



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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Transition and Education Committee Meeting Minutes August 31, 2023 2:30 PM to 3:30 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 (P)

Andrew Pennington (NP)
Lorie Brew (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: Cheryl Novak, Melissa Wert-Thrush, James Whitonis, Hillary Hubbell, Kim Robinson, Carla Hill, Mara Wolfe, Sumathi Balachandran, Ralph Roach

Guests Present: Natasha Fletcher, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN), Hunter Steinitz, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN)

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Ms. Julia Barol called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM after quorum was established.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Ms. Lorie Brew suggested the addition of discussing today's announcement from Ms. Carol Clancy, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE).

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

MOTION was made by Ms. Jeanette Alexander for approval of the agenda with additions and past meeting minutes. Ms. Michelle Mitchell seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

OVR Updates: Youth Ambassador Program, Transition Navigator, Early Reach Workgroup, Staffing / Rapid Response Implementation / Outreach Efforts

- Ms. Lorie Brew shared the announcement from Ms. Carol Clancy, Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) that effective no later than November 25, 2023, all students entitled to Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) and those served under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) may remain enrolled in Public School until they turn 22 years of age.
- Attendees' questions about this announcement include how this plays a role in Act 55 in regard to how this affects OVR services and what this announcement is meant to accomplish. Members will share more information upon it becoming available to be distributed to the group.
- Ms. Kim Robinson introduced Ms. Natasha Fletcher and Ms. Hunter Steinitz, Pennsylvania Training and Technical Assistance Network (PaTTAN) that will be working directly with OVR in their roles as Youth Engagement Specialists. They will be helping with recruitment of Youth Ambassadors and increasing and improving engagement with youth. Additional initiatives include creating youth engagement materials, creating a youth committee, and identify potential PaRC member for Young Adult category of representation. Youth Ambassador outreach efforts have increased and now include Community Rehab Providers (CRPs). There are additional providers for this year including potential for 8 in the Washington area, Hispanos Unidos para Niños Excepcionales (HUNE), and the Philadelphia School District. Additional outreach and recruitment will include attending transition and career fairs, meeting with student's families, and other events now that providers are in place. Transition Navigators will be working in conjunction with Youth Ambassadors and other programs.
- Ms. Hillary Hubbell reported that the Early Reach Workgroup was meeting monthly from June 2022 through July 2023 until they were paused due to contract negotiations. The workgroup was reviewing Early Reach Coordinator provisions and making modifications in methodology to better serve customers. When meetings resume, they will be focused on trainings for Early Reach Coordinators to get acquainted with the new model and implementation over the next three years.

Update on Grants for Innovative Demonstration Projects

- Ms. Hubbell and Ms. Mara Wolfe shared information about the Pennsylvania Transition Partners: Pathways to Partnership Demonstration Model, which is an innovative three-component model of transition services that will be implemented with support and engagement across all partners to provide both intensive training and program development support.
 - The first initiative is the Pathways to Partnership—Professional Development, Capacity Building, and Training: will be available for all identified PA Transition Partners. Professional Development opportunities will be offered on Transition Discoveries and Charting the LifeCourse (CtLC) frameworks. The focus of this component is to provide all PA Transition Partners with opportunities to increase knowledge of these frameworks, best practices,

and will provide context for practical application in local areas.

- The second initiative is the Pathways to Partnership—Transition Discoveries: Will allow the development of programming for 29 Local Education Agency (LEAs) through coordination with local Intermediate Unit (IUs). Transition Discoveries is a researched based transition planning framework. This component builds upon the work done in Pathways to Partnership—Professional Development, Capacity Building, and Training to support school-based implementation of Transition Discoveries. The focus of this component continues to be on staff development and training, which leads to students receiving innovative, individualized transition planning.
- The third initiative is the Pathways to Partnership—Work Based Learning Experience (PTP-WBLE): will be developed in conjunction with local OVR offices to expand WBLE opportunities with six LEAs Statewide. The PTP-WBLE programs will be focused on serving 2 urban schools, 3 rural schools, and 1 cyber school. The PTP-WBLE will be developed and funded by OVR Interagency Agreements (IGAs) utilizing Vocational Rehabilitation Pre-Employment Transition Services funds. This initiative will provide PA Transition Partners the opportunity to apply best practices from professional development and trainings to increase work-based learning capacity for students with disabilities.
- This is a five year grant beginning in October 2023 and is a collaborative effort with partners from Centers for Independent Living (CILs), PDE, and PATTAN. They anticipate hearing more about the grant awards within the next few weeks. Meetings are scheduled with those partners listed and collaboration will begin once the funds are awarded.
- Ms. Barol inquired where the urban and rural schools will be located.
- Ms. Hubbell explained that all schools will be able to take part in the first pathway, 29 LEAs and IUs will participate in the second pathway, and for the third pathway, it will be offered to all districts to apply. Those applications will be graded off of a rubric to decide the awards for mini grants.

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

- Mr. Ralph Roach explained that from 2015 to 2018 the Council provided feedback to the agency about the Customer Satisfaction Survey process and helped to develop survey questions and parameters. Surveys are sent out monthly, are intended to get qualitative and quantitative feedback about the experience of the customer, there are 5 surveys for different populations within OVR services for Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRS), Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS), and Transition services. Transition surveys are not receiving any responses due to a 2022 upgrade in how the surveys operate and are sent under the Commonwealth Workforce Development System (CWDS). There may be a glitch where the surveys are going to a SPAM account and may never be seen by the customer. Students may be using LEA based email address or parent's address and most states, including Massachusetts, that receive robust

responses are being sent to students using phone calls and text messages. Collecting permissions to receive texts and obtain phone numbers for texting would need to be completed and built into CWDS. After redaction process survey results are shared.

- Ms. Barol inquired how long it would take to enact the text and phone number system similar to what Massachusetts is doing.
- Mr. Roach explained that information on a timeline to incorporate a similar system would need to be provided through staff from CWDS and Deloitte. Massachusetts VR contracted the survey to their State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) which created a business plan and competitively bid that process which resulted in the hiring of a marketing firm. That service is being handled by their SRC to a professional marketing company, this system enables them to send results to the Designated State Unit (DSU), each counselor, aggregate data, redact names, and use the data in other ways. Their return rate is in the 90th percentiles, and they begin the survey process from initial interview through all services and exit of services.
- Mr. Paul Fogle inquired why the Rehab Council would be responsible to collect the data.
- Mr. Roach explained that it is not the responsibility of Council. This was something that the Massachusetts SRC wanted to do. There is not specific guidance within the Rehab Act and the CFRs pertaining to who needs to handle the survey.
- Ms. Barol inquired about the most recent Act 26 data in which there are a lot of counties that have no data regarding Summer Programs and why that is.
- Ms. Barol suggested that collecting data on virtual format Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings would be helpful to determine how to provide students supports from OVR. There are no rules for schools to provide virtual options for OVR attendance of IEP meetings and that could be helpful to expand or improve attendance.
- Ms. Robinson explained that the information is reported by the service once it has been paid for and the data is reflecting that most of the programs aren't getting paid for until the end of the Summer, not that the programs aren't happening. Initial report is showing that My Work and Professional Connections services have far exceeded past years. This data showing increases will be reflected in the next Act 26 report as each report contains data from the previous two quarters. Act 26 fourth quarter report is currently under accessibility checks and will be provided shortly. IEP meeting invitations are provided for both in person and virtual meetings. Data is not collected on that format of IEP meetings. Not all schools are providing invitations for virtual IEP meetings and a rule may preclude some districts from providing invitations. OVR is providing staff with trainings on the new requirements to document attendance of IEP meetings that can be reflected in the Act 26 reports.
- Mr. Fogle inquired if members would be interested in additional fact finding with VR and contracts process regarding the logistics and other considerations of surveys being handled by a marketing firm. This would be something new for the Council and the Council would need more information before taking on this project.

Updates from Bureau of Special Education

- This topic was previously discussed.

Conference Information: PaRC Resource Table from the August 9th, 2023, Community of Practice Transition Conference Expo Pennsylvania Department of Education / Bureau of Special Education Annual Conference, February 28 - March 1, 2024, Hershey Lodge & Convention Center

- Ms. Brew reported that her experience at the PaRC Resource Table from the August 9th, 2023, Community of Practice Transition Conference Expo went really well. Members met a lot of attendees and provided information about what the Council does. Suggested for the next conference adding a computer display with looping stories or other digital resources.
- Ms. Barol will leave discussion regarding the Pennsylvania Department of Education / Bureau of Special Education Annual Conference, February 28 - March 1, 2024, Hershey Lodge & Convention Center for the next Committee meeting.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 3:35 PM.