

CAC Minutes 12/06/2022 – meeting held virtually by Microsoft Teams

Meeting called to order at 1:15 PM.

5 in attendance + 2 OVR staff members

Kim Baskett introduced herself as Acting District Administrator for RDO

September 2022 minutes were reviewed and not approved. Issue was taken with wording of one item, and will be updated ahead of next meeting for review and approval.

OVR Report provided by Kim Baskett

- RDO year-to-date numbers for time period of 7/1/2022 until 11/30/2022:
 - 416 referrals
 - 245 applicants met with for initial interview
 - 251 individuals found eligible for services
 - 276 IPEs written for customers
 - 50 successful case closures
 - 178 successful closures is the yearly goal
 - 28.09% of goal has been achieved so far at midpoint of the year
- Question: Are referrals picking up now that lockdown has been lifted and rapid engagement started?
 - Prior year data was not on-hand to compare
 - Agency-wide, referrals are picking up
 - Successful closures traditionally lag at this time of year and pick up in December, May, and June
 - RDO has made successful closure goal every year for the past few years
 - Ryan Hyde shared recently that OVR is heading in the right direction
- Staffing remains a big concern. 8 vacancies remain to be filled across ERCs, BSRs, and VRCs. These are currently being handled by use of 1 annuitant and OT work being handled by VRCs.
- Question: How many VRCs are assigned at the RDO versus the Schuylkill Office?
 - There is no “Schuylkill Office” – only the RDO is an OVR site, but there are liaison sites and VRCs frequently travel to other sites. There is also the Tamaqua Outstation, which is not currently staffed by OVR but is shared with BBVS.
 - RDO also pays for office space in the Berks and Schuylkill CareerLinks. This is not the same situation as the Tamaqua Outstation.

- Question: How many total employees are currently at the RDO?
 - Estimate of compliment including management, supervisors, clerical staff, and field staff is roughly 35 total
 - Total VRC positions: 14, but only 8 are currently filled
 - Average caseload: 155
 - Ideal caseload: between 110 and 120
 - Some caseloads are upwards of 200, and nearly every VRC has above 140 cases at this time
 - Vacancies remain a statewide issue.

- Staffing update
 - RDO recently finished a round of interviews for VRC position and were authorized to offer 3 total positions.
 - All 3 offers are conditional offers
 - There were 14 total applicants due to expanded METs which allowed for applicants with degrees equivalent to Masters of Vocational Rehabilitation to apply.
 - METs changed 7/1/2022
 - Position vacancies were listed in July-August 2022
 - The pandemic spurred a massive exodus from teaching, and some applicants had special education masters degrees
 - Quality of candidates was good and impressive
 - Applicants were local and unlikely to leave
 - Many interns historically leave after completing hours for their masters' degrees

- Question: What is the biggest difficulty in getting positions filled?
 - HR System is the biggest challenge. The hiring process is long and there is a lot of red tape.
 - The Request to Fill was submitted to Central Office and must be updated on a regular basis.
 - OVR remains a civil service position and must satisfy the hiring requirements of this.
 - There had been a hiring freeze from March 2020 until summer 2021, and positional attrition has thinned out ranks of employees, including from retirement and leaving for other jobs.

- Question: When do positions hope to be filled?
 - RDO's goal is to fill positions ASAP, but the posting time frame is up to HR and the Civil Service Commission.
 - Central Office is trying to fill vacancies equitably across the state.

- Comment: Having a case that is assigned to an OT counselor means that your counselor changes every so many weeks and creates a poor customer service experience.
 - RDO is aware of this and agrees.

CAC Goals

- Social Media / Facebook Page
 - CAC hopes to find a member with knowledge and skills to build a Facebook page, or possibly locate someone in college needing to fill community service requirements
 - The social media page can NOT be affiliated with OVR, per legal
 - How is the line of affiliation drawn? CAC advises OVR and the minutes are posted to the PARC, so it seems difficult to remove mention of affiliation.
 - The page can be used to promote CAC meeting dates.
 - It can NOT be used to promote OVR services
 - Kim will check if the page can use Department of Labor & Industry publicly available information. It is understood that the CAC can not create its own information about OVR.
 - The Wilkes-Barre office had a CAC page but it went dormant a while ago.
 - If Berks-Schuylkill CAC can't promote OVR services with methods used on social media, how can it promote OVR to reach the necessary population instead?
 - OVR as a state agency is on Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn
 - Kim will check if other CACs have a social footprint, why / why not, and if they do if it was helpful?
 - The RDO Outreach group met yesterday, 12/5/2022
 - Outreach is sometimes best handled face-to-face
 - Can the CAC get information from the outreach committee?
 - CAC members may need to do their own research into the current social media presence for OVR's official pages to see what information is available and the engagement with audience.
 - All OVR staff signatures currently include links to OVR social media pages, which are managed by Central Office.
 - OVR's big concern would be regarding client confidentiality, especially as individuals tend to share confidential information in public forums, and that is worrying from a legal perspective.
 - Is it possible to engage in advertising the CAC in other ways?
 - Possibly reaching out to get employers onboard, providers, and consumers
 - The CAC needs more members to make sure consumers have a voice in advising OVR
 - Employers would be a valuable voice on the CAC to share what they are looking for in certain positions, what skills they seek, etc.
 - If there is a social media page, who would maintain it, barring an elected secretary?
 - Kim will look into this – there are union concerns in using an RDO staff member to maintain a social media presence, so it would be best if a CAC member can fill this role.
 - Instead of creating a CAC-specific social media page, would it be better to push for an increased presence on the OVR pages or the PARC site?
 - Why does the CAC as an entity not have its own website instead of being buried in another website? Is it possible to bring this up at the next public comment period?
 - Kim will ask if the CAC can have its own website

- A website would possibly list the district offices, meeting dates/times/locations, host the CAC minutes, and work to establish the CAC's individual identity and presence to help pull in a robust membership
- Can the chairpeople of the CAC meet on a regular basis to see if they can collaborate on needed issues / solutions?
 - This includes both the local CAC chairs and the OVR chairs of the CAC across the state
 - This would be used to generate new ideas and solutions
- Question: Is there a public directory of official / acting DAs and ADAs?
 - There is an office directory available online, but there are no names associated with the offices. Is it possible for the list to include DA and ADA names?
 - Someone in Central Office does update that but may not be able to address updating the list quickly.
 - Kim will look into this.

Other Business:

- Can the CAC get a copy of the BSR PowerPoint that was mentioned at a previous meeting for review?
 - There are many PowerPoints. The CAC is most interested in any geared towards employers and containing a disability awareness theme
 - Kim will look into this and send to Angel for review and possibly update for use by the CAC.
- The most recent pdf for the CAC brochure provided to RDO clerical support has the incorrect contact and chair / vice chair information. No one in the RDO has the original file.
 - Sally stated she thinks it was originally from someone in her office. She will see if they can forward this original file to Angel & RDO for update.
 - If found, the file may possibly also be updated to include any web presence information.
- Scheduling elections was discussed. Possible options for officers have fallen out, so this year will continue as things are, and if someone wants to step up into an officer position, they may speak up when they feel able to do so.
 - Brian is willing to step into vice chair for the coming year if needed.
 - Motion for Angel to remain as chair for 2023: Brian
 - Seconded: Andrew
 - All in favor, no against
 - Motion for Brian to become vice chair for 2023: Angel
 - Seconded: Andrew
 - All in favor, no against
 - Possible goal for 2023 is to find an official secretary for the CAC

- Next PARC meeting is February 15, 2023 at 9:30AM to 12:30PM.
- Next CAC meeting is March 14th at 1:00PM
 - Discussion will be held to possibly change meeting days from Tuesday to Mondays at next meeting.
- Motion to close: Andrew
 - Seconded: Brian
- Meeting adjourned at 3:00 PM