



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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Transition and Education Committee Meeting Minutes January 12, 2023 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

Jeanette Alexander (P)
Lynn Heitz (P)
Jessica Keogh (NP)

Julia Grant Barol (P)
Michelle Mitchell (P)
Paul Fogle (NP)

Andrew Pennington (P)
Lorie Brew (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: Cheryl Novak, Melissa Wert-Thrush, Tracie Maille, James Whitonis, Ralph Roach, Hillary Hubbell, Kaitlin Salvati, Mara Wolfe, Melody Troup, Krista Sloan

Guest Present: Will Gruver, Youth Ambassador

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Ms. Jeanette Alexander called the meeting to order at 2:00 PM after quorum was established.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol for approval of the agenda and past meeting minutes. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

Introduction from Youth Ambassador

- Mr. Will Gruver reported that he has been working through OVR with the Intermediate Unit (IU) in Clarion since June 2022 as the pilot Youth Ambassador.

Some of his accomplishments during that time have included job shadowing of every department of the IU headquarters in Clarion, several classroom visits, participated in monthly secondary Transition meetings, Achieving Skills for Life team meetings through Riverview IU #6, and participated in the PDE Transition Conference. Started a project for disability awareness and education for schools located in Clarion County which included student interviews, local education agency surveys, social media distributions, and attendance and participation in many educational and stakeholder meetings.

- Members congratulated Mr. Gruver on his success, agreed that the program has been very beneficial, and inquired about the best parts and challenges of the Youth Ambassador position.
- Mr. Gruver stated he has loved participating in meetings and outreach as it has enabled him to provide information about the program while helping to overcome his fear of public speaking. Another great benefit of the position has been the opportunity to engage with a multitude of students with different disabilities.

OVR Updates

Youth Ambassador Program

Transition Navigator

Early Reach Workgroup

Staffing / Rapid Response Implementation / Outreach Efforts

- Ms. Krista Sloan reported that Mr. Gruver has done a fantastic job and his time in that position will soon be ending. Another Youth Ambassador is being determined at the same District Office location. Outreach has continued for this position at many school districts. The Transition Employment and Mentor (TEAM) Navigator has also been recently initiated and varies from the Youth Ambassador program as it is a 2-year paid professional position with the same goal as facilitating Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) and assists with implementing the Bureau of Special Education (BSE) / OVR Memorandum of Understanding (MOU).
- Members inquired about the length of the Youth Ambassador program and about plans to expand the program across the Commonwealth. Member also inquired about the TEAM Navigator position.
- Ms. Sloan and Ms. Hillary Hubbell reported that the program is intended to last for a 30-week period with some flexibility for extensions. There is a plan to expand the program but there are concerns from additional school districts because of staff shortages and other concerns. OVR continues to work to provide solutions to these concerns. The first TEAM Navigator position has not been determined yet and would be stationed at the IU, school district, or agency and OVR would provide the funding. TEAM Navigator positions could be implemented statewide and have more than one position in larger school districts. These positions would engage multiple entities and work to build relationships between different students, advocates, agencies, school district, IU, OVR, Pre-ETS, and Summer Programs.
- Mr. Andrew Pennington stated that Mr. Gruver has done an exceptional job at articulating his experience at Riverview School District and inquired what the

biggest hold up is to more Youth Ambassador (YA) positions and if there is a plan to have Mr. Gruver potentially advocate for more YA positions with other IUs and school districts.

- Ms. Sloan and Ms. Hubbell reported that staff shortages and the potential of temporary funding seem to be the biggest concern to allow for staffing of supervision for a YA position. Expansion to both IUs and school districts being available to provide services for the YA and TEAM Navigator positions will hopefully increase interest. Reported that Mr. Gruver and team from OVR will be giving presenting on January 31st on the YA program across the state to all IUs and hope that will generate more interest and expand the program statewide.
- Ms. Hubbell reported on the Early Reach workgroup has been meeting monthly on how Early Reach Coordinators (ERC) are providing services and establishing a new framework to be utilized by schools and in the community. The new framework is being called the Peer Development Model; upcoming sessions will be focused on the ERC Training materials.
- Ms. Tracie Maille reported that Central Office has tasked each local District Office to develop their own outreach plans to focus on contacting/reestablishing local resources. Continue to monitor outreach plans and ensure an increase in referrals during quarterly reports. Reviewed many changes to determination of eligibility, referral process, CWDS, and associated timelines which speed up the referral process/eligibility process. Data has shown improved time for referral process of 53.2%.

Review and Discussion of Transition Customer Satisfaction Surveys and Act 26 Reports

Survey Return Rate

Act 26 Data Regarding Blindness and Visual Services for Students

- Ms. Melissa Wert-Thrush reported on customer satisfaction surveys for the Professional Connection Enterprise (PCE) Summer Program. 52 of 60 would “definitely recommend” the program to others.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired how many blind students participated in the Summer Program. Stated that Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) customers are frequently not informed about these programs.
- Ms. Wert-Thrush stated that she would have to look into that data and that BBVS customers are provided information about the PCE programs. Reported on Act 26 Reports which does not capture data on specific disabilities. Will look into potential additional data and resources regarding BBVS customers with OVR team.

Updates from Bureau of Special Education

2023 PA Department of Education (PDE) Conference: “Making a Difference: Education Practices That Work!” March 1st to March 3rd

Registration information available at PaTTAN - Pennsylvania Department of Education Conference

- Ms. Alexander provided information about attending, cost, speakers, and links for

the BSE Conference and inquired if any members had interest or questions about the conference.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to adjourn. Ms. Lorie Brew seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.