

Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting
Monday, August 21, 2023
MINUTES

ATTENDEES:

Andrew Pennington, Shari Brightful, Louis Smith, LaQuenta Montanez, Alex Shay, Suzanne Erb, Steve Whittaker, Pat Petrone, Joseph Thomas, James Whitonis

Suzanne Erb called meeting to order and asked for introductions.

Ms. Erb asked for approval of minutes. Hearing no disapproval, asked for a motion to accept minutes. Alex Shay made a motion to approve, and Shari Brightful seconded. The minutes are approved.

Shari Brightful:

Ms. Brightful said good morning to everyone and gave updates for BVRS.

Shari and her managers went over the year in review with their staff and reported:

Staffing – hired a Rehabilitation Counselor for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Four Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors are in the conditional offer phase.

As far as 26 closure goals, the goal was 406 and BVRS had successful competitive employment for 234 customers. Philadelphia has a large number of students, pre-employment transition services goal was 1040. The VR Transition Team and Early Reach Counselors served 1,001 students and continue to work with our staff and community partners.

Lakeysha McLaurin is working with providers so they understand CWDS and are able to work within the CWDS parameters. Providers are appreciative of the one-on-one technical assistance.

Collaborations:

The Business Services Team recognized People Share, in addition, Sally Belli and Tasha Carter also received recognition.

Project Search won an award at the National Conference and also received an award from Drexel University.

Suzanne Erb asked Shari to explain Pre-ETS, particularly since Louis Smith is new to the group. Ms. Brightful explained the customers are between the ages of 14 and 21 or 22. They will receive a menu of opportunities/services to prepare them for life after they graduate from school.

There are five activities they can engage in with Early Reach Coordinators or VR Counselors. If we do not have activities needed, we engage outside providers.

Suzanne is grateful Louis Smith is able to attend the meeting. He is working with agencies and is hoping they can combine with disability. Louis does have a career fair/outreach program going on in the near future and if anyone is interested they can reach out to him.

Alex Shay:

Staffing – we have hired a Vision Rehabilitation Specialist, Joe Thomas formally took the role of ADA with BBVS. We have a Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Social Worker 2 and Orientation & Mobility Specialist position in various processes of reposting and have started interviewing for a CA2.

Statistics from July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023 - our Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor's had 56 successful closures with a goal of 99. The Social Workers, VRT's and O&M's all achieved their goals.

OVR is going through major changes in regard to RSA, compliance metrics, moving cases to eligibility and to plan status within a certain number of days. Credential attainment, measurable skill gains, working on these metrics to be sure we hit them. Everyone is encouraged to be involved in rapid engagement which involves moving cases forward rapidly, removing any unnecessary steps to move the case forward.

We are working with IMS Audubon in Montgomery County which manufactures sponges, loofas and bath products. They employ people with disabilities and began with the blind population and now have included all people with all disabilities. The biggest barrier is transportation since it is located in Montgomery County.

BBVS is working with Overbrook School for the Blind and the School District of Lancaster for reimbursement costs to run a program to get students engaged in paid work experiences. A good indicator is paid internships. Alex spoke with Ryan Hyde. We are hoping to start the program next year or next fall. This has to go through OVR legal before it can begin.

Steve Whittaker asked what services are available for people over the age of 65? Also inquired as to the time from initial contact to the start services. Alex replied we still have the program for ILOB, anyone over age 55, to assist people to be independent in their homes, low vision, independent living skills, O&M Services, VRT Services. Currently there is no budget cap for the ILOB program. The previous caps were \$500.00, and \$1,000.00.

Steve asked how many customers are in the Independent Living program and asked about goals and closed cases. Alex responded the Social Workers successfully closed 45 closures per social worker per year. Joe Thomas said we have a little over 300 active cases right now. As far as the timeline of services - customer calls in, we have 30 days to reach out; application is taken and we

have 60 days to determine eligibility and before 90 days there should be a plan. The idea is to make this timeline a little tighter and there are discussions with the union to come up with a timeline. Basically, it is to get customer eligible, get a plan and serve them in a timelier manner.

Suzanne asked LaQuenta Montanez if she would like to say anything about happenings in the school district. LaQuenta said they are working on staffing, filling teacher positions and vacancies at every level. They do have the ESY program in conjunction with OVR. There were 277 students who received group Pre-ETS services and is eager to continue this program in the future. LaQuenta is hoping to connect with the OVR team for middle school level up to the age of 21, working with service providers they are connected with. She is working with parent coordinators to get students registered. With the help of Shari and her team, attempted to implement a youth ambassador which didn't work out at this time. Is conducting meetings with parents to make them aware of OVR and the services they can provide.

Suzanne asked if there were any questions for LaQuenta.

Ms. Erb asked Andrew Pennington to give a little synopsis of the CAP program and what they do. Unfortunately, Andrew had to leave the meeting.

Suzanne asked if anyone had anything they would like to discuss regarding their agency. No one responded.

Suzanne Erb:

There is a job fair at Career Link this Wednesday with collaboration among several different systems and talked about the importance of dialoging with providers and other systems. The interest is to get people with disabilities hired. PWI got involved and they put out the word to other agencies. Right now, there are about eight agencies participating. They will bring job descriptions and collect resumes from people seeking employment. This will be held at the Career Link, downstairs in the building on 1617 JFK Blvd., entrance is on the side – from 10:00 A.M. to 2:00 P.M.

Louis Smith is putting together a Resource Fair. He has various systems involved. This will be held on September 6, 2023 from 10:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M. If people are interested in having a resource table, they can contact Louis. The interest is in building mutual relationships with various sources/people. Suzanne asked how many agencies are participating. Louis said they have seven so far and there are 12 tables total, is still waiting for responses from other invitees.

LaQuenta Montanez said there are students that have an IEP and she will try to get some of these students to attend the job fair on Wednesday. LaQuenta asked if Suzanne had a flyer Suzanne said she will send her one after the meeting.

Steve Whittaker stated he is working with Vision Loss Canada and said he would be happy to have them speak at another meeting to discuss their programs and how they are put together.

Suzanne will have a new email address for the next meeting suzerb1@comcast.net.

There will be an employment first stakeholder meeting in October, October 19, 2023. Suzanne will make sure everyone receives the information. The object of this meeting is to put together a plan for the next couple of years. Thinks this is only open for people associated with Career Link but would like people associated with OVR to take advantage of what Career Link has to offer. LaQuenta Montanez said she thought this was September 14, 2023. Suzanne said she wasn't sure. Suzanne will send information out to everyone when she gets the dates.

Ms. Erb asked if the third Monday is good for people to meet. It was decided the next meeting would be Monday, November 20, 2023. Asked if we could send out a notice within the next couple of weeks so people would be aware to put it on their calendars.

Asked if anyone had anything else they wanted to share.

Motion to adjourn – Seve Whittaker, so moved and Shari Brightful seconded.

Suzanne will send an email to everyone regarding the job fair.