



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

OVR Policy & State Plan / Customer Satisfaction Committee Minutes for January 22, 2025, 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

Lynn Heitz (P)

Julia Barol (P)

Christie Cyktor (P)

Sylenthia Dent-Siebenlist (P)

Twana Jones (P)

Jessica Keogh (NP)

Julianna Rodrigues (P)

Susan Tomasic (P)

William Paz De Melo (NP)

Joan Myers Goodman (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: James Whitonis, Chris Harbert, Audrey O'Connor, Cheryl Novak, Ralph Roach

Project Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Ms. Lynn Heitz called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM after quorum was established.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to approve today's agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Christie Cyktor seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

OVR Updates

Financial Needs Test (FNT) Policy

2026 State Plan Two-year Modification

- Members shared concerns about the Financial Needs Test (FNT) policy providing information about the waiver for financial contribution, providing the customer the OVR 110 Financial Hardship Worksheet, FNT review process, and OVR customers being informed of the waiver process and forms by their Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) Counselors.

- Ms. Cheryl Novak and Ms. Audrey O'Connor, OVR explained that the FNT policy will require VR Counselors to inform all customers about the waiver for financial contribution during the FNT review process, OVR trainings are planned to ensure the new policy is fully implemented following its approval, the OVR 110 Financial Hardship Worksheet is not mandatory and is only meant to be used as a helpful tool if the waiver process is necessary. The OVR 105 FNT worksheet includes a statement above the signature line informing customers about the waiver for financial contribution. Members provided the suggestion that a checkbox is added to the statement so that the customer must provide acknowledgement that they have been informed of the waiver. OVR confirmed the recommendation to add the acknowledgement checkbox to the OVR 105 worksheet.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz explained that the background statement of the FNT policy lists the PaRC as part of the workgroup that helped to revise the FNT policy in 2021. Ms. Heitz requested that PaRC be deleted from this section and explained that the Council did not provide approval of changes to the policy in the past. OVR confirmed the recommendation of removing PaRC from the background statement.
- Ms. Heitz explained that the FNT policy may require a psychological evaluation as part of determining eligibility and assessments. Ms. Heitz shared concerns about the lack of qualified evaluators for Pennsylvanians who are blind and requested the OVR psychological providers policy. OVR confirmed providing the requested policy.
- Ms. Heitz shared concerns regarding an accessibility issue with the OVR 110 worksheet. OVR confirmed properly tagging the document and providing that updated document to the Committee.

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol for approval of forwarding the Financial Needs Test (FNT) Policy to the Executive Committee. Ms. Sylenthia Dent-Siebenlist seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Mr. James Whitonis reviewed the timeline for the 2-year Modification of the 2024-2028 Combined State Plan and provided an explanation of that process with the Committee which may require a Special Meeting to be held in March. The Committee will be provided documents containing section (a) Input of State Rehab Council and section (c) Goals, Priorities, and Strategies. Mr. Whitonis explained that during the previous plan's 2-year modification the goals were not changed, there were minor modifications to the strategies, minor changes to the OVR responses, and one goal was added regarding the Commonwealth Technical Institute at Hiram G Andrews (CTI at HGAC).

Continued Discussion of Bender Consulting Project Regarding Customer Satisfaction Surveys Goal and Objectives

- Members requested that this topic be tabled until the next Committee meeting.

Schedule next meeting

- Members requested that the next meeting be tentatively scheduled for February 26, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Ms. Sylenthia Dent-Siebenlist to adjourn. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.