

Minutes for CAC meeting November 6, 2020 Pittsburgh BBVS.

The meeting was held telephonically and through Skype for Business.

The meeting came to order at about 10:05 a.m.

In attendance:

Tom Burgunder (co-chair), Rich Fisher, Carla Hayes, Christine Hunsinger (Secretary), Bob Nagy, Barb Peterson (BVRSPA), Spero Pipakis (guest making Business Service Rep report), Larry Shock (Assistant Administrator), Sarah Vogel (Administrator), Michael Zaken (co-chair).

Carla Hayes made the motion and Tom Burgunder seconded the motion to approve the minutes for the August 2020 meeting. The motion carried.

First item on the agenda was staff updates from Sarah:

The Pittsburgh BBVS office is down two VRCs, a VR supervisor and a Social Worker, but the office really needs two Social Workers. The office is also short one VRT and one clerical - that being a CT2. Also, an O&M will be retiring soon.

Sarah reported that the hiring freeze is still in effect. They have applied for waivers to be able to meet some of the office's needs caused by losing employees. There is no projected time for the end of the hiring freeze.

They don't know why things are taking so many months to go through Central Office Human Resources. Other offices needed to approve waivers so that jobs can be posted.

As a result of both decreased staff and telework issues, case backlogs exist. They can use overtime to try to work on the backlogs, and possibly job sharing or moving a particular county from this office to one with less backlogs or more employees may create a solution. The work has yet to be done to make that kind of workload decision.

Launch Academy and Summer Programs:

There is nothing new about Launch Academy for Summer 2021, and we covered the one for this year in the August meeting. BVRSP had some Fall workshops which have been shared with BBVS, but no BBVS clients are part of them.

Statewide work is being done to create a Summer Academy for 2021, but there are no details yet.

Pre-ETS (Pre-employment transition) for non-post-secondary students is a new push. All 14 to 21-year-old students qualify for these services.

Business Services Update - Spero Pipakis:

Accessibility Shield is the company that Bob Nagy is working for part time at present. They hope the job will become full time and that the company will be able to support more visually impaired testers. Among other tasks, Bob Nagy is checking with existing customers to see if changes to a company's system take away accessibility after it has been built into the system.

Spero had another possible candidate for the company.

The NDEAM event planned and mentioned in our August 2020 minutes didn't take place; the vendor withdrew.

Gus Laffey did some research and it is expected that there will be an event in about March 2021. The agency will instead be using Crowd Compass formerly known as AttendeeHub, and they will be working with a company called Cvent.

There are free jobseeker events through OVR.

Lunch and Learn for employers began last week of October 2020.

They have virtual events for employers every two weeks.

Larry and Spero are providing ADA training for employers on topics of interest through a training network with modules on many aspects of disability information for employers.

Accessible Pharmacy is looking to hire someone in Western PA to cover this area for that company.

Spero mentioned a couple of other companies. He has been in touch with Achieva to make them aware of visually impaired employee abilities. Bill - someone from Achieva - is the person that Spero is working with.

Spero talked a little about the Apprentice Program or Intern Program that Jeff Seaberry is working to establish throughout the State. There could be some additional issues for visually impaired people working on such job trials. O&M and adaptive equipment issues, as well as safety issues for moving around a facility, may well enter into the consideration for such a job trial.

Tom asked about BVRSPA virtual office classes and Lifesworks classes.

Barb from BVRSPA told us that Promote through BVRSPA will hold its next Promote Virtual class in February 2021.

It is a 4-week class and it could most likely be remote or virtual. People are finding that they don't know as much about using "Office" products as they think they do.

This course teaches people accessibly use with PowerPoint, XL, Adobe and other Office products. This class is conducted using a curriculum worked out by NIB. This facility and one in Texas are teaching classes. They have done three classes so far. Even the beginning level of most office positions should be able to use these products before coming to the office.

Tracy and Art from BVRSPA teach and the classes are about 8 hours a day. Classes and instructors are certified through NIB.

The cost now that the classes are not residential is \$3700.00 for the four weeks.

When the program was residential Barb said that it cost about \$7,000.00.

Spero and Sarah are working on an outline of what he can do for people, what people need to have before they are referred to Spero. Then he gets in touch with them to work together.

Spero sometimes sees challenges in the areas of soft skills, such as professionalism / office etiquette, resume writing, etc. This is a real barrier for someone who has been out of the workforce.

What about CareerLink? People on the waiting list get referred to them.

BBVS locally believes that management is onboard with doing work with visually impaired job seekers. Spero and the staff are working with local CareerLink offices to enhance their involvement.

Since this is currently a way for people with vision loss to look for employment, and a determination about accessibility must be made for the offices, BBVS has been working on a way to determine this accessibility issue virtually.

Spero also mentioned the possibility of doing a program for PNC and other companies showing how accessibility for all the virtual platforms and learning platforms might work.

Order of Selection – Larry:

Statewide 157 BBVS customers are on the waiting list, and Pittsburgh BBVS has 23 on the list. Fourteen customers should be coming off soon. Nine are still waiting to be allowed off the waiting list.

We had a question of how many new people have come to the office since the waiting list was established and then been put on the list.

Job retention bypasses the waiting list, but until the referral is processed, you can't tell if it qualifies either as a job retention person or if it can even go on the waiting list at all.

Referrals are a part of the backlog in the office, and they say that they are drowning in them, but they often can't tell how the referral will be disposed of until there is a full interview with the appropriate personnel.

Telework for the office and return to in-person services - Sarah:

Telework will continue through December 2020 for sure. They have nothing telling them things will go back to full time in-office work after that.

They are in the office three days a week, no more than six people in the building.

Sarah just received information this morning telling her that Instructional Staff will be allowed to return to the field. Central Office will be sending out guidance. The staff considered instructional are O&Ms and VRTs.

Pre-ETS and Early Reach - Sarah:

Just as COVID came along, the office was requesting a special Social Worker for the younger group of Pre-ETS students.

This office doesn't have an Early Reach component but could use the services of the BVRS office for the young students, not from the Department of Education.

BBVS had just started working on a pre-employment component with Western Pennsylvania School for Blind Children when COVID came along, but the office has been told by the School they are ready to work on this plan again.

The next CAC meeting is February 5, 2021.

The recurring meeting invitation will be sent out for the whole year, and Tom requested that another reminder be scheduled for him and Mike as co-chairs to meet with Sarah and Larry to develop the agenda ahead of time.

Carla requested that the dates of meetings be in the subject line of the email.

Tom Burgunder motioned to adjourn. Rich Fisher seconded, and the motion carried.

Respectfully Submitted by Christine Hunsinger, Secretary