

Berks-Schuylkill CAC

3/12/2023 held virtually

Attendance: 5 members, 2 OVR staff

Meeting was called to order at 1:05 PM

Introductions: Angel Torres, Brian D'Amico, Andrew Pennington, Sally Kneipp, Helen Konnick, Kim Baskett, Jim Whitonis

New member; Helen Konnick was introduced to the group. Helen works for EDSI Solutions in workforce development and is the former Administrator for the Berks County CareerLink.

Brian D'Amico noted that an updated members list is needed. Andrew Pennington agreed and stated that inactive members should be removed from the list.

Minutes from 12/12/2023 committee meeting were not approved today in order to allow absent members who attended the December meeting to review. Motion tabled until June meeting.

Revised by-laws review was tabled until June meeting to allow time for all members to review.

Sally Kneipp stated that the CAC Brochure also be reviewed and updated as needed.

Andrew/Angel/Jim Whitonis provided background and details on the initiative to have all CAC Chairs/Co-chairs statewide meet to discuss a variety of topics including recruitment, youth involvement, and in-common issues. Chris Habert is coordinating the scheduling and agenda for this meeting anticipated to take place in July.

Today is Angel Torres' last day as CAC Chairperson. Andrew Pennington nominated Brian D'Amico for the Chairperson. Angel moved to approve and was seconded by Sally and Kim. All were in agreement. Brian accepted this appointment.

Sally motioned to nominate Angel as Co-Chair. Motion was moved to approve by Andrew with Kim Baskett and Brian agreeing to second. All were in agreement. Angel accepted this appointment.

Kim Baskett delivered the OVR report.

- For the program year 7/1/2023 and runs to 6/30/2024:
 - Numbers reported are valid 7/1/2023 – 2/29/2024
 - 911 referrals (exceeds # of 726 for same period in 2022-2023). Referrals are increasing each month.
 - VRC's receiving high # of referrals monthly; 13 – 15 avg. Should be 8 – 10.
 - 527 initial interviews / intake appointments successfully held (473 same period last program year 2022/23)
 - This number reflects cases moved to status 02 to date, not the total number of initial interviews conducted. The discrepancy is due to case processing delays and successful return of Rights & Responsibilities document (OVR-11).
 - 578 eligibilities determined (430 same period in 2022/23 PY)

- Total of 810 IPE's were developed (457 same period 2022/23 PY)
 - 528 initial IPEs completed
 - 282 IPE amendments
 - 88 successful Status 26 closures – goal is 174 (78 same period 2022/23 PY)
 - Current # of cases in Status 06 added to minutes per request by Andrew Pennington – 10 cases
- Staffing:
 - 12 – VR Counselor positions filled
 - 6 of 12 are less than 2 years (1 is less than 1 year)
 - 5 of those 6 are not yet at full-caseload capacity
 - 3 – Open VRC positions approved to be filled
 - VR Supervisor – 1 experienced filled, 1 TWOC filled, 1 vacancy not yet approved to be filled
 - 1 – ADA position not yet approved to be filled
 - 2 Business Services Representative positions not yet approved to be filled
 - 1 DA position (Kim) filled permanently from TWOC in November
- Rapid Engagement/Status 02 & 10 Compliance
 - Referrals assigned to VRCs within 5 days
 - Contact with customer occurs within next 5 days
 - Most intake appointments taking place within 15 business days of referral assignment
 - Question from CAC member “How is rapid engagement working for customers?” – Going well. Customers are instructed via written and verbal correspondence to bringing medical documentation to intake appointment. Quicker scheduling and early availability of medical records has led to higher compliance rates and starting customer services sooner. Example: In November the Reading DO had a 98% compliance rate for determining eligibility within 60 days of referral (status 02 – 10). Status 10 (initial IPE) compliance rate for November was 81% which is tracking upwards. RSA requires a minimum of 90% for both indicators.
 - Question from CAC member: “How does presumptive eligibility work in rapid engagement especially for Social Security cases? What do you attribute increase in compliance to?”
 - Supervisors meeting weekly with VRC's to track status 02 & 10 compliance
 - Two aspects to eligibility: do they have a disability and determine order of selection (OOS). SSI/SSDI recipients are determined disabled and are automatically presumed eligible but VRC still needs to determine OOS. VRC's can change OOS later if additional medical documentation and diagnoses are discovered later in the process.
 - Referrals come into the office but most are by phone. Referrals take clerical staff approx. 10 – 15 minutes to complete.
 - Supervisor meet with VRC's monthly for full caseload tracking leading to monitoring all open cases, ensuring no one is overlooked and ensure quicker customer engagement and service delivery.

- Question from CAC member: “Is OVR under a waiting list?”
 - No, there is no waiting list state-wide. Some offices are still experience significant staffing vacancies which is leading to certain areas being uncovered, or partially covered. Reading DO has vacancies in Schuylkill county. Those referral assignments are being delayed and are assigned to overtime VRCs as available. New VRC hires will be prioritized for Schuylkill County.
- Question from CAC member: “How many in vacant territory in Schuylkill?”
 - Currently there are approx. 110 referrals waiting, most are slated for assignment before Feb 2024, 39 of which are already being served on OT. We have two new VRC’s in Schuylkill
- Question from CAC member: “Where to find job postings?” [Employment Open Jobs \(pa.gov\)](#)
- Staffing and vacant caseload updates will be provided in the next CAC meeting.
- CAC member suggestion: “Ca CAC put out a position paper from CAC perspective regarding what CAC sees as drawbacks and needs to get everyone seen/addressed timely & try to make needs better understood by Central Office?”
 - All suggestions and feedback from the CAC is sent up through the chain of command by DA Kim Baskett.
- Assistant District Administrator and two Business Services Representative positions are still open
 - No update on these positions since last CAC meeting
- 1 clerical position remains open
 - This position will not be filled until the full complement of other positions is already staffed

CAC Goals were discussed

- State Rehab Council website post re: community education & outreach.
 - Do Jim and/or Andrew know of any other CAC’s that post to the PaRC site?
 - Jim – CAC’s post agendas or speakers with special pdfs – there is room to take on more opportunities – talk to PaRC and see what they would be willing to do.
- Outreach – Connie Moonen runs OVR social media accounts. Can PaRC have job posting link?
- CAC recruitment flyer updates
 - Updated recruitment flyer, closure letter insert, by-laws and brochure have all been updated and circulated to members.
 - Sally found the original files for updating the brochure
 - The updated file is in MSPublisher
 - Angel and Sally will review the documents in question and give Kim suggestions to review before updating the file
- Statewide CAC Chairperson meeting?
 - Jim reached out other CAC chairs and had some interested in this.

- OVR could host state-wide meeting via MS Teams or can use PaRC Zoom link.
- Jim will reach out to chairs and provide details to local chair.
- CAC Election
 - No email were returned with nominations for positions.
 - Concerns include low turn-out to meetings – not having a chairperson may result in poor-quality meetings.
 - Angel wants to step down from his leadership position. Can he provide a hard-stop date?
 - Angel to email members a hard-stop date and reopen nominations for new voting date. Angel indicated March 12, 2024 as hard-stop.
 - Interim Meeting
 - Angel, Brian, and Kim will meet in Jan 2024 for interim meeting for planning purposes and to discuss agenda for next meeting.
 - Is the name of the organization Citizen’s Advisory Committee or Citizen Advisory Committee?
 - Name appears to be inconsistent across CACs across the state
 - Naming and consistency should be addressed with other chairs

Next Meeting Agenda

- PaRC & State Board meeting on agenda

Items for the general good:

- Next PaRC meeting
- PA State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation meeting 3/7/2024 from 10:00 AM to 3:00 PM

Next CAC meeting to be held 3/12/2024 at 1:00 PM

Upcoming meetings in 2024: June 11, Sept 10, Dec 10 (1:00 – 3:00 PM)

Motion to adjourn made at 3:05 PM by Brian, Seconded by Judy