



# Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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## Legislative & Public Awareness Committee Minutes for October 5, 2023

### Members Present (P)

### Not Present (NP)

William Del Toro Vargas (P)	Jeanette Alexander (P)	Julia Grant Barol (P)
Lynn Heitz (P)	Michele Leahy (P)	Paul Fogle (P)
Michelle Mitchell (P)	Jessica Keogh (P)	Lorie Brew (P)

**OVR Staff Present:** James Whitonis, Chris Harbert

**PaRC Staff Present:** Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

**ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA:** None

### APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES:

***MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz to approve today's agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### AGENDA ITEMS:

**Preparation for Meetings with State Legislators**  
**Background/reminder on PaRC Legislative meetings**  
**Review of talking points (included within meeting email)**  
**Update on scheduled meetings**

- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas reviewed a document provided in preparation for today's meeting that included information and reminders about PaRC meetings with Legislators and their staff. Which included the following:
  - It is important to take the opportunity to share personal stories, experiences, and other anecdotes that highlight the importance of the PaRC mission and VR system as we know this can be very effective measures when discussing the need for increased funding for OVR.
  - It is important that each member be allotted time (if they chose to speak) to address the staff and/or legislators and hold discussion without interruption.
  - Members understand the importance of being mindful and that any disagreement or counter point to the discussion can be reserved for

discussion after the meeting has ended. As an example, if a member has a differing opinion about a piece of legislation, we would expect that the member be given the chance to respectfully offer their recommendations for consideration as long as it continues to benefit employment and fits the mission. PaRC members know how important it is to portray a united front when meeting as a team and respecting everyone's voice during meetings with our elected officials.

- It is also important to keep in mind that you are representing the PaRC during meetings and that personal opinions and stances that oppose those of the Council or that have not yet been approved by Full Council be explicitly stated as such or be omitted from discussion until the Council as a whole has the opportunity to review them.
- PaRC State and Federal Position Papers are shared prior to Legislative Meetings and are designed to keep the discussion geared towards Full Council approved talking points and legislation. PaRC Annual Report, PaRC website information, OVR Annual Report, VR Highlights, etc. are also shared with Legislators and their staff prior to meetings.
- It's vital that those who are shaping legislation know how their hard work and dedication to our Commonwealth deeply affect our communities and day to day lives.
- Members agreed that during each meeting a Council member may lead the discussion if they choose. This may be helpful if they know the Legislator or live within their district.
- Members agreed that when providing their introduction, it may be most affective to provide personal stories relating to the PaRC mission and to keep the introduction/stories to approximately 3 minutes to ensure everyone has an opportunity to speak if they choose to.
- Members agreed it's important to review the materials provided to the Legislators prior to meetings and become familiar with PaRC's Position Papers, Annual Report, Council information, and OVR's Annual Report, VR highlights and other documents.

***MOTION was made by Ms. Jessica Keogh to approve of the talking points provided prior to today's meeting. Ms. Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### **Rough Draft of an OVR / PaRC Brief Introduction document for Legislators**

- Mr. Chris Harbert reported that OVR staff has several PowerPoint presentations that may be best suited for informing Legislators about OVR and will follow up with the Committee and PaRC staff once more information is available.
- Once a PowerPoint is provided members agreed that it should be reviewed by Social Media Committee for accessibility.
- Mr. Del Toro Vargas requested that staff send a Doodle poll to Full Council with the dates provided by Representative Khan's staff to schedule a meeting.

### **Adjourn**

***MOTION was made by Ms. Jessica Keogh to adjourn. Ms. Lynn Heitz seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.***