



# Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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## OVR Policy & State Plan / Customer Satisfaction Committee Minutes for November 21, 2022

### Members Present (P)

### Not Present (NP)

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

Paul Fogle (P)  
Susan Tomasic (P)

**Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present:** James Whitonis, Cheryl Novak, Lee Ann Stewart, Danielle Schmidgall

**Project Staff Present:** Chris Todd

**Interpreters Present:** Ashley Shenk

### CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Ms. Lynn Heitz called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM.

### ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

### APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

***MOTION was made by Mr. Rob Wallington to approve today's agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Susan Tomasic seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

#### OVR Updates

- Ms. Lee Ann Stewart reported that a draft of the Driver and Vehicle Modification Policy was provided to the Council last month, can answer questions about the policy and that its timeline is currently being developed.

- Ms. Cheryl Novak reported that the Audiological Services Policy is in process and the work group continues to meet periodically. Early Reach continues to meet monthly and is reviewing the associated data before drafting a policy and has a target for mid to late 2023 to have a draft of the policy completed. Supported Employment workgroup is on hiatus due to Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) feedback and OVR is in the process of reviewing the revised draft. Financial Needs Test (FNT) workgroup has been on hold as the Board approved revisions to the policy will go through the approval process for the new Fiscal Year.
- Mr. Jim Whitonis reported that OVR has received the first draft of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) from Temple and has requested revisions be made with a second draft expected to be reviewed by December for Council review. Temple is also working on providing necessary paperwork to begin the next CSNA cycle.
- Mr. Paul Fogle inquired about the targeted February completion date for the Driver and Vehicle Modification Policy.
- Ms. Stewart reported that February remains their target and will be meeting tomorrow to discuss that timeline and explained that there needs to be a public comment period and internal processes to complete the policy.

**Discussion on due process and collaboration 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**

- Mr. Andrew Pennington reported that National Federation of the Blind (NFB) often receives complaints and CAP often receives referrals from organizations like that. Providers of OVR services often report interruptions and denials of services. If CAP is not notified or an individual is not referred to CAP, they would not be able to cite the complaint. OVR is also able to receive complaints and often handles those internally. In regard to the law, CAP has a special place in regard to appeals and advocacy within VR. There are not many instances where customer concerns and issues reach the appeal process and has credited OVR with working with CAP advocates and staff regarding the resolution of those issues and concerns. In the event where an appeal or denial is not resolved, CAP is involved with both formal and informal hearings. CAP is able to share data that RSA requires including individuals' age, gender, race, VR service status, waitlist, transition services, Pre-ETS, and all other applicant services provided along with conflict data. Conflict data includes issues regarding communications, conflicts with services to be provided, concerns with application and eligibility process, concerns with OOS priority determination, informed choice issues, employment outcomes, independent living services, and other rehabilitation act related problems. CAP is also required to track Rehabilitation Act related issues including Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), SSI, SSDI, housing, and Title 1 of the ADA. CAP works with customers, VR counselors, and others involved to figure how to best move forward with the VR process. In 2022, the biggest concerns CAP has worked with BBVS and BVRS are related to communication problems, conflicts about services to be provided,

application and eligibility process. Largest number of concerns have been due to lack of communication or a misunderstanding between a counselor and a customer and conflict of services to be provided. CAP works with customers and those involved to help work through those issues by completing a thorough investigation to determine where the conflict is and resolve it as quickly as possible.

- Ms. Heitz inquired if CAP receives calls from providers regarding concerns about their customer's continuation of services.
- Mr. Pennington reported that is something that would fall under the services to be provided and it's not always limited but often asks providers to have the customer reach out to CAP to gather more information.
- Mr. Fogle inquired if CAP has received complaints from organizations other than BBVS and BVRS including ODHH, Hiram G Andrews Center (HGAC), and others.
- Mr. Pennington stated that it depends upon funding frameworks and has received issues from HGAC about the individuals' seeking services at HGAC. CAP maintains regular contact with OVR Central Office and speaks to Bureau Directors about concerns they're provided. Reported that there has been a concerted effort by Central Office to identify issues that individuals are having. Encouraged attendees to have anyone they know with concerns or questions reach out to CAP.

### **Discussion of Proposal for Moving OVR Policies Forward / Out of Committee Public Comment (three minutes per attendee)**

- Ms. Heitz reviewed with attendees the document that she shared prior to the meeting regarding a process for reviewing and moving proposed OVR policies forward to the appropriate committees. Inquired if members had any suggestions or changes for the document.
- Mr. Fogle stated that he felt it was important to have this process written out as the Council did not have a procedure for moving policies forward in writing and that Ms. Heitz did a great job with this document.
- Ms. Novak and Ms. Stewart explained that sometimes there are time limitations for getting committee approval depending upon different factors such as previously scheduled Full Council and State Board meetings and required public comment periods.
- Ms. Susan Tomasic stated that Robert's Rules provides the option for the Executive Committee to provide review and recommendations of any policies if there would be a need to quickly provide review of a policy because of an emergency, scheduling, or time limitations.

***MOTION was made by Ms. Susan Tomasic to move the proposal forward to Executive Committee. Mr. Rob Wallington seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### **Schedule next committee meeting**

- Members agreed to hold the next committee meeting on January 10, 2023 from 2PM to 3PM.

## **Adjourn**

***MOTION was made by Mr. Rob Wallington to adjourn. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.***