



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

55 Utley Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011

Voice: (717) 975-2004 or (888) 250-5175 TTY: (717) 737-0158 Fax: (888) 524-9282

Email: parc@parehabilitationcouncil.org Website: parehabilitationcouncil.org

Transition and Education Committee Meeting Minutes September 3, 2024, from 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

Andrew Pennington (P)
Sylenthia Dent (NP)

Michelle Mitchell (P)
Kara Donatucci Pham (P)

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

Ex-officio Member Present: Julia Barol, Association for People Supporting Employment First

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: Chris Harbert, Kim Robinson, Krista Sloan, James Whitonis, Brett Glavey, Michael Vore, Don Barrett, Anna Griffiths, Mara Wolfe, Melissa Wert-Thrush, Hillary Hubbell

Guests Present: Alyse Watson, Bureau of Special Education (BSE), Kathy Walton, Riverview Intermediate Unit #6

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd

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.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

MOTION was made by Ms. Michelle Mitchell for approval of the agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Kara Donatucci Pham seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS

OVR updates

Youth Ambassadors Pre-Employment Transition Services

- Ms. Kim Robinson reported there are currently 6 Youth Ambassadors (YA) with 2 more planned for the Reading and Philadelphia District Offices. YA activity has included attendance of OVR meetings, community engagement projects, PA Youth Leadership Network activity, a State Board of VR presentation is planned, engagement with Special Olympics, collaboration with PaTTAN and their Youth Engagement Specialists, and online forums. Ms. Krista Sloan provided information about the YA located within the Allentown District Office which engaged in presentations and outreach on student-led IEPs, OVR trainings, and Project SEARCH activities. The YA located at the New Castle District Office began participating in their role about 2 weeks ago and attended an online virtual onboarding process through Special Olympics, attended Special Olympics Global Messaging training in person, attended an event at the Governor's residence, created 2 songs and graphic design for the Special Olympics softball championship using AI, assisted with a summer sports camp for children and served as the social media ambassador for the camp. Ms. Kathy Walton reported YAs at the Riverview Intermediate Unit attended an employment symposium, classroom presentations on transition and self-advocacy, attended a summer camp assisting students with a learning lab, and outreach with other school districts.
- Initial obstacles to the YA program have included staff shortages of providers, the program has been expanded to more schools, Local Education Agency (LEA), and community providers to alleviate this barrier. Members requested that OVR provide a list of District Offices that are either developing a YA program or have one in place to share with the Committee prior to their December meeting. Members suggested creating goals and collecting data regarding YA and student outreach. Members suggested providing more information about the YA program within the Board Quarterly Reports.
- Members requested that information be shared on the impacts of flat funding for Pre-Employment Transition Services. Ms. Robinson reported that a memo was shared with staff and providers regarding reprioritization of services due to flat funding and that they are providing guidance that will continue to use provider agreements that have been in place but stick with the minimum length of services.
- OVR has made updates to the College Policy which is now implementing the use of the Student Aid Index due to changes required after the enactment of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Simplification Act which no longer uses the term family contribution. Forms and system updates have been made accordingly. Memos were provided regarding the expiration of temporary limits allowing contribution limits for training.
- Members suggested tracking and collecting data on the impacts of reduced length of services due to flat funding.
- Ms. Mitchell inquired if the same efforts to decrease rather than eliminate services are being made to the College Policy and if messaging or outreach of restructuring versus discontinuation is being put forth. Members requested that this discussion be included for the December Committee meeting agenda in consideration of time

available.

Bureau of Special Education Updates

- Ms. Alyse Watson reported that she has a meeting scheduled this week with leadership to determine who will represent the Pennsylvania Department of Education on the PaRC and will keep members updated.

Conference Information

Pennsylvania Department of Education Conference, “Making a Difference: Educational Practices That Work!” February 5-7, 2025, at the Hershey Lodge and Convention Center

- Ms. Barol, Ms. Keogh, and Ms. Mitchell reported that they would be interested in attending the PDE Conference in February 2025. Members requested that staff follow up to plan for the conference attendance and travel arrangements.

Work Experience for High School Students with Disabilities Act (Act 26) Report Act 26 Information

- Members requested the Act 26 Reports be moved to the top of the agenda for the December Committee meeting due to lack of time.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Ms. Kara Donatucci Pham to adjourn. Ms. Jessica Keogh seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.