



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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OVR Policy & State Plan / Customer Satisfaction Committee Draft Minutes for July 18, 2022

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

William Del Toro Vargas (NP) Michelle Paonessa (P)
Robert Wallington (P) Julia Grant Barol (NP)
Lynn Heitz (P)

Paul Fogle (P)
Susan Tomasic (NP)

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

Project Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

Interpreters Present: Ashley Shenk

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Ms. Lynn Heitz called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

No additions.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

Quorum was not reached for this meeting.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

OVR Updates

Updates on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) Statement of Work Draft

- Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired what was added to the CSNA in comparison to the previous draft.
- Mr. James Whitonis stated that there were no additions to the targeted goals. The legal department revised the draft to include revisions with clarifications to

language to better define the deliverables. The CSNA draft was provided to the OVR Executive Team which provided comments to add to the targeted goals which focuses on deaf, deaf-blind, and blind individuals for services and transportation issues. Voiced concerns about the timeline and inquired if members had additions to the targeted goals.

- Ms. Lynn Heitz stated that there is no specific mention of blindness specific services and those services within OVR have not been a priority. Inquired if other members had additional suggestions or comments. Suggested adding visually impaired, blind, and deaf-blind.
- Mr. Rob Wallington stated that adding language to include people with blindness is a great idea.
- Ms. Michelle Paonessa stated that language should be changed from hearing impaired to hard of hearing and that deaf blind should be included as well.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart stated that it would be really helpful to include statistics that are disability specific relating to employment needs without taking too much focus away from other areas. Primary deliverables are directed by Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) and because they don't use language that specifically includes visually impaired, blind, deaf-blind, deaf, and hard of hearing they could use that suggestion as a targeted goal. Will work to include that language so it is included for review at the next Full Council meeting. Committee approval is not required if the Full Council provides its support in August.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz stated that she will inform the Executive Committee of the addition that is going to be made at that meeting later this week and looks forward to the updated draft.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart provided updates on five different policy work groups. Audiological has had two meetings and plan to start drafting policy soon, Ms. Michelle Paonessa is on that work group as the PaRC representative. Vehicle Modification workgroup continues meeting and there is a more final draft in process to be finalized and plan to present to leadership within the next month. Ms. Michelle Leahy is the PaRC representative for the Vehicle Mod work group. Financial Needs Test (FNT) workgroup draft will be presented to leadership within the next two months and members may provide a recommendation to fill the slot of Ms. Passle Helminski for that work group but is not required. New workgroup focused on Early Reach activities developing best practices for that program across the state and Mr. William Del Toro Vargas is the PaRC representative on that work group. Supported Employment work group has been on hold. RSA informed OVR that substantial changes need to be made to their policy. Ms. Juliet Marsala was the PaRC representative and will need a new PaRC member to join when the group reconvenes.
- Ms. Michelle Paonessa inquired if there was a deaf person on the Early Reach work group.
- Ms. Tracie Maille stated that she will ask staff if a person who is deaf or hard of hearing is on the Early Reach work group. A Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf (RCD) was requested to join. Will provide clarity on this at a later date.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz requested to fill in on the FNT work group.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart agreed to inform staff.

Complete the Review and Discussion of Committee Budget and Goals for Fiscal Year 2022-2023

Additions from previous meeting are highlighted

Provide Steps to Achieve for Goal #6: Partner with OVR to review due process issues to assure good quality outcomes for consumer customers. OVR will share same report that goes to OVR Board on a quarterly basis.

- Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired if there were any discussion on the budget. Was informed that the budget is to cover expenses for communication needs of the Committee and attendance of any conferences.
- Members reviewed the additions to the goals from the last meeting.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz stated one of the steps for Goal #6 would be to receive data from the Client Assistance Program (CAP) numbers of calls received regarding customer issues.
- Ms. Michelle Paonessa stated that we don't know if only CAP receives customer concerns. Suggested identifying persons of contact that customers are reaching out to and organizations that have been partnered with to share this information.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz stated that is true, many customers contact her as President of the National Federation of the Blind of Pennsylvania and forwards those complaints to CAP. Suggested connecting with CAP to see where else people might be voicing concerns and reaching out to for assistance. Suggested language for step one as Collaborate with the Client Assistance Program (CAP) to determine how many individuals they are working with and to determine what other organizations and programs individuals are reaching out to for assistance.
- Ms. Michelle Paonessa suggested the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing may receive a lot of complaints that might get forwarded to CAP or not forwarded. Inquired how Goal #6 relates to due process and if customers know how to start the process and to reach out to CAP.
- Ms. Tracie Maille informed attendees that Mr. Ryan Hyde did send out an email reminder of the key pieces that need to be shared and when to share as well as a CWDS release that adds CAP information to several forms and brochures for customers and providers. Formats include forms in the customers preferred correspondence of braille, large print, print, Spanish or to be read to them. Interpreters can be requested for any appointment. In process of purchasing two iPads for remote interpreting to increase accessibility. Staff will be provided training on how to provide remote interpreting and how to provide forms and interpreting for persons who are deaf blind. OVR would request a tactile interpreter if that was required.

Discussion and Review of OVR Customer Satisfaction Surveys

- Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired about the goal to provide recommendations to make Customer Satisfaction Surveys accessible.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart stated that this has been something that has been reviewed many times and that OVR is continuing to work to improve the survey process.

Once additional staffing is provided the past recommendations for improving the surveys accessibility will be implemented.

- Ms. Michelle Paonessa stated that she had inquired previously on how the surveys were accessible to deaf people and how do counselors fill that out for them as a neutral party. Inquired what format the emails are in such as written or sign language. Stated that many deaf people will not be able to access the survey because of the requirement of reading English.
- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart explained that surveys are sent randomly through CWDS through email. The surveys are electronic in written format.
- Ms. Jessica Keogh suggested that the survey would be more accessible if it was an audio survey that included a voice-over.
- Ms. Tracie Maille stated that OVR has a team working to review and ensure that the surveys, documents, forms, screens, and services are accessible from all angles.
- Ms. Michelle Paonessa stated that she wanted to add the population of deaf blind into consideration when it comes to things like filling out forms and the equipment they would be using. Specifically mentioned the importance for all forms to be accessible not just the surveys.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz requested that OVR's team working on accessibility provide an update on their progress.
- Ms. Tracie Maille stated that this is not an individualized team housed within different divisions and bureaus and can reach out for individualized updates from each person.

Schedule next Committee meeting

- Ms. Lynn Heitz requested that staff poll members to hold a meeting for August 16, 2022. Requested that OVR staff that are unavailable to attend provide reports prior to the next scheduled meeting.

Adjourn

Meeting was adjourned at 2:00PM.