

Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting
Tuesday, October 25, 2022
MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

Shari Brightful, Dave Bautista, Alexander Shay, Joseph Thomas, Pat Petrone, Suzanne Erb, Andy Burstein, Lynn Heitz, Mary Brucker, Raquel M. Mangual, Mary Beth Morgan – Liberty Resources (speaker)

Suzanne Erb called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone.

Ms. Erb asked for approval of the minutes. Lynn Heitz made a motion to approve and Alexander Shay seconded. The minutes were approved.

PRESENTATION:

Suzanne welcomed Mary Beth Morgan from Liberty Resources, Inc. who is the guest speaker this meeting. Mary Beth's topic today is Transition and Advocacy. Ms. Morgan discussed the purpose of Liberty Resources which advocates for and works with persons with disabilities to ensure their civil rights and that they have equal access to all aspects of life in the community. Advocacy is the chief service they provide. Her program is Mentoring/Transitioning/Voices which is an empowerment program focusing on the success of youth with disabilities transitioning into adulthood. Discussed the services provided and the programs associated with these services. At the end of her presentation Mary Beth asked if there were any questions.

Mary Brucker asked if they service the five-county area or just Philadelphia? Mary Beth answered, recently Liberty started serving the other four counties, Berks, Bucks, Chester, Montgomery and Delaware. Latoya Maddox is also working in these counties.

Suzanne Erb asked if there is any overlap, do they work with OVR and do they both work together to merge programs to give the customer the best advantage. Mary Beth replied OVR funding has changed, they are in the process of transitioning themselves and if they need our services, they will call us. Suzanne then asked if when we encounter people who need advocacy skills, do we refer them to advocacy organizations? She feels there are many young people who could benefit from advocacy skills. Do we ever refer to Liberty Resources? Shari Brightful answered we have a pre-employment transition services provider agreement and then look at internal staff to see if they can provide services. If not, we look to outside services such as Liberty or other providers and it is determined which provider is appropriate and the student or parent chooses which provider meets their need.

Alexander Shay said he was looking in CWDS and it seems we only used Liberty for Pre-ETS and asked if Liberty does adult services. Mary Beth replied, yes, Liberty helps ages 14 and above and discussed several ways she provides services to these customers. Mary Brucker asked who covers Bucks County? Since Freedom Valley closed, LVCIL helps out Bucks County. It was asked if Mary Beth would be the point of contact if our staff needs help? Yes, she can be the point of contact and if she cannot assist, she will refer to other staff in her office.

Suzanne thanked Mary Beth for presenting and offering her insight.

It was reported by Suzanne there is an Employment First Stakeholder meeting on Thursday October 27, 2022 if anyone is interested and strongly recommended people register. You can attend the meeting virtually or in person, although virtual would probably be the easiest. The email was attached to the meeting invite today.

BVRS REPORT:

Shari Brightful

Shari Brightful thanked Mary Beth for presenting and Suzanne for offering to let her speak. Shari stated she decided to present differently this meeting rather than reviewing staffing, goals, budget, etc. she will speak on different opportunities they have been teaming up on and new programs she wishes to put together in the new year.

Following are items BVRS has been working on:

- The College Resources for Success provider agreement was signed by Temple University and Chestnut Hill College. We hope that more colleges and support programs sign this agreement.
- BIAPA (Philadelphia, Reading and Norristown) - grant with the Brain Injury Association of PA for NeuroResource Facilitation which involves ex-offenders (who may have had a traumatic brain injury which may have landed them in prison) being released, receiving the NRF supports and SOP (standard operating procedures) to help connect them to VR services and ultimately employment. The goal is to reduce recidivism. We are connecting with providers and employers in the community to get employment for these people.
- Project Search - we are looking to have more applicants, so we need help in spreading the word. Project Search for this year has reached their goal for applicants. Project Search Sites are 440 N. Broad St. and Drexel University.
- Project Career Launch is a program facilitated by Drexel University and Community Integrated Services. Our office has been able to fund portions of this program. This program is for students interested in Project Search but may need more support before they could apply and be successful in Project Search. Many of the students are not travel trained and

many of the parents are anxious about their student travelling using public transportation. We are trying to get more students interested in the program and trying to get more parents comfortable with letting their son/daughter be travel trained.

- Had a HGAC virtual hour to inform students regarding the program of which many are not aware. There were two HGAC graduates present. Is hoping for more participation on the next virtual hour which hopefully will be held in the spring.
- We are in the early stages of conversation with the Bureau of Juvenile Services PACCT Affiliates and Community College for a program during the summer regarding job shadowing. This is still in the discussion phase, but we hope to share more in the coming meetings.
- Veterans Administration Rehabilitation Agreement is something we hope to bring back in order to better serve the veteran population specifically in Philadelphia.
- NDEAM – business services – some of the collaborations we focus on is to assist customers with preparing for jobs (mock interviews, resume preparation, exploring various employment) and networking with employers. Currently, the team is hosting a virtual NDEAM event with Amazon as we speak.
- One Stop Operator Committee for Philadelphia Works - Shari sits on the Board and is actively involved.
- Transition Fair at the School District of Philadelphia - was very successful, BVRS and BBVS were in attendance and over 500 participants showed up to 440 N Broad Street
- Employment First Steering Committee – Shari sits on this committee as well. Suzanne shared information earlier regarding the Stakeholder meeting.
- Working with Wyss Wellness Center to serve the unserved and underserved population. Attempting to find interpreters to support the people who can train and hire those who do not have English as their primary language. Currently our staff is using Propio Language Service to complete intake and applications with the referrals we receive.
- There is a Monthly Transition Meeting with Philadelphia OVR management and the School District of Philadelphia's staff in the Office of Specialized Services, LaQuenta Montanez, Maryanne Hayde and Amy Nieves from the Mayor's office for People with Disabilities.
- Supported Employment Virtual Hours – recently asked providers what barriers they are facing and how we can support them. Pamela Smith is the Single Point of Contact for providers in our office.
- We have an outreach Workgroup that provides in person and remote OVR 101 and Q&A sessions on how to access our services and share who we are and what we do.

- The Philadelphia management team is working with Keystone First and UPMC (managed care organizations) to understand their process when it comes to employment and put together a SOP that will hopefully make the intake process seamless.
- There is a meeting with HUNE today to talk about a youth ambassador who can help students understand how to advocate on their own behalf.

Future Endeavors:

- Our Transition Team which is comprised of Shelly Silverman, Ian Wright, Jamie Luthy, Danielle Sewhendiman and 2 ERC's (Nea Hargrove and Jill Grossberg) with Sharon Silverman as the supervisor needs team members. We are trying to hire by posting vacancies, interviewing, hiring, training and transitioning assignments to those who would be a good fit in order to build our team.
- Will Request to Fill two Early Reach Coordinators and another Business Service Representative since Tamani no longer works with our agency as a BSR with a Pre-ETS focus.
- We are looking to host a Reverse Job Fair, first with students and then potentially with adults. We would have employers walk around to the tables and learn about the talent we have (which is different than typical job fairs) and we want to host a College Signing Day using the common app and offers of school acceptance on the spot.
- Evin Jarrett uses an RV to teach students about the skill trades (mobile classroom) and is currently doing this in a middle school in the district. Shari would like to work with him to do this with our high school students with disabilities, possibly this summer.

BBVS REPORT:

Alexander Shay

Alex asked Shari to send over all the involvements to help Pat with the minutes. Shari sent them.

- BBVS had some staffing changes:
 Alex accepted the DA position effective August 20, 2022.
 Joseph Thomas is temporarily working as the ADA (Assistant District Administrator).
 Arwa Mubaslat accepted the final offer for the VR Supervisor effective October 29, 2022.
 We have a new Clerical Assistant 2, this position used to be a Clerk Typist 2. Customer service is our primary point.
 We are requesting two VR Counselor positions, a 3rd clerical position and a 3rd Social Worker position.

- Closures to date:
 - VR Program – 18 successful closures out of 99.
 - Social Work Program – 12 successful closures out of 90.
 - VRT Program – 14 successful closures out of 72
 - O&M Program – 20 successful closures out of 72
- Alex stated closures are important but there are other elements involved. We are trying to increase referrals and increase outreaches which should drive referrals. Pennsylvania is one of the biggest states and should reflect this. Is working with Central Office to procure additional materials for outreaches. Some items were sent, for example bump dots, signature guides, specialized writing paper, 20/20 pens, etc. They are not BBVS branded materials which we would like to utilize and had in the past.
- There was a recent change to our referral process, through job gateway and career link and other referral processes. We revised our referral form because additional information is required. Alex went over the differences in the form.
- BBVS had a recent discussion with Overbrook School for the Blind and Central Office regarding a Financial Literacy Program for Pre-ETS. Thinks this is a great program to teach students how to take care of their own finances. We will be getting materials from Karen Walsh Emma soon to offer to all students.
- Overbrook is considering bringing back the TVI program which was their summer program. In the past we have sent students to their program.
- Lastly, there is community interest in having a project search program with Overbrook. It is a rigid program and we need to work with Overbrook.

Mary Brucker asked when you say Project Search is that a job fair or a program? Alex said right now we work with rehab sites. There is an evidence-based program centered in Cincinnati. This focuses on youth but does not have to be youth. The program is rigorous. The end result is a high placement rate.

Lynn Heitz asked if this is just for students at Overbrook? Alex Shay said he doesn't think so, it is technically open to everybody from BBVS, BVRS. Lynn questioned if there has been a consideration of the hospitality industry. Is also concerned because Overbrook is no longer just a school for the blind even though their name is Overbrook School for the Blind. Feels places like Hilton have a large presence in Philadelphia. Alex said this is certainly something to be considered. Lynn asked if Overbrook hired a Braille teacher? Joe Thomas said he is not sure if they hired someone but they are teaching Braille. Shari is excited BBVS is interested in doing Project Search which she is so engrossed in and discussed how the program is administered (which is a very rewarding experience). Alex said the program is rewarding. Lynn asked if other counties are prepared to spend the amount of money that is required to send students to

Overbrook. Alex said at best it could be tried. A discussion ensued regarding blind students being able to put on their resume they have a job during high school, etc. Suzanne said maybe they might want to be a future guest at the CAC meeting.

Suzanne Erb reported she has interesting news to share but cannot share right now because it is not in writing. You will have to attend the next CAC meeting to find out the news.

Suzanne welcomed Joe Thomas, thanked him for attending and asked if anyone had anything else to share.

Mary Brucker – gave an update on Montgomery County Association for the Blind (MCAB) and went over personnel and their operation.

Discussed the next meeting date and Suzanne announced the next meeting is January 30, 2023, 10:00 A.M. – 12:00 P.M.

Suzanne told everyone to have a good holiday season and good luck on all your proceedings for the next month and will see you all on January 30th.

Motion to adjourn – Lynn so moved.