

CAC MINUTES
Friday, July 14, 2023
10:00 a.m. McKean County Career Link

In Attendance: Bob Mecca, LIFT; Rebecca McKenzie, LIFT; Adam Bell, PA Link; Andrew Pennington, CAP; Chris Palmer, OVR; and Jim Whitonis, OVR Central Office.

Welcome & Introductions: Bob Mecca opened the meeting. He introduced Rebecca McKenzie, LIFT's new consumer support specialist. There were no questions or changes to April 2023 meeting notes.

OVR Updates

Chris P. shared that the DuBois DO closed 148 successful closures last program year which was 97.3% of the district's goal of 152. 742 new cases were started, 543 IPEs written (179% of goal), 1436 Pre-ETS services provided (368% of goal). VRCs are really working hard at getting cases moving forward. Rapid engagement and LEAN put us in a good position this year at DuBois. Andrew Pennington asked when does the DO get their goals from Central Office. Chris stated that new goals usually come out in July but won't be received for a couple of weeks.

Staffing update: Nicole, VRC for Elk, Cameron and ODP is up and running. All caseloads are staffed now, no caseloads on OT. Sue, CA2/receptionist is doing fantastic. Lisa, new Local Office Fiscal Assistant started this past Monday. DuBois is going to be posting for a 9th counselor. We are carving out an additional transition caseload as the volume and travel is high for transition. The position will be for McKean County. The addition of this position will give us 3 transition VRCs.

My Work summer program is a municipal and youth program we can do with municipalities or non- profits. The DuBois DO is doing one with Elcam and the Boys & Girls Club, also one in DuBois with the Downtown Revitalization Group and Goodwill. One will kick off next week with Futures in Bradford and the YMCA. The goal is to have one in every county.

OVR had a lot of Board approvals at the last state board meeting. Some of these highlights were approved last year: FNT raised to \$100,000 for 12 months, HGAC services exempt for 12 months. Family contributions on college formula is exempt. Exempt the pro-rated BTT formula for programs that are less than one year and allow up to the BTT maximum for those programs for a 12-month period. College maximum is going with Shippensburg rate again. New: Small business program has expanded from \$10,000 OVR contribution to \$30,000. Customer must come up with 25% - that is waived if it's a Social Security case. For OJTs, we are now able to do 100% reimbursement for up to 180 days. Andrew Pennington asked about the DuBois DO current small business caseload. Chris indicated that we have had a lot of interest over the years. We have only had two in the last few years and one of them was closed successfully this spring. Andrew noted that numbers across the state have been low, but this is a lot of positive change. Customers need to know how much work goes into self-employment before the small business is started. Chris advised that when DuBois has someone seriously considering it, we go over the policy with them. We typically have them use SBDC and they do a great job with our customers. The most recent one we had, we bought a lot of initial inventory and advertising. We only get a couple people a year interested in it. We encourage counselors when they see someone they feel it would be a good fit, to bring it up. Andrew added that there is a lot of potential for success and financial freedom from this exceptional service.

Member Updates

LIFT: Bob Mecca again introduced Rebecca McKenzie. She worked there before so is familiar with the organization. They held their annual youth conference on May 3rd. Eight schools participated with 107 students – it was their largest ever. Having a virtual conference gave all schools the chance to participate; very successful.

June 9th was LIFT's annual wine walk fund raiser. They had 150 participants and raised \$6600. 16 local business and 16 alcohol vendors participated in the successful event.

July 25th is the annual expo. This year it will be held at Elk County Catholic in St. Marys. Bagged lunch will be provided. Door prizes. ATA will provide transportation with two 10 passenger busses with a couple spots for wheelchairs to transport people to and from senior centers in Elk County. ATA is donating that service. There will be 5 spotlight vendors and 45 vendors overall.

PA Link: Adam Bell advised they send out weekly webinars; most recent one 7/12/23 was on healthy ideas. No other updates.

CAP: Andrew Pennington stated having no real updates at this time. CAP is busier than they have ever been – not for DuBois office. They have been having trouble with people reaching their VRCs and OT caseloads. He is glad to hear DuBois doesn't have any caseloads on OT anymore. They understand that it can happen, and they just try to resolve problems for the customers. They don't get any calls between CILs. LIFT is doing a good job.

OVR Central Office: Jim Whitonis informed that he will send last minutes to Rehab Council. Every CAC does their minutes a little differently. Those can be viewed on the rehab council site.

Next Meeting

Next meeting will be held Friday, October 13, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. location TBD (possibly in Jefferson County).

Chris Palmer also mentioned that the CAC still needs to bring on more people with disabilities (PwD) or families of PwD. If any of you are aware of people we could bring on, let Chris or Bob know. Also, October is NDEAM so there will be things going on – we will share when we know more.