



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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CareerLink / WIOA Committee Meeting Minutes for May 21, 2024, from 1:00PM to 2:00 PM

Members Present (P)

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

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: Cheryl Novak, James Whitonis, Russ Goddard, Chris Harbert

State Workforce Development Staff Present: Daniel Kuba, James Martini, Christopher Manlove

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

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. Julia Barol to approve the agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Joan Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Agenda Items

Annual Review of Committee Goals for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

- Members provided review of Committee goals for FY24-25 and provided the following revisions.
 - Addition was made for Goal #3 Step 2.) Committee members will identify and attend different WDB meetings and provide report to the Council.

- Mr. James Whitonis reported that a Workforce Development Board members has come forward to apply for PaRC membership and they are working to begin that process.
- Mr. Whitonis reported since the pandemic WDB meetings are hybrid and allow for virtual attendance to ensure accessibility. Information for members and the public to attend the WDB is available at the following link:
<https://www.dli.pa.gov/Businesses/Workforce-Development/wdb/Pages/default.aspx>
- Members agreed to attend at least one WDB meeting. Ms. Barol report that she has recently begun attending their Barrier Removal Committee meetings.

MOTION was made by Ms. Passle Helminski to approve the revised goals for Fiscal Year 2024-2025. Ms. Joan Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Committee Chair / Vice Chair for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

- Ms. Julia Barol nominated Mr. Andrew Pennington for Committee Chair. Ms. Passle Helminski seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations.
- Mr. Andrew Pennington nominated Ms. Twana Jones for Committee Vice Chair. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the nomination. There were no other nominations.

MOTION was made by Ms. Joan Goodman to accept the nomination for Committee Chair of Mr. Andrew Pennington and to accept the nomination for Committee Vice Chair of Ms. Twana Jones for Fiscal Year 2024-2025 by acclimation. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Updates

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

ADA Comprehensive CareerLink Assessments

Implementation of Assistive Technology (AT)

CareerLink Staff Trainings

- Mr. Russ Goddard reported that he recently met with Workforce Development staff regarding the use of TTY at CareerLink locations. TTY is now considered old technology and has few if any users. CareerLinks do have access to a text relay service or 711 which provides access through an operator, the person using TTY and the CareerLink. CareerLink staff is currently working on publications to make their staff and public aware of the use of 711. The service may also be used for CareerLink staff to reach out to those that use the service. CareerLink sites also have UbiDuo devices available which have 2 screens and 2 keyboards allowing staff and CareerLink visitor to type to each other wirelessly to ensure accessibility for the deaf and hard of hearing.
- Mr. Pennington explained that certain offices only list voice options and inquired why is it not consistent for all OVR District Offices as well. Mr. Goddard can refer

this question to appropriate OVR staff to update that website information. A few years ago, the TTY 800 numbers went out of commission and the use of 711 text relay was available instead.

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

- Ms. Barol reported that since February 2024 they have held 3 different trainings which began in April and finished in May that provided basic information on OVR Business Services, accessibility issues, and inclusive practices. Approximately 200 individuals signed up for each training. A pre-conference was held at the Pa Workforce Development Association conference on May 1, 2024, which was well received. The kickoff to the business to business mentor network is planned for next week with a focus on creating accessible job descriptions with 168 people registered for that 1 hour event. This will be an ongoing monthly meeting open to businesses to share information. The June topic will be the use of job coaches. Part of this project is to include a landing page online for business services for OVR and CareerLinks which can be found on the for business tab. They recently received approval to add recordings of their trainings to the webpage along with additional resources for different topics for businesses to learn about hiring individuals with disabilities and to join the business mentor network. This information will be provided to attendees once it is online.

Follow Up Discussion: Is there an ability to list email addresses of each CareerLink location and/or create RA email accounts for each CareerLink location to be listed on Commonwealth website?

- Mr. Dan Kuba reported that there is currently a review of the website, and the information would have to be listed after the review is complete. Mr. Kuba will follow up on this to ensure this information is accessible.

**PA Workforce Development Updates
Mr. Dan Kuba, Deputy Secretary, Workforce Development**

- Mr. Kuba provided report on the Commonwealth's overall strategies including efforts to increase availability in the Commonwealth for teachers and childcare. A Kindergarten to 6th grade apprenticeship program and a childcare program were recently approved. Sector Strategy includes efforts to improve healthcare, Information Technology (IT), teachers, farmers, and health / human services. Additional efforts include providing access to their High Priority Occupations information. Information about the Digital Literacy / Workforce Development grants and Direct Care Worker grants were provided.
- Mr. Pennington inquired how the grant funding for teachers, healthcare workers, and others equate to higher pay for those with low paying jobs. Mr. Kuba explained that there are standards and requirements that are a part of any

apprenticeship which will not be approved without meeting each of the minimum standard requirements. The grants often cover the creation and training aspects of the programs which frees up additional funding available within the providers budgets. Mr. Pennington inquired if these grants are self-sustaining to allow for the work to continue once the grants run out. Mr. Kuba explained that they continue to hold discussion on this issue. Apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship model have shown more success in that they continue and become self-sustaining over time. Some of the training consortium programs have stopped working once funding was no longer provided.

- Mr. Kuba will provide the Committee a report that is currently underway to determine barriers to employment. Mr. Pennington inquired if disability is a consideration included within this report. Mr. Kuba explained that the individuals surveyed do not have to disclose a disability and that he will research to see if this information is available within the aggregate data they have collected within the 'other' category.
- Mr. Kuba reported on the ID.Me Kiosks which provide safe and secure access to claims and other general information. Ms. Lynn Heitz reported that ID.Me is not accessible to individuals who are blind or low vision that use screen reading software. Unemployment Compensation uses this service and requires sighted assistance to get through that process. Mr. Kuba will look into what the process and protocols are for their staff providing assistance for the ID.Me Kiosks for sight impaired individuals and follow up.

Follow Up Discussion: Is data provided to U.S. Department of Labor in relation to Office of Federal Contracts Compliance Program (OFCCP)?

- Ms. Joan Goodman explained that she would like to know if OVR is aware of this organization, as they are required to establish Affirmative Action. Mr. Chris Harbert will inquire again and follow up to provide an answer for the Council.

Schedule next meetings

- Members requested that staff provide a poll for the quarterly meeting dates.

Public Comment (3 minutes per attendee)

- Ms. Lynn Heitz provided Public Comment and explained that the CareerLink webpage providing contact information by county through clicking on a map or picture is not accessible for her. Her screen reader does not read graphics at all, and it is impossible to click on anything. She would appreciate the information be provided another way to access information on all the PA CareerLinks. Resource Accounts (RA) could provide access to this information through an email account for each of the CareerLinks. Mr. Kuba will invite staff to hold discussion on the website accessibility and use of an RA for CareerLinks for the next Committee meeting.
- Ms. Joan Goodman provided the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM)

contact information for a 5 county area near Temple University and inquired if we should provide them information for all counties since OVR now has business services counselors in all of their offices. Ms. Barol agreed this was a great idea and can share that information with OVR as she is working closely with them on the business services project.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Ms. Joan Goodman to adjourn. Ms. Barol seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.