



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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OVR Impartial Hearing Officers (IHO)/Mediators Ad hoc Committee Meeting Minutes for August 1, 2024 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

Andrew Pennington (P)
Susan Tomasic (P)

Jessica Keogh (NP)
William Paz De Melo (NP)

Lynn Heitz (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: Ralph Roach, Chris Harbert

Guests Present: Rob Schramm, Esq., Office of Chief Counsel, PA Department of Labor and Industry

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 2:30 PM after quorum was established.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz for approval of the agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Susan Tomasic seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

OVR Updates

Formalize process / involvement between PaRC and OVR in written policy or procedure

Outreach efforts / current list of IHO/Mediators

- Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR reported that a written policy has not been created and that he continues conversation with Mr. Ryan Hyde on PaRC involvement in the Impartial

Hearing Officer / Mediator screening and training process which involves a specific member being part of the process. No outreach has been completed since the last meeting for additional IHO/Mediators. A draft letter for stakeholder outreach has been created which provides information about the law so that potential applicants may self-exclude if appropriate.

- Members inquired about previous recommendation to provide outreach to the Pennsylvania Bar Association. Mr. Harbert reported that there has not been any outreach completed.
- Members inquired about developing a timeline to plan PaRC involvement in the process. Mr. Harbert will inquire with Mr. Hyde on this matter.

Review of updated IHO / Mediator training / re-training

Ensure that an observer and/or Committee member is present during trainings

Ensure training curriculum meets the standards set by RSA

Ensure objectivity and impartiality is part of the Due Process during initial training and revisited during tenure as IHO / Mediator

- Mr. Robert Schramm, Esq. reported that a draft of the training materials will be provided to members for review. The PowerPoint Presentation is divided into 2 sections. Part one will cover how to conduct a hearing and Part 2 will provide information about employment goals, eligibility, services, and other topics that hearings may involve. Member feedback is welcome prior to the next Committee meeting. A link to the Office of General Counsel (OGC) Mediation Program was provided
<https://www.ogc.pa.gov/Services%20to%20Agencies/Mediation/Pages/default.aspx>
- OVR previously agreed to a Committee member being present during trainings. No written policy has been created.
- Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) does not have training materials but information from the Council of State Administrators for Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) includes best practices and other useful information that will be shared with the Office of Chief Counsel.
- Mr. Pennington requested that staff include in the next agenda formalizing Committee goals and an action item on the timing of a written policy regarding PaRC involvement of the process. Members requested that a formalized policy or letter of understanding be created by OVR on the PaRC's involvement of the process.
- Members requested that training materials be provided to members prior to the next meeting. Members agreed to provide feedback on the training materials. PaRC Governance Committee is developing a policy and will be responsible for choosing or appointing a member to be involved in workgroups, conferences, and the IHO/Mediator screening and training process.

Schedule next meeting

- Members requested that staff poll for the next meeting to be held in mid to late October, 2024.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz to adjourn. Ms. Susan Tomasic seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.