



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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CareerLink / WIOA Committee Meeting Minutes for February 20, 2024, from 1:00PM to 2:00 PM

Members Present (P)

Andrew Pennington (P)
Lynn Heitz (P)
Paul Fogle (P)

Not Present (NP)

Julia Barol (P)
Kara Donatucci Pham (P)
Passle Helminski (P)

Joan Goodman (P)
Twana Jones (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: Robert Hodapp, Cheryl Novak, James Whitonis

State Workforce Development Staff Present: Daniel Kuba

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Mr. Andrew Pennington called the meeting to order at 1:00 PM

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

MOTION was made by Ms. Passle Helminski to approve the agenda with additions and past meeting minutes. Ms. Joan Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Progress of the Workforce Coalition / Developmental Disabilities Council / Temple Institute on Disabilities Grant Trainings, Conferences, Presenters, Mentor Networks, etc.

- Ms. Julia Barol reported that Temple Institute on Disabilities is working on a grant with the PA Workforce Development Board to support businesses by providing them

with education on hiring individuals with disabilities, best practices, understanding accessibility options, tax credits, and working with job coaches. After the first series of trainings is completed, they will be looking to develop a mentor network made up of businesses. The first training series will begin the week of March 20, 2024, offering overview topics with a different training every 2 weeks. Initially working with the 4 largest local Workforce Development Boards (WDB) located in the Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Erie, and Lehigh Valley areas. Upon completion they will move on to all other Boards. PA has a total of 22 local WDBs. There will be a pre-conference held on May 1, 2024. In collaboration with OVR a job fair is in the planning process to help match people with disabilities with good fit jobs. The Workforce Coalition meets monthly as a think tank and information/idea gathering pulling from subject matter experts for technical assistance on different areas on this project. Invitations are provided by the local WDB to their members and businesses. Training dates have just been identified, invitations will be provided to businesses, and there has been a total buy in from the 4 largest local WDBs.

- Ms. Goodman inquired about reaching out to the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) as they are the frontline for recruiting employees.
- Ms. Barol agreed that is great idea and asked to share any connections for outreach to SHRM.
- Mr. Pennington inquired about the role of PA Workforce Development Board in this project and OVR's participation.
- Ms. Barol explained that the WDB is partnering in the project and OVR is very active in this process and is participating in the providing of trainings along with others.
- Members agreed that it's important to work with employers to provide information on the support available from OVR.
- Mr. Pennington requested this item be included in the agenda for the next meeting.

Feedback on PA Internship Program

Have internships lead to permanent employment?

- Mr. Dan Kuba reported that last year there were 2 internship programs which involved OVR, one of which is located at the PA CareerLink locations. This program will be expanded to double the number of participants for 2024. Workforce Development has not directly hired interns for permanent positions to date, but their partners have. Outreach for internships will include the Office of Administration, Historically Black Colleges, local employers, and schools. Internship placement and job descriptions are based upon student interest. The PA CareerLink internships focus on public service and include providing a variety of skills such as research, making referrals for different services, working with the public, and customer service.
- Mr. Paul Fogle inquired if Workforce Development works with Commonwealth Technical Institute at Hiram G Andrews Center (CTI at HGAC) for the internship programs.
- Mr. Kuba reported that they do work with CTI at HGAC and explained there are plans to develop a mobile PA CareerLink that could be implemented in different locations, especially rural areas. This could also be located near the CTI at HGAC campus in

PA Workforce Development Updates

- Mr. Kuba reported that he pays attention to the Committee's questions and uses this information as a standard/check and balance for Workforce Development activity. Their monthly report that was shared with the Committee was created to spread awareness with Federal Operators and U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) project managers. OVR is involved with just about every project. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, Accessibility (DEIA) is a priority and accessibility are a vital part of the Workforce Development grants. DEIA grants are also being developed for apprenticeships, healthcare, teaching, IT, and other professional opportunities. They are working to provide examples of the successes seen within the PA CareerLinks and Workforce grants participants. Working with the WDB they have created a pilot program to simplify the registration process which is broken down into about 54 different triage categories to better collect data and identify the needs of those visiting the PA CareerLinks. 37,000 individuals have registered online for PA CareerLink services. Of those about 3,000 reported transportation issues, 2,900 reported childcare issues, and 13,000 were visiting specifically for referral services from other entities such as OVR or the PA Department of Human Services. They have also identified the number of individuals visiting each PA CareerLink Office seeking Unemployment Compensation (UC). UC can utilize this data to identify where individuals can go to receive services.
- Mr. Pennington inquired about providing some of this data publicly.
- Ms. Barol inquired if information is being collected after individuals have finished with the system.
- Mr. Kuba will provide the recommendation to share data publicly. Reported that surveys are provided by partner staff for individuals that go through their career advisors and there is a statewide initiative that surveys individuals through 2025. They began by looking at unemployment records from 2021 and 2022 and checked their new hire data along with their wage and record data. This information was used to send out information to those individuals on the services CareerLink offers and also to survey each individual's current status. 400,000 individuals that filed during this time period for UC are still not working in Pennsylvania. This data will be aggregated and used to create a report to provide to the Governor and General Assembly. The report will include information about those who remain unemployed and why. About 1,000 individuals responded that they would be interested in providing their story to identify barriers to gaining employment and locate the holes within the Workforce Development system.
- Ms. Joan Goodman inquired if there is an ability to designate whether a job is part of the Office of Federal Contracts Compliance Program (OFCCP) regarding the employer side of the database that Workforce Development provides to the U.S. DOL previously mentioned.
- Mr. Kuba explained that he will check on this and provide follow up. They regularly discuss Federal contracting and next steps would be to identify who is participating and what those occupations are.

- Mr. Pennington requested that this topic be added to the agenda for the next Committee meeting.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Updates

Mr. Rob Hodapp, Western Business Services & Outreach Specialist, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation

- Mr. Rob Hodapp reported that a training was completed on use of the ADA Accessibility kits. Collaboration continues between OVR and CareerLink sites to assess and update the ongoing accessibility comprehensive overviews of PA CareerLinks and affiliate sites. Disability Awareness presentations continue with staff and partners either virtually or in person. Ubi Duos have been provided to all sites and have proved to be very useful for communication with someone who is deaf. A presentation is planned for using video relay software that will be available to download. All CareerLink sites have the updated versions of either Fusion Software, JAWS, and or Zoom text. Once alerts are received that software updates are required, OVR provides the walkthroughs to assist with those updates as needed.
- Mr. Pennington explained that they had previously discussed accessibility for the PA CareerLink websites and reported that each CareerLink website does not list the email addresses for each location. Email can be a preferable way to communicate within the sensory disabilities community if they have questions to be answered prior to visiting a CareerLink site. Inquired if there was any ability to provide on the Commonwealth website a specific email address for each CareerLink site.
- Ms. Heitz explained that the Commonwealth regularly creates Resource Accounts (RA) email accounts for various agencies and inquired if an RA email account could be created for each CareerLink location. Explained that this would benefit a blind person that is seeking information prior to visiting a local CareerLink by providing another means of communication. Listing each RA account on the Workforce Development website would solve a lot of communication issues.
- Mr. Hodapp reported that the CareerLink site is always being updated, if someone is using assistive technology the Commonwealth site is accessible, and adding these features is something they can work with Workforce Development on. Agreed that RA accounts can be easily set up and accessed by anyone within a particular division. This recommendation will be provided to Workforce Development.
- Mr. Pennington requested that this topic be added to the agenda for the next Committee meeting.

Updates on Accessibility of CareerLink Locations, Affiliate Sites and CareerLink Services

ADA Comprehensive CareerLink Assessments

Implementation of Assistive Technology (AT)

CareerLink Staff Trainings

- This topic was previously discussed.

Public Comment (3 minutes per attendee)

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Ms. Twana Jones to adjourn. Ms. Kara Donatucci Pham seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.