

Approved minutes 09-20-2022

Citizen Advisory Committee for Harrisburg BVRS and
BBVS

June 21, 2022

This meeting took place at the Harrisburg District Office at
555 Walnut Street, 8th Floor Harrisburg, Pa and on the
phone through Teams/Skype.

In attendance: Henry Worthington, Mifflin County on the
phone

Jessica Hanula, VR Supervisor, BBVS

Natalie Barbush, Social Worker Supervisor, BBVS

Patrick Kane, VR Supervisor, BVRS

Cathy Long, Secretary of CAC

Billie Wolfe, parent

Wesley Wolfe, Customer, BVRS

Cynthia Gibbs-Pratt, customer, BBVS on the phone

Andrea Koretz, possible customer, BVRS

Cassandra Enck, VR Counselor, BBVS

Melanie Shubert, Social worker, BBVS

Tristyn Hohman, Social Worker, BBVS

James Whitonis, Central Office Specialist, on the phone

Cheryl McIntire for Orrie McIntire, (customer)

Drucilla Brannock, Customer

Abbreviations in this document:

ACB: American Council of the Blind

APH: American Printinghouse for the Blind

BBVS: Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services

BVRS: Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services
ILOB: Independent Living Older Blind Program
O&M: Orientation and Mobility
PCB: Pennsylvania Council of the Blind
S.W.: Social Workers
VR: Vocational Rehabilitation
VRC: Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
VRT: Vision Rehabilitation Therapist (formerly known as
Rehabilitation Teachers)

Approval of minutes from March, 2022. Questions: Cathy has one correction as sent out: Cathy noted John Horst worked for the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania for over 30 years. He let me know that he served 37 years. Cathy will correct this and send it back to BVRS/BBVS and also will take off the word DRAFT at the top of page one.

BBVS Reports: Jessica Hanula. A few days after this meeting, Robert Cochran, VR Counselor, retired. Congratulations, Bob! This leaves BBVS with one VR Counselor and the VR Supervisor, Jessica Hanula, assisting. Mr. Cochran's customers will be informed by mail, and the important transactions on behalf of customers, such as paying for college tuition, or ordering needed equipment, supplies and training will continue without interruption. Hoping to be able to hire a VRC before too long. There is one VRC on medical leave currently.

At the end of May, 2022, the Social worker goal is 45 and they have 44 closures. VRT: 64 with a goal of 72. O&M: 60 with a goal of 106. VRC: 19 out of 135.

Obviously working remotely was difficult for O&M to get their goals met, because mobility is something you must do in person, not just talk about it over the phone. VRC's also suffered/struggled to make their goals remotely. We know now things will improve as we learn to live in the world of post-COVID-19. We grieve with those who have lost family members, colleagues, and friends because of COVID. Strive On is a virtual program for high school students to participate in. It teaches study skills. This is preparatory to secondary education. Applications are being taken until July, 2022, Strive On takes place in September. Interested VR customers should contact VRC or VR Supervisor.

Another program going on this summer is called the STEP Program, assisted by VisionCorps in Lancaster. One student, possibly two students will take part in this program. STEP stands for something—Andrea asked but Jessica did not remember. Promised to look it up and send it to Andrea's email.

BBVS and BVRS have a statewide intern program. This means that students completing their Masters degree in VR Counseling can begin working at BBVS or BVRS during their last semester of school and be paid for the experience. The interns are supervised by either a VRC who has been at the agency a tad longer, or the VR

supervisor, and most likely reports are generated about the student's accomplishments with the agency. BBVS has one college intern participating in Harrisburg

BBVS received some federal quota money to spend on young students in school. This is for children from birth to age 18. This quota money is associated with APH, so any products needed/required by the student with vision loss or total blindness would be recommended equipment APH manufactures or sells. APH has a myriad of choices, related to learning Braille, Braille displays and notetakers, to use with a computer or smart phone, and some equipment for people who have limited vision to assist them to enlarge print on the screen to read it. APH is a well known company and has a good reputation in the community they serve, their blind and visually impaired constituency. That ended Jessica's report. There were no questions from the room or over the phone.

BVRS Report: Patrick Kane. Unlike BBVS, BVRS has one program: VR. It is VR all the time. The VRC goal for this year is 265 successful closures. Pat explained briefly how a case moves through statuses to get finally to Status 26, closed successfully. Of course not every case turns out to be successful, but that would not be a 26, it would most likely be a 28, and is not counted as successful. There are many reasons for this when it happens. This is a partnership between the agency and the person, known as the customer, who is being served. Each has responsibility for doing specific things, spelled out in any written plans in the case file When someone has achieved the

employment goal, has a job, and no longer requires services, that case can be moved into Status 26 and the customer is considered successfully rehabilitated. This does not mean that the customer cannot come back to the agency for additional services in the future as needed. There is something called PES, (Post-Employment Services) which are services particularly to help the customer to maintain his/her current employment, and this service is provided as quickly as possible. For older people, a sudden death on the part of the customer would cause a Status 28. Pat explained a lot of this to Andrea, who was busily writing notes for herself.

Pat stated that we are compliant with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. That re-authorized all previous rehabilitation Acts. Pat stated today BVRs is at 226 successful closures. This is 85% of the goal.

The State internship program is also working in BVS. There are at least 20 customers taking advantage of that program. The transition team is transitioning youth in high school doing a "My Work Initiative" and these students are gainfully employed doing tasks over the summer and are also taking advantage of other transition programs to help them build work experience. BVRs is able to hire a business representative and are hopeful to hire the BSR within the next few months. They did have a good one but he got a job closer to his home for the same salary and wisely decided to take that job to save money and have much more family time. This is new news, as this BSR just

came through today! BVRS also hopes to hire a few more VRC's.

A question on the phone asked of Pat: Does future funding depend on current success. Short answer: Yes. Funding can potentially be impacted by our results. A customer stated getting funds through OVR/BVRS is slow coming. This customer is a BVRS customer and is trying to get funding to get his CDL. Pat promised to email with this particular customer to see if he can help speed up the process for the customer.

Reports from Other Organizations. Cathy gave a brief report about what PCB was going to have in late October- a four-day virtual conference and Convention. Cathy is not on the Conference Program Planning Team but briefly described what generally occurs at a conference. There are games in the evening where audience participates. Saturday afternoon is all about the business of PCB where we vote for board members and every other year its president, 1st and 2nd vice-presidents, Treasurer, and Secretary. Every year a few board members go off the board and new ones are elected. Cathy stated this year she goes off the board for at least one year. After two-two-year terms this has to happen. Cathy, after serving as Secretary of the Board for 20 years, took a hiatus in 2015 but by 2017 was finishing up someone's last year of a two-year term and then did two two-year terms so lately she has done five additional years on the board. PCB is an affiliate of ACB. ACB will hold its own convention on July 2nd through July 8th. Some Zoom meetings will occur

prior to 07/02/2022 and after that for voting purposes. This is a busy time. ACB has a system called Vote Now. It allows people to vote even if they are not physically at the convention. The convention will be Hybrid this year, with people coming to Omaha, Nebraska and meeting in the big ballroom, but also people meeting via Zoom and listening over ACB Radio for the happenings at ACB Convention. Cathy personally is not going to Omaha but will be there every day via zoom. It is nice to rub elbows with other conventioners, but even nicer to sleep in my own bed, eat my own food, not over-priced hotel food, and be able to snuggle and give attention to my favorite feline! Cathy did give a little report about what is involved with the ACB convention and also PCB convention. By the time we meet in September, the ACB convention will have happened, but the PCB convention occurs from October 27–30, 2022, so you will have to get a report on its happenings in December.

New business. Andrea had questions. She did ask some questions and they were answered. Andrea indicated she is willing to work to make the process better and offered to assist in boosting the attendance of future CAC meetings. She appeared frustrated with the VR process in general and hoped it moved faster overall.

Cynthia Gibbs-Pratt will contact her Social worker to determine what other services are available to her.

The meeting was then adjourned. We will meet next on Tuesday, September 20, 2022 at 555 Walnut Street, Floor 8 at the BVRs/BBVS offices and via Skype. New Skype code will be available via Pat Kane.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Long, Secretary