



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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CareerLink / WIOA Committee Meeting Minutes for November 22, 2022

Members Present (P)

Rob Wallington (P)
Paul Fogle (P)

Not Present (NP)

Andrew Pennington (P)
Lynn Heitz (P)

Kara Donatucci Pham (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: Cheryl Novak, Robert Hodapp, James Whitonis

State Workforce Development Staff Present: Josh Towzey, Daniel Kuba

Guests Present: Twana Jones

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Mr. Rob Wallington called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz to approve the agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Kara Donattuci Pham seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Agenda items:

Discussion of Ongoing Concerns Regarding Unemployment Compensation (UC) Process

Application and Registration

Not Allowing for Combined Services of Resume Building Program and Job

Coaching Programs/Modules

CareerLink Staff Providing Access and Assistance with UC at CareerLink Facilities Germantown and John F Kennedy Blvd Locations in Philadelphia

- Mr. Rob Wallington reviewed concerns regarding UC application process, lengthy delays in receiving approvals, compensation, and services. Expressed appreciation for OVR and UC staff assistance during a recent meeting to resolve issues. Stressed the importance of the UC system being corrected to properly serve Pennsylvanians who have lost their jobs through no fault of their own, especially those who are most vulnerable, including people with disabilities.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz shared her experience with UC application process, lack of accessibility, and delays with receiving an approval of UC. Thanked OVR and UC staff for holding a meeting to provide assistance with resolving delays and was recently approved to receive UC. Reported that the CareerLink in Chester County was recently using JAWS in demo mode version that is not compatible with the UC website. Also having issues with using assistive technology on the UC website. Stressed the importance of technology being accessible to all and correcting the lengthy delays and complications with the application and approval process.

Updates / Discussion from PA Workforce Development

- Mr. Dan Kuba thanked members for their feedback, stated that he takes the information provided during PaRC meetings very seriously, will provide member input and concerns with his colleagues at Workforce Development, and provided the following updates and discussion:
 - Technology: Reported that 96% of the public facing side of the updates to CWDS have been completed. The back-end side is the current focus with about 64% completed. Over the past year taking accessibility concerns into consideration, they have developed a standardized digital intake that will collect information with improved accessibility for applications for referrals and services. The digital intake will be piloted in five areas of the Commonwealth for staff to continue to provide recommendations for improvements and fix any components that may be needed before a statewide release.
 - Digital Literacy: Reported that CareerLink / Workforce Development staff often provide assistance to customers using computers at CareerLink locations and would appreciate language and feedback regarding digital literacy trainings and accessibility concerns members may be able to provide specifically for the disability community. Grants have been provided to communities that do not have adequate access to technology and have been impacted economically.
 - Veterans: Workforce has provided an additional \$800,000 in grants for veterans with disabilities seeking employment. Working to increase Disabled Veterans' Outreach Program Specialist (DEVOPS) on staff and establishing equalization of pay for those positions. Working to improve veterans' services and accessibility.
 - Schools to Work: Working to enhance partnerships between Workforce,

schools, businesses, employers, employees, and other entities through available School to Work grants. Working to increase outreach and expand grantees including about \$2.5 million to support School to Work programs. Upon availability will provide information to members to share with their community organizations to apply for these grants for School to Work, earn to learn, apprenticeships, and similar projects.

- Assistive Technology: Will be asking for a report on the delays and concerns shared by members regarding TTY technology, JAWS, and other accessibility issues.

Updates / Discussion from Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR)

- Mr. Rob Hodapp informed attendees that some of the locations mentioned by members today, including Chester County, are the last to complete the assistive technology updates / ADA reviews. Philadelphia reviews were completed recently and still had additional updates to complete to assistive technology.
- Ms. Heitz inquired about current testing for JAWS software to ensure the website is working with it. Concerned that even after newest version of assistive technology is implemented statewide, there will still be accessibility issues because of the way the website technology is configured.
- Mr. Hodapp stated that he will provide member's suggestions to ensure the website technology is properly configured / accessible and compatible with screen readers / assistive technology such as JAWS.
- Mr. Andrew Pennington stated that recently the CareerLink websites did not have information on TTY lines, 711 relays, and other various means to communicate with CareerLink locations and inquired if that has been updated through CWDS. Stated that it is concerning that individuals who are blind or with a visual impairment are unable to properly access the website or individuals who are deaf or hard of hearing are unable to communicate with CareerLink locations due to lack of information provided on the websites.
- Mr. Hodapp agreed to provide member's concerns about accessibility with the appropriate staff.

Discussion / Updates on CareerLink Locations and Services ADA Comprehensive CareerLink Assessments Implementation of Assistive Technology (AT) CareerLink Staff Trainings

- This item was previously discussed.

Public Comment (3 minutes per attendee)

- There was no public comment provided by attendees.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington adjourn. Ms. Kara Donatucci Pham seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.