

Tuesday 6/13/2023

Berks / Schuylkill CAC Meeting

Held online / virtually by Teams

Meeting called to order at 1:14 PM

5 members, 2 OVR staff in attendance

Members of call introduced themselves.

Attempted to review and approve March 2023 minutes.

- Several members did not receive March 2023 minutes
- Minutes that had been attached to invite were for December 2022
- Motion made by Brian to delay approval until next meeting to allow time for review
  - Motion seconded by Judy V

**OVR Report was presented by Acting District Administrator Kim Baskett**

RDO numbers for fiscal year July 1, 2022 to June 30, 2023:

- 1053 referrals
- 699 initial interview appointments conducted
  - Possibly more conducted, number includes only those who returned all intake paperwork and moved to status 02
    - Question: Is this a good number?
    - Answer: Last year's numbers were not at hand, but this is a large increase from last year due to Rapid Engagement
  - Referral numbers spiked as usual in January, April, and May
- 593 cases had Eligibility completed
  - Order of Selection is currently open, so all eligibility categories are being serviced at this time
- 693 initial Individualized Plans for Employment were written
- 152 successful case closures as of 6/10/2023
  - Goal for the office is 178 by 6/30/2023
  - Current number is 85% of office goal
  - Goal is expected to be reached or very nearly reached

#### Staff changes since last CAC meeting:

- 1 VRC resigned. Corey had serviced Berks county.
- 2 new counselors started May 8, 2023 including a Deaf & Hard of Hearing Counselor / RCD and a new counselor who speaks Spanish.
  - Berks County and Reading area specifically need a Spanish-speaking counselor
  - RCD has been needed for a long time
- 2 postings came down including Corey's and interviews are being conducted presently
- ADA position has not yet been posted
  - Kim is still acting DA and also supervising the transition unit
    - Transition unit is very busy this time of year
- Supervisor vacancy and ADA vacancy have yet to be filled

#### Summer programs:

- More than 100 students are participating in a summer program for 2023
- My Work Program
  - Summer work program where high school students partner with a local municipality or nonprofit
    - There are 16 sites this year, compared with 2 sites last year
    - 4 students per site, all being paid
    - Lasts 6-8 weeks over the course of the summer
  - PA Governor Shapiro and Secretary of Labor & Industry are very interested in the summer My Work sites, and the RDO has submitted dates and sites in case they would be available to visit one (or more) of the RDO sites.
    - Ryan Hyde is to visit one site in July 2023
- SWEAP (Summer Work Enhancement and Assessment Program)
  - 10 sites between 2 counties
  - 4 students per site
- Professional Connections
  - 60 hours focusing on job readiness, resume building, career exploration, self-advocacy, independent living, and also on tours of workplaces
  - 4 sites up to 15 students per site

#### Other programs:

- WEXA
  - Like a paid work experience but for adults with gaps in work history or little to no experience in the workforce
- Supported employment provider capacity continues to be a challenge
  - Providers are short-staffed with high turnover
  - It is difficult to connect customers to services

- Almost all providers currently have waiting lists while they try to hire / onboard more staff
- RDO continues to work as hard as possible to connect customers to services
- RDO Counselors continue to attend Berks and Schuylkill CareerLinks.
  - Berks schedule: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, hoping to eventually expand to having a presence at the Berks CareerLink all five days of the week when the CareerLink lease is next updated
  - Schuylkill Schedule: Monday through Friday
- **Question:** Rapid Engagement was initiated because it took too long to get to planned status and there had been a high drop-off rate, but will the delay in services also cause a large drop-off in participation? What is the RDO doing to keep customers engaged?
  - Answer: Through counseling & guidance, frequent check-ins with customers, and looking for other services that may benefit the customer until providers are available.
    - Customers are not happy about the delays, but VRCs are trying to get services engaged as soon as possible
    - RDO is trying to partner with agencies who do have staff available in the area who can help out
    - VRCs are keeping in contact with providers through the bimonthly provider meetings regarding each agency's ability to serve customers

### CAC Goals were discussed

Outreach goal involving social media / preparing a post for the PARC website was discussed

- James Whitonis alerted all CACs of an option to post meeting times and dates on the PARC website.
  - This idea originated with the Berks / Schuylkill CAC
  - It is hoped that there will be more interaction between the heads and chairs of CACs across the Commonwealth
    - Some CACs are currently vacant and others have minutes not currently up-to-date
    - Angel will discuss this with James Whitonis to see if there is more interaction to be had
- It is hoped to achieve improved local outreach to Berks and Schuylkill counties
  - In July 2023, RDO staff and other community agencies and nonprofits will be participating at Community Days in Schuylkill County
    - Would it be possible to have the CAC info at the table as well?
    - Is it possible to update the CAC brochure before this date, as it has outdated contact information
      - It does not seem to be possible at this time, but updating the brochure will be prioritized going forward
  - RDO attempts to attend any relevant community events

### General Good Items were discussed

- Angel will be stepping down as chair at end of 2023 but intends to remain a member of the CAC for the foreseeable future
- Poll results regarding meeting date changes from Tuesday to Monday
  - No strong opinion was noted for either day as easier for people to attend meetings
  - One individual had previously requested a date change to Mondays, but her situation has since changed
  - Tuesday meetings will remain through the end of the year
- Last PA State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation
- meeting included a discussion regarding opening VRC positions to individuals with Bachelor's degrees
  - This is being discussed at the state board level
  - Ryan Hyde estimates this will be a long process to determine if this is something Pennsylvania will find useful going forwards
  - Review will include civil service discussions, duties for Bachelors vs Masters level counselors, and job descriptions
  - Negotiations have not yet started, they are only seeking board approval to discuss this concept
- Upcoming PARC meeting:
  - August 2, 2023 from 9:30 to 1:00
  - October 18, 2023 from 9:30 to 1:00
- Upcoming PA State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation meeting:
  - September 14, 2023 from 10:00 to 3:00
  - December 7, 2023 from 10:00 to 3:00

### Next meeting agenda items

- Review the CAC brochure and have ideas on how to update it with general information regarding the CAC and its mission
- Update inclusion flyer for successful (status 26) closures of cases at OVR
  - Lee will scan the CAC letter currently included to Kim, Angel, and Brian for review and discussion
  - Update ideas will be presented at next session

Motion made to adjourn: Sally

Seconded: Andrew

Meeting adjourned at 2:15 PM