overtime for working BBVS VR cases?

**Harold's response:** We can't have the BVRS office handle the backlogs because they are on a different seniority unit as prescribed by the SEIU contract – this prevents BVBS and BVRS staff from interfering with each other's promotional opportunities and furlough rights should layoffs ever occur – it also however prevents staff from one Bureau doing the work of the others. It makes no sense to try to have other BBVS offices work with this office because they are all down employees as well and also far away. Possibly we as stakeholders could put pressure on people to solve this dilemma.

Emily asked what does get offered, do the pay grades change now that the minimum wage is going to be higher?

We never got the actual starting salary, but Harold said that usually VRC candidates have a choice of working for insurance companies or working for the State of Pennsylvania. The State has historically offered comparable pay while offering better benefits. However, we heard that V.A. could well start an O&M out at more than \$60,000.00 a year.

Chris asked about what stakeholders can do to get more folks to jobs as counselors. Harold said stakeholders should encourage folks qualified for positions to apply who are visually impaired.

Tom pointed out that the pool of visually impaired people wanting jobs in rehab counselling has shrunk since other fields are now more accessible, and possibly a greater number of those visually impaired joining the workforce have multiple disabilities which may well limit their ability to obtain a master's degree in Rehab Counseling or Social Work. BVRS is a more desirable position for counselors because less travel and don't have to learn about so many new things.

**Barb Peterson, from BVRSP**, pointed out that this environment is a job seeker's world, and we can't be as picky about candidates.

Carla Hayes suggested that the State consider emergency certification.

### **Telework Update**

BBVS staff are now working two days per week from home. Staff can get permission to work additional time due to weather. Permission must come from Central Office. If a person can't do telework, they get paid office closing.

**Office configuration changes.** OVR is considering moving to another location. This probably will not happen until Spring of 2023, as the lease of the current office space expires then.

### **Pre-ETS Programming**

Larry has nothing new.

### **BVRSP Programming**

BVRSP Promote again in the Spring. Four weeks of Microsoft Office. \$3600 for the four weeks. This is the sixth time this program has been offered. It is comprehensive and builds on basic computer skills.

Instructor program for yoga. They have one instructor trained.

### **New Programming at BBVS**

STRIVE-On:

Larry told us that the current session has started already and will continue until sometime May 2022.

Three from this office were submitted and 2 of the 3 are still on the program.

Karen Walsh-Emma is satisfied with the turnout.

Spring/Summer

BVRSP is offering a summer one-week program for high school students and a two-week program as well for others.

### **WPSBC Programs**

Sarah is now gone so there is less contact between BBVS and WPSBC. Larry pointed out that once the temporary District Administrator gets to the office, he will be back in touch with WPSBC, since he was active with Sarah on the work between BBVS and WPSBC. Want to look at different kinds of placements for adults with vision loss and multiple disabilities.

May 6, 2022 is A Day of Learning for people at WPSBC. Diagnosis of CVI, student and staff mental health, visual arts, with blind or visually impaired artists, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. Announcements will be forthcoming.

### **Training Update**

Transition conference in August 2022. Request for presentations will be sent.

### **BSR Update – Spero**

Since Spero is not doing that job right now but he talked about his temp position. Spero said he won't apply for the permanent position that he is now working and plans to come back to the Pittsburgh BBVS office as a BSR. This is one of his options when the TDY ends.

They posted a VR Specialist Accessibility Support position both internally and externally. Spero said that there were issues about online application and little available information from the proper people so that applicants with vision loss who contacted Civil Service were told that they had to be a VR Counselor to apply for the job, which was incorrect. It sounded like they either were discouraged from filing or that their applications were rejected because they didn't meet the requirements that someone thought were a part of the position. Reposting the position because of this issue.

Spero started his application as a BSR with the state in August of 2016 and was interviewed in June of 2018. That was too long a time for someone to be kept in limbo for a position if people are being practical about filling it. Let's talk to Civil Service as stakeholders.

Spero's position is working with staff working on how staff can use the assistive technology equipment. He also works on document accessibility. He and Becky Knaub in CO work on this. He and Becky are developing Assistive Technology Resources folders for State employees.

Spero is working on trying to figure out training for Adobe Pro to make Adobe documents accessible for people using screen readers. He has an Adobe Pro license, but he has not been effective in getting current training for use of its full functionality. He hopes that someone will come up with Adobe training in accessibility. Barb gave him a name in her office for someone who might be able to steer him in the proper direction.

Spero is also working on a profile for all Assistive Technology providers to be able to get and complete accurate reports. He wants to make the reports simpler. He wants to be able to easily show what kind of training a person needs,

what kind of qualifications the provider has, how much time the training might take, and what level of experience the customer has already.

### **Summer Internship**

The BBVS Pgh office is not offering internships. They have no candidates for any of the intern positions either. Those positions were originally scheduled to be in Harrisburg, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia. We were assured that the counselors sent out letters to all students who could qualify in the office and had no takers.

### **Order of Selection - Status of Waiting List**

This office has no one in Status 11. This office has no customers in Status 11. Everyone who was in that status is either closed or in Plan Status. Carla asked about what Status 11 means. Harold explained it is the code used when a person is eligible for services but cannot receive them either because the Order of Selection is completely closed or because they do not fall into a category that is open at present.

When the Order of Selection was closed back in July 2020, that meant all new people who applied for services had to go into Status 11 and couldn't have their employment plan started.

There are three categories of disability related to the number of functional areas affected. Harold said that when he sees someone come up in Status 11, it is usually because some of the paperwork was done incorrectly, or forms were not completed because visual impairment most always affects several different functional areas.

### **Adding new people to the Group**

Mike and Tom asked that we all try to recruit new members. Also, Mike encouraged Larry to stay in the group even after he retires.

### **New Business**

Chris asked about statistics and that kind of information will be put on the agenda.

Talked a little about the areas to be reported on: Cases cleared; cases being worked on; cases per employee; monthly report showing stats; whatever other metrics might indicate areas of concern.

Emily G. mentioned Accessible PHARMACY and BEL Braille program from NFB in the Summer so it will be virtual.

Kids from ages 4 to 12 - a National Braille Program

Carla did a reminder about non 24 20 minutes from Maggie Felton scheduled by Washington County Council of the Blind for 2/05/2022 at 9:30 a.m. via free Conference Call at phone (425) 436-6372 with the access code of 229381#.

Next CAC Meeting – May 6, 2022 from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 Noon

Barb made the motion and Harold seconded to adjourn.