

CAC MEETING – February 3, 2023 Minutes

The CAC meeting of the Pittsburgh BBVS office occurred on 2/03/2023 using the Teams platform at 10:00 a.m. The office is at 531 Penn Ave, Pittsburgh PA. Attendance virtual and in office.

In attendance - Some virtually and some in person at the office:

Tom Burgunder, President of GTCB (in person); Danielle Dawgiello, District Administrator, Pittsburgh BBVS Office (in person); Emily Gindlesperger, 2nd - VP NFBP (virtual); Carla Hayes, WCCB President (virtual); Lynne Heitz, President NFB PA (virtual); Chris Hunsinger, President - PCB (virtual); Harold Longmore, VR Supervisor - Pittsburgh BBVS office (virtual); Bob Nagy (virtual); Spero Pipakis, BSR – BBVS Pgh (virtual); Andrew Pennington, CAP Representative (virtual); Barb Peterson, BVRSP (virtual); Sherry Rogers, Guest (virtual); Michael Zaken, Co-Chair (virtual).

Approval of November 2022 Minutes:

Mike motioned and Carla seconded to approve. Attendance (in person/virtual options to discuss). We made no changes in the way to meet.

Staff Updates:

Annuitant CA2 and a new CA2. Have a new VRC who moved here from New Castle BVRS where she was a supervisor and came to the BBVS Pgh office. Fiscal position is still open but there are people covering from other offices with overtime.

Looking for another VRC. Still looking for a Social Worker and two O&Ms. Hunter will be transitioning from Intern to full-time VRC. Lynne asked about why the supervisor from New Castle would take a pay downgrade, and Harold mentioned that she always wanted to work for BBVS.

Statistics Update:

From July through the end of January 2023:

VRTs: 89 cases with 60 closures.

O&Ms: 61 cases, but that will go up since there are more VRCs and Social Workers to make referrals.

Social Workers: 327 cases with 83 closures

VRCs: 482 cases. Having meetings to work on closures. Caseload per counselor is between 100 and 130. They are identifying providers they can use in particular counties. They want to use organizations which work predominantly with intellectual disabilities, using job coaches or job shadowing.

Lynne brought up that people ask for particular items as they go through their counseling. The example was given of asking for WayAround tags and getting something else which was more expensive that didn't work because the client wanted the items to be clothing identification tags.

The customer had been told that there was no one to train on how to use the WayAround tags. They will be looking into such issues. Harold indicated people ask for items which are not appropriate some of the time, things that they want and not what they need. His example was an expensive car when an economy car will do.

Pre-ETS Programming:

Identifying high school students giving high school students choices
Paid Work Experience:
Job Shadow
My Work

Summer Programs:

Robotics Camp at BVRSP
Career and Community Program at BVRSP
Envision Camp at Penn State Behrand about a week. This is a living skills program primarily.
Summer Academy- wait list already

Emily asked how the information given to students and their families. We were told that VRCs get the info to give to their students.

Lynne asked since there is a Central Office committee to make the decisions, why is there no ability to give all students the chance and let the committee deal with the denials. Chris and Emily suggested an email blast,

or automated phone blast was suggested by Sherry. This conversation will be a part of the 2/14/2023 meeting.

Lynne made a suggestion that CWDS move to find a way to sort and filter email from its database to create easily reachable lists of emails to communicate with different categories of clients.

Specialized Services Children:

Having 3 VRTs in the office

Planning a summer group for kids in-house at Pittsburgh BBVS. Instructional program for kids, like baking living skills etc. need to work on logistics.

BVRSP Programming:

PABT Personal Adjustment to Blindness starting 2/20/2023 and changes to the program

Pre-Promote (Basic office skills) starting in March 2023 Scholarships available for Allegheny County - remote. Cost of PrePromote is \$750 otherwise, and program lasts a week.

BVRSP One Program July 10-14, 2023 - C-cap.

An additional program July 24-28, 2023 which is similar.

Stem Aug 1-11, 2023.

White Cane Day was held last Oct 2022. A reminder to involve the Golden Triangle for this year's event

This planning has not yet started at BVRSP.

New Programming:

STRIVE-On (starts in the Spring of 2023)

Other programs customers have attended (Helen Keller) adjustment and student for deaf-blind.

The Perkins Program has not been approved in Pennsylvania because it is so new and expensive. It is a postsecondary program for college prep expected to last several months.

Outreach:

Training Update- Train the Trainer program. Train the trainer for BBVS going out to customers and/or providers going out to Intermediate Units. Looking for supervisors of TVI as contact points. Outreach to work with the BVRS offices giving them more guidance on how and when to refer people to BBVS.

A presentation at WPSBC in January to help the school understand better how and when their students can or must take advantage of Pre-ETS services through BBVS.

They are planning an outreach event with CVS Training Center for visually impaired people because Erie has been doing Pre-ETS with CVS already. The office hopes to have a Spring Steam event for students which would be at CMU. They are working with Catherine Getchell.

Pre-ETS provider sessions, Outreach to Ophthalmologists and other providers. They acknowledge they should work with PaTTAN better to work with the Intermediate Units.

BSR Update – Spero:

CVS and Highmark, First National Bank and Disability Go hiring. Spero is now on a mailing list for usajobs.gov in the Pittsburgh area. He gets spreadsheets from CVS with many jobs and forwards to the VRCs the ones which look like customers could do them.

UniqueSource, which is Pennsylvania Industries for the Blind, is also now a source of employment. Spero thinks he will now be able to go to one place instead of to each agency for information about available jobs.

Mike asked about UPMC as an employer. Spero says not so good as it should be. When people are referred, the imbedded people who knew the disability system are no longer working there. And the assistive technology people are in-house and not necessarily aware of solutions which work.

As for PNC, Spero said he has really heard nothing from PNC since before the pandemic. PNC had said their goal was total accessibility, but there is no way to judge that because he hasn't placed someone there recently.

Looking at getting feedback from Highmark for their billing system because they have some remote positions discussing people's insurance needs which might be possibilities for clients.

First National Bank has placed a client from the Erie office in Hermitage so Spero will be checking on the accessibility of that system since they are also hiring people for remote positions in this area.

Prospective new Low Vision provider in Allegheny County- Dr. Lindsey Lear – Ophthalmology Associates of Osborne (Sewickley, PA)

For the BBVS office there is a bioptics consultant because this is a new concept for the office to be working with.

VR Update:

How Rapid Engagement will affect intake processes:
It may make the system a little faster. There is only a one-page referral form now with rapid engagement.

Now 4 VRCs (caseloads divided among the 4) The info about caseloads was above.

We had a discussion of the flaws in the work management system which does not really measure accurately what number of employees this office needs to handle the work. We talked about the difference in caseloads from BBVS and BVRS because BBVS cases take a lot more work to get people into the work force. Harold explained that there could be a total compliment of VRC slots for the offices and when your office loses someone through retirement, another office might take the slot that you would like to fill so that you can't fill it even though your office would like to have that person replaced. He also said that this office has gone from 8 VRC positions to the 4 that they have now, but the agency argues that since homemakers are no longer a category that BBVS works with, they justify the lower number of employees. The number of cases has also dropped by nearly half, but no one can determine whether it is because there are fewer people needing service or fewer workers to serve them. Also, because of Pre-ETS students joining the VRC caseload earlier in high school and staying in the system longer, the numbers for current caseloads don't mirror older statistics. He

also pointed out that because of Pre-ETS, students with multiple disabilities would have in the past been referred to other agencies for services and might not have had vocational evaluations, etc.

CA MSG tracking grades for college students and report cards. Federal requirement to keep grades on file for students. Working on a streamlined way to do that. Losing a counselor in June. Keeping the record of student grades and Diplomas for high school students (is an RSA requirement)

Adding New People to the Group (two potential new members):

Mike made motion and Barb seconded to bring on Brenda and Sherry. The motion carried. Mike will send the bylaws out for group distribution so we all know what we are or are not doing according to them.

New Business:

Lynne brought up the ILOB change to \$5000 and the Financial Needs Test change to \$100,000 through June 2023. The ILOB change is for new plans created January through June 2023, and Amendments to the ILOB plan done in the same time frame can be for the higher amount. Social Workers actively pursuing these money aspects. Let's get a review of the FNT form at our next meeting.

The next CAC meeting is on Friday, May 5, 2023 starting at 10:00 a.m. Adjournment motion by Chris Hunsinger and seconded by Carla Hayes at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted by Christine Hunsinger, Secretary