



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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OVR Policy & State Plan / Customer Satisfaction Committee Minutes for March 26, 2024, from 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

Lynn Heitz (P)
Susan Tomasic (P)
Twana Jones (P)
Lorie Brew (P)

Michelle Paonessa (NP)
Jessica Keogh (NP)
Sylenthia Dent (P)

Julia Grant Barol (P)
Paul Fogle (P)
Andrew Pennington (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: James Whitonis, Cheryl Novak, Russ Goddard, Ralph Roach, Chris Harbert

Project Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Ms. Lynn Heitz called the meeting to order at 2:30 PM.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

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

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

OVR updates

Audiological Policy

- Members confirmed that they have reviewed the final draft of the OVR Audiological Services Policy.

- Mr. Russ Goddard explained that the Audiological Services Policy is the result of 2 to 3 years of sustained action which included PaRC members. The length of this policy is in part due to the complicated process of purchasing Hearing Aids. Revisions have been made to help streamline the process of purchasing Hearing Aids with step by step instructions for counselors to follow more easily. The Policy also has also been modernized by including information about different Hearing Aid technologies. A guidance document has also been added to help field staff.
- Mr. Chris Harbert reported that there is going to be an upcoming OVR and Office of Chief Counsel (OCC) Sunshine Act training refresher for the end of April. This meeting will be virtual via Zoom.
- Mr. James Whitonis reported that OVR just received the negotiated performance measure indicators from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). OVR will evaluate those numbers to determine if they will take those to negotiation. RSA is requiring an answer is provided by OVR by April 5, 2024. Once negotiated those numbers will be reported.

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to approve the Audiological Services Policy draft and move it forward to Executive Committee and Full Council. Ms. Susan Tomasic seconded the motion. All were in favor.

**Discussion regarding Customer Satisfaction Surveys with Transition Committee
Develop Questions for Massachusetts DSU
Determine Dates/Times to Invite Massachusetts Contact**

- Mr. Ralph Roach explained that in 2022 he was asked to survey what other states were doing in regard to Customer Satisfaction Surveys. An inquiry was made through CSAVR to all 70 VR programs and as a result about 6 or less respondents provided a general overview on how they complete their surveys. Dr. Amanda Baczko from Massachusetts provided information and documents on how they went about reconstituting, revising, and purchasing consultation services from a customer service organization to do their customer satisfaction surveys. Other states use various tools or services to complete their services including Survey Monkey. Massachusetts stood out on how they collect information to understand their customer’s experience with their VR program. Provided clarification that Dr. Baczko is not an employee of the Massachusetts SRC but of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission. There probably is no reason that an SRC could not be involved in looking into identifying a good customer satisfaction survey process or going beyond that role to possibly conducting those surveys. The important takeaway from this research is not which entity should be conducting the surveys but identifying how Massachusetts improved the surveys and as a result improved

the way customers were coming to their VR program. Massachusetts' surveys go far beyond collecting information on outcomes. Previous WIOA measures of performance included Status 26 successful employment outcome within 90 days and Status 28 those who exit the VR program without an employment outcome. Massachusetts collects information from when the customer initially enters the program including eligibility, plan development, receiving various points of service, training, etc. as well as their employment outcomes. Encouraged the Committee to contact Dr. Baczko and ask that she walk through what the survey is currently doing and what was not being received prior to their new approach.

Massachusetts' survey results can be aggregated to a District Office, drilled down to a counselor, and supervisors were looking at the surveys along with other standard HR procedures to perform annual performance reviews for staff. Long-term what could take place through this research is a change to the current customer satisfaction survey process based on states like Massachusetts through recommendations provided by the PaRC to do something more enhanced whether that is done by CWDS or any other options that may be explored.

- Ms. Lynn Heitz explained that there would be concerns from the Labor Unions on using the data collected for staff performance review.
- Mr. Roach explained that would be a minor point in consideration on what Massachusetts had done with their survey process and that this was a positive experience.
- Members agreed that the survey would need to take into consideration questions for Transition age students. Members shared concerns about the current lack of response and the need to consider access, housing the surveys within the CWDS, and rating individual counselors. Members would like to know what Massachusetts had done before and what brought them to where they are now.
- Ms. Heitz explained that having an independent entity conduct the surveys may result in collection of more data, electronic means of collection may result in accessibility issues, phone calls are made 3 times and lack of response results in moving on to the next customer.
- Members agreed it may be beneficial to have a 3rd party conduct the surveys as surveying yourself may result in skewed data.
- Mr. Pennington explained the largest issue is that there are no responses being received. Information provided may not provide solutions to current infrastructural issues with collecting responses. Extensive research into a 3rd party and/or further details on how the surveys would be collected, surveys not going to junk email, lack of accessibility, and other concerns with improving response rates need to be addressed first. There have been 0 customer responses for the last 2 years for all Transition Services surveys.

- Mr. Fogle explained that BBVS responses have also remained at a low rate, there are concerns with those surveys not being accessible, and that the Committee should consider assembling an outline of what members are looking for so that when 3rd parties or outside vendors are considered, that information can be provided. OVR's agreement with these factors is also needed. Potential 3rd parties would need to have done this type of work before.
- Members agreed that accessibility must be a consideration. Emails may not be the best way to reach students. Text messages may improve response rates. Cold calls and/or cold texts may not be answered. Methodology also needs to be considered. There needs to be a mechanism of warning the individuals being surveyed to expect phone calls, texts, etc.
- Ms. Brew inquired what percentage of Transition students responded to the Massachusetts surveys and could there be an outreach campaign that reminds customers to complete the surveys. Members agreed this information could be provided during counselor interactions, be included in counselor email signatures, and be part of an ongoing campaign reminding customers to complete surveys.
- Mr. Chris Harbert explained that one thing members may want to be aware of is when polling outside vendors is trends with QR codes. QR codes are commonly used by different businesses when collecting information from their customers.
- Ms. Heitz explained that she would like to know how Massachusetts made the transition to what they are doing now, how they got the word out to customers, and what methodologies they are currently using. Explained that 95% of blind people will answer the phone before they would click a link from a text message or email that goes to something that is not accessible.
- Members explained that it is important to inquire with each customer on preferred ways to best communicate. This question is included on the OVR applications and could be the process for the surveys based upon customers response. Members explained that Braille and large print has not been provided as a means of preferred communication. This is a topic that could be discussed separately. Members inquired if a means of preferred communication could be pulled from CWDS.
- Ms. Cheryl Novak explained that there is an option for customers to request receiving surveys by other means of communication including Braille. This could be further looked into and discussed.
- Mr. Roach reported that since his involvement beginning in 2022, he has not seen a request for Braille surveys and is not aware of any mechanism to provide that. Surveys are not provided randomly, they are sent to everyone on a monthly basis that is considered in either 1 month, 6 months, or 12 months of Status 26 or Status 28. OVR uses a CWDS generated survey and it goes out based upon the last recorded email link in that system. Responses are less than 3% and they are

not receiving any responses from students for 2 reasons. Emails were going to a SPAM account which has been corrected, and also because many of the students served under Pre-ETS set up emails through their Local Education Authority (LEA) or possibly their parents. Mailing is not currently an option. Around 2014 due to expenses and changes in available technologies, OVR switched from surveys that were mailed to a CWDS paperless response system.

- Members inquired about the process for putting out a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a 3rd party vendor to handle the Customer Satisfaction Surveys.
- Mr. Harbert explained that if the OVR were to pay the 3rd party company directly they would have to be a registered vendor with the Commonwealth and there are contracts with vendors who qualify within a scope of a project. All eligible vendors eligible for a contract are on a list, from there an RFP listing all expectations could be laid out and whoever responds with their list of prices and abilities could then be considered using a best value determination. From there payment could be issued to the vendor.
- Mr. Fogle explained that a good first step would include inviting Dr. Baczko to a meeting with the Policy Committee and Transition Committee to take that information forward to the Full Council.
- Members requested that staff draft a letter inviting Dr. Baczko to attend the next Policy Committee meeting to hold discussion regarding Massachusetts process with Customer Satisfaction Surveys, what led them to change their process, how they transitioned to the new process, and what has led to success with receiving higher response and more robust data/information.
- Mr. Roach agreed with members that before going into more details such as formats of surveys, answering the basic question of what Massachusetts does differently to greatly improve their survey responses. Once that is complete further reviewing the Council's role in advising OVR about improvements to the surveys one step at a time.

Schedule next meeting

- Members agreed to hold the next meeting on April 25th from 2:00 PM to 3:30 PM, including extra time for discussion with Dr. Baczko.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to adjourn. Ms. Sylenthia Dent seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.