

CAC Meeting Minutes for February 7, 2020

The meeting was held at the office of the Bureau of Blind and Visual Services in Pittsburgh PA at 531 Penn Ave. The meeting was called to order shortly after 10:00 a.m.

In attendance at the office were Sarah Vogel, Office District Administrator; Larry Shock, Assistant District Administrator; Christine Hunsinger, Secretary of the CAC; and Tom Burgunder. On the phone were Mike Zaken, Co-chair; Carla Hayes; Eric Dolphy, Fayette County; Rich Fisher; Barb Peterson, Blind and Vision Rehab Services of Pittsburgh; Terri Lukes, Beaver County Assoc. for the Blind; Sue Lichtenfels; Bob Nagy and Lynn Fox.

Mike asked Tom Burgunder to help him by keeping track of the agenda, but Tom pointed out that he is not co-chair.

Tom Burgunder made motion to approve November 2019 minutes and Rich Fischer seconded. Motion carried.

Mike turned the meeting over to Sarah. She started with Staff Updates.

The office has been interviewing for a VRC (Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor) position candidates in the week of the CAC meeting. They hope to come up with a hiring decision which can be passed on up the line.

They are losing a Social Worker on February 7, 2020 but they hope to fill that position.

The office also interviewed for a VRT (Vocational Rehabilitation Therapist) position in the week of the CAC meeting and plans on making a hiring recommendation for that position. There is a request to fill a Social Worker position.

Larry pointed out there were 9 VRC candidates so they hope that it will be possible to make a good choice. He also said the VRT candidate they are recommending is a strong candidate.

Mike Zaken asked about O&Ms and BBVS already has three.

Rich asked about the number of VRTs and VRCs. BBVS currently has two VRTs and are trying to fill the third position. They have three Social Workers, but will drop to two on February 7 and hope to bring it back up to three. There are currently 3 VRCs on board and they just interviewed to eventually bring it up to the full complement of four. Although the Social Worker number will drop to two until they can hire the replacement, they feel that Larry and Sarah can backfill since they both have Social Work credentials.

Rich asked about how the new hires will affect the goals that the State sets for the office. Larry pointed out that since the new hire VRC will just be coming on, it shouldn't change the expected goals for a while. They expect that the closure goal will be around 68 with each VRC expecting 17 closures for the year, or is it some other time frame?

Launch Academy is the next topic. Sarah went to the first meeting to plan this year's Launch Academy. They may add another week, could go up to three weeks for the summer. Questions came up as to how they could accommodate blind and visually impaired students. Jim Joyce, an O&M Specialist, recommended that any blind and or visually impaired student have a sighted guide.

They are then going to have to reach out to both students and/or staff if they expect to have any students take advantage of this program. Sarah recognizes that these plans have to be done a year in advance.

Launch Academy normally is for BVRS students not visually impaired students. Launch Academy deals with both college and other sorts of post-secondary schooling exposure. Sarah was uncertain as to what the actual education targets are for the Junior Summer Academy.

She pointed out that where Launch is a local program, Junior Summer Academy and Summer Academy are State-wide programs in BBVS. Pittsburgh BBVS has 6 customers for Junior Summer Academy and 3 for Summer Academy. Application deadline was extended because they had slots left at the time when it was supposed to close.

Next topic is White Cane Day for 2020. Mike had not been able to touch base with Cindy who works on that at BVRSP, and Barb Peterson said they would start working on that in the future. Mike pointed out that he hoped we could have more activity with the Duquesne University Health Fair since that brought a lot of additional people to the event.

The next topic is Job Fairs. BBVS is planning on one; they think it will be some time in October 2020 to coincide with NDEAM. It could be more than just a job fair. Mike reminded us that the PCB Conference will be October 22 through 25, 2020. We don't know how active the Harrisburg office will be with our event.

The next topic is clarification of our method of attending these meetings. Sarah clarified the Skype issue for us. They create webinars and conference calls in Business Skype. They now understand how to set up these features. Now that this meeting has been assigned as a reoccurring meeting, we should always have the same phone number and guest pin, and the host pin isn't our issue, but it is the issue for the person setting up the call. Tom pointed out that we need a way to get in touch when the system for some reason doesn't work. He recommends that within the email sent out about the meeting they include another number to get in touch with a staff member to let them know of a problem. Sarah pointed out that they try to commit to email communications if there are issues with connecting.

The next topic is the Area Agency on Aging and how BBVS is working with that office. Larry got Donna Lambie to talk about this topic. Donna is the BBVS Pittsburgh Social Worker Supervisor. BBVS doesn't have an official relationship with the Area Agency on Aging here in the Allegheny County area, but BBVS Pittsburgh does. Donna said the Social Workers do collaborate with Area Agency on Aging in seeking referrals for BBVS customers and getting referrals from that office.

Chris pointed out that we as the CAC had in the past been told this office was referring people to Allegheny County Area Agency on Aging, but that office was not identifying and referring possible clients to BBVS. Also, we had no data explaining how the other counties Area Agency on Aging offices this office covers were indeed working with this office.

Donna said when she was a Social Worker for Fayette County, she felt the Washington, Fayette-Greene Area Agency on Aging and she worked well together. Sarah pointed out that on the list of contacting possible collaborators, she and Larry have every intention of touching base with all the Area Agency on Aging offices and the Associations for the Blind to let administrators know what services can be provided.

Eric From Fayette County Association for the Blind said he is having difficulties getting his referrals acted on at the BBVS office. Sarah said she and Larry would take the lead on setting up a meeting to sort out the issues. He apologized for breaking into the conversation, but Mike pointed out that all the callers and participants should feel this is their meeting and they can bring issues to the meeting.

The next topic is Order of Selection. As of February 1, 2020, Pittsburgh BBVS has 15 individuals who they can move on to get plans for employment. Sarah said their office has less than 40 total on the list of most severely disabled, and they have scheduled sending out letters to 15 of them.

Severely disabled people have been in closed Order of Selection almost always, but in February the Pittsburgh office is taking 15 people off the most severely disabled closed Order of Selection list to begin creating their employment plan. There was to be training in December 2019 to address restructuring of impediments to employment. For practical purposes, any person seeking services through BBVS would be classified as most severely disabled, and this training just took ambiguity out of the definitions in use.

Chris asked if there were definitions of the characteristics of most severely disabled people and the changed language. Sarah said she should be able to provide us with a copy of those changes.

Tom asked for clarification of how the closed Order of Selection worked and what happens. Here are the criteria for taking people off the waiting list. People eligible in status 11 waiting for service most significantly disabled on January 21, 2020 with an application filed prior to July 2019.

The delay is at least 6 months right now since they didn't get any employment plan until this opened in February and they filed before July 2019. Sarah said there are no waivers and these people are not in plan status. The spot is not given to anyone else if a person chooses not to try to get into plan status. Sarah didn't have any information about how people in job jeopardy are affected by this closed Order of Selection. That was a question asked by Rich Fisher.

Rich asked about safety issues as well and they fall under Specialized Adult Services. In order to use Specialized Adult Services, a person would need to have documentation from a medical provider that they cannot work to qualify for those services. If the medical provider said they could work, then they would be on the closed Order of Selection list.

The next topic is how the Business Services Representative position is working out. Spero is the only person in BBVS doing this job. He is creating a proposal for his job description. His job includes expanding services to more counties, more events, having additional groups of clients, work readiness activities, and additional resources. Chris asked if this office was going to other states and their offices for visually impaired people to see how their Business Service Rep job is structured so Spero doesn't have to reinvent the wheel. Larry asked Chris to get info from other states.

The next topic is the PCB BBVS Satisfaction Survey. Mike asked if the office had seen the PCB BBVS Satisfaction Survey. Neither Larry nor Sarah had seen it so Chris said she would make sure it was sent to them since they didn't get it when PCB meant to send it out.

Carla Hayes had a couple questions. She asked how to mute her phone during these calls. Sarah said *6 should work for an individual.

Carla also asked what the CAC would like local chapters of organizations to do to have better two-way communication with the CAC. Mike said the key to being a better advisory committee is more participation. Rich suggested an employer be on the CAC, and Larry suggested someone else from PaTTAN since Lynn Fox is no longer at that organization. Chris offered to get in touch with Greg Lazare at PaTTAN.

The final item on the agenda is elections. We had delayed elections in November 2019 because we had so few people at that meeting. We have three positions: two co-chairs and a secretary of the CAC. Joe Wassermann had been one of the co-chairs and is not interested in that position any more.

Chris Hunsinger put Tom Burgunder's name forward as a co-chair. Mike Zaken agreed he would continue to be a co-chair. Carla made the motion that nominations be closed and that Mike and Tom be co-chairs. That motion carried. I heard no second to Carla's motion, but there was no objection either to the vote.

Rich Fisher nominated Chris Hunsinger as secretary. Carla moved that nominations be closed. That motion carried.

The next meeting is on Friday, May 1, 2020. Tom Burgunder made a motion to adjourn and Chris Hunsinger seconded.

Respectfully Submitted by Christine Hunsinger, CAC Secretary