

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE READING OVR

JUNE 8, 2021

MEETING 1:00 PM TO 3:00PM

VIRTUALLY OVER MICROSOFT TEAMS

ATTENDEES:

- 14 people in attendance.
- CAC Member Directory has not been sent to all members as of yet. It is being updated and will be sent to all members once update has been completed.

1. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- April 2021 minutes were NOT approved. Changes needed to be made:
 - Date year changed to 2021.
 - Attendance list updated to reflect correct number of 20 attendees.
 - Minutes from April 2021 will be reviewed again at next meeting.

2. OVR REPORT AND LEGISLATION: (YVELISSE GONZALEZ)

- There are ongoing vacancy issues with the Reading District Office (RDO). There are currently 9 openings in the RDO and only 10 active Vocational Rehabilitation Counselors (VRCs).
- Going forward, OVR will not have the "Trainee" position as a hireable position.
 - Previously the Trainee position allowed district offices to expand the Masters degree qualifications and hire locally and train the individual for 1-1/2 years.
 - The union and Central Office agreed to get rid of the Trainee position and expand the Masters degree qualifications for the standard VRC position. It is unknown what degrees will be included at this time and OVR is waiting to hear more information.
- OVR is still in a hiring freeze because of COVID.
 - RDO could be allowed to hire in the near future.
- On July 1, 2021, the Order of Selection will open, and cases will no longer need to have the waiting list. This means that cases that are identified as "MSD" (Most Significantly Disabled) by VRCs will be served with no interruptions.
 - Question: Last meeting we discussed the possibility of OVR revamping the application process. What is the status of that?
 - Answer: Central Office is still working on this. District offices do not have specific details at this time. RDO encourages interested persons to call and apply over the phone or apply online. RDO is considering bringing back the paper applications. In the last several years, the CareerLink website has changed, but OVR has no specifics regarding guidance for how to navigate the updated system for parties interested in applying online.
 - Comment: Why isn't there a link from the OVR page in the state website that directs to the application? Finding the application should not be as complicated as it is. This is something the Berks and Schuylkill CAC wants to tackle and streamline to keep referrals from dipping further.
 - This is not a reflection of the RDO. This is a system-wide problem that needs to be addressed from the top down.
 - Related question: Can the local CAC write a letter? How does the CAC make its voices heard and enact a change?

- Yvelisse: Central Office has the decision-making power regarding this, so calling Central Office to make them aware of the issues might help.
- Comment: The website does not give a list of application options or instructions. Andrew P. has been compiling a list of issues. The Chair of Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council may be able to bring up issues to the council meeting on the CAC's behalf.
- Website for PA Rehab Council: parac.org.
- Next PA Rehab Council meeting date: August 4, 2021 – public is allowed to attend.
- Suggested Action: CAC puts together a position paper and be prepared to answer a Q&A field. Angel T. will reach out to Andrew P. for collaboration.
- Comment: With the Order of Selection closed, Service Access and Management (SAM) was able to take direct referrals for employment support, and that also would have negatively affected OVR's referral numbers.

3. PA CLIENT ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (PA CAP) PRESENTATION: (ANDREW PENNINGTON)

- There is a CAP in every state. PA CAP's staff is completely separate from OVR staff.
 - Question: Could a customer come to CAP before applying for OVR services?
 - Answer: Yes. CAP is knowledgeable of the whole process for both OVR and Center for Independent Living and can offer advice and consultation on these services.

ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR GENERAL GOOD:

- Angel Torres led a discussion of possible CAC Goals.
 - Improve outreach to disability community, especially in Schuylkill County.
 - Streamline the application process.
 - Increase referrals.
 - Think of ways to improve OVR outreach in Berks and Schuylkill counties and increase awareness of OVR services in the community.

4. OTHER BUSINESS:

- Angel T. relayed the results of the Scheduling Survey that was sent out after the last meeting.
 - There were 15 responses.
 - Would Tuesday or Thursday be a good day to meet? 11 yes, 3 no.
 - Is 1PM a good time to meet? 12 yes, 3 no.
 - Are you interested in the co-chair position? 2 yes, 13 no.
 - If you are interested in the co-chair position, please email Angel T. at berks-schuylkillcac@hotmail.com to discuss interest.
 - Meetings will now be scheduled quarterly instead of bimonthly.
 - There were no member objections to this.
 - Comment: Setting a regular day might be helpful, for example every third Tuesday at 1PM.
 - Next Berks Schuylkill CAC meetings for 2021 are 9/14/2021 and 12/7/2021.
- If anyone is interested in or knows someone interested in giving a presentation to the CAC, email Angel T. at berks-schuylkillcac@hotmail.com to discuss.

5. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:

- Outreach improvements.
- Yvelisse G. will provide data and statistics on number of participants / open or new cases with RDO since last meeting AND since the start of the fiscal year to see the trend in referrals. This will help track the number of applications received and assigned throughout the year. If outreach is a goal, CAC will need metrics to track progress on this point.

- New goals for the CAC were discussed.
- Figure out barriers for youth seeking employment and come up with ideas and creative solutions to work with them with OVR to develop ideas to reach them and engage with them.

6. NEXT MEETING:

- CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE READING OVR
- SEPTEMBER 14, 2021
- MEETING 1:00 PM TO 3:00PM
- VIRTUALLY OVER MICROSOFT TEAMS

7. ADJOURNMENT:

- Motion to adjourn: Andrew P.
- Second to adjourn: Judith Y.
- Meeting adjourned at 2:32 PM.