

# **CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE READING OVR**

**JUNE 14, 2022**

**MEETING 1:00 PM TO 3:00PM**

**VIRTUALLY OVER MICROSOFT TEAMS**

## **ATTENDEES:**

- Meeting called to order at 1:10 PM.
- Attendees: 7 total, 1 guest; total includes 2 OVR staff, 2 arriving in last 20 minutes of meeting
  - A quorum is required to vote on any business. A quorum is defined in the CAC charter as at least 2 officers and 3 members.
  - No quorum was able to be made at meeting start.
- Allie S has stepped down from the CAC and will no longer serve as co-vice chairperson.
- None

## **1. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES:**

- None
- Angel will send emails 7-10 days prior to upcoming meetings to remind CAC members of upcoming meeting.

## **2. OVR REPORT AND LEGISLATION: (YVELISSE GONZALEZ)**

- Pre-ETS report provided by Kim Baskett
  - Pre-ETS / Transition unit is extremely busy at this time.
    - Referrals increase between March and May each year for students.
    - Many referrals this year are 2022 graduates, but they also include undergraduate high school students with anticipated 2023-2024 graduation dates. 2023-2024 grads see the uptick in referrals because they want to participate in summer programs.
    - Most summer programs (except for Professional Connections) require an open case to participate.
    - Professional Connections Experience includes 60 hours of job readiness. Students who participate in at least 54 of the 60 hours will receive a \$625.00 stipend.
      - Helps complete I-9 paperwork documents and preparation
      - Resume development
      - Career Exploration
      - Touring different businesses in the community
        - Tours
        - Answering questions
        - Workers and supervisors discuss the job being showcased
    - There are currently 3 PCE programs running.
      - Goodwill is running 2 sessions, one starting in June, one starting in August
      - Abilities in Motion running 1 session hybrid in-person/virtual starting in July
      - NEPA Inclusive running 1 session completely virtual for Schuylkill county specifically
      - NEPA Inclusive has prior experience in both Bucks and Philadelphia counties
    - My Work Program includes students working for municipalities in their communities

- Goodwill is operating 1 site in Reading at Reading Parks and Rec
    - Experience is 8 weeks, mostly outside with a site supervisor. Students are paid to work on beautification, repairs, painting, and similar work
  - Woz Works is operating 1 site in Frackville Borough.
    - Experience is 8 weeks, primarily outside work. Students are paid to work on repairs, clean-up, and improving local parks.
- LEAP Program is currently being operated by Easter Seals.
  - Program is operating out of the Opp Shop on 5th St in Reading.
    - Participating students working on job duties and education, especially self-advocacy.
    - Program runs on Saturdays
    - Students are paid \$10.35/hour
    - Education is run out of the Easter Seals office
- Several changes to the Pre-ETS program – new rates and services will take effect June 14, 2022
  - OVR can now pay for driver evaluation and behind the wheel training
  - OVR can now authorize transport / travel support for students in Pre-ETS activity
    - Fee paid is calculated by zone and paid to the provider transporting the student both to a site and from a site
    - Example: Transportation support may be paid for PCE provider for transporting to job shadow site and back to training classroom
  - Individualized travel training
    - To teach people how to access public transportation, taxis, ride sharing services, campus bussing, and city bussing
    - Travel training for these items for groups remains available. Individualized training for these items is a new addition.
  - All providers have been updated on the group services rate increasing from \$7.50 / half hour per student to \$12.50 per half hour per student
  - Increase of individual service job shadows from 3 to 5 job shadows. Students can earn a stipend of \$50 per job shadow completed
- QUESTION: Can the CAC watch some of the virtual job shadows / tours?
  - Kim will forward available job shadows / tours to interested parties after meeting
- Project SEARCH – 10 interns graduated for 2021-2022 term
  - 7 are employed or have job offers
  - 1 has decided they do not want to work
  - 2 are still in the interview process
  - 9 incoming students for next year to date, more possible
  - RDO and host company Penn State Health Saint Joseph have good rapport and love working together for this project
  - Working to expand Project SEARCH into Schuylkill county
- OVR updates for the general office and adult caseloads
  - VRC Salisa W has announced she will be leaving OVR.
    - ACHIEVE at Kutztown cases were Salisa's cases. These will be transferred to another counselor in the future.
    - The provider agreement has been updated.
  - Increase in total number of referrals to around 70+ per month since March 2022, plus referrals directly from schools (roughly 20 per month).

- Referral list is pulled biweekly
  - All new referrals are assigned within 15 days
- Liaison list has been updated
  - VRCs are starting to make rounds and contact sites and be present in the community
  - Sites were chosen based on exhibition of being in need of direct contact with a VRC
- On July 29, 2022 RDO will have 10 vacancies
  - New hires from 2022 are still interns and must complete their educational training in order to become full hires. They are getting increased caseloads for transition and veteran caseloads.
  - RDO is still waiting to post the District Administrator position
  - Yvelisse is still acting DA
  - Position will be hopefully posted soon
  - There is one confirmed interested candidate
- An update to the transportation policy is in the works
  - Yvelisse has identified two agencies interested in becoming a provider to transport non-driving individuals
    - Interested agencies are primarily in Berks county
    - Provider agreements are being updated to get everything in order
    - Schuylkill has a big need for transportation
    - Attempted to contact Schuylkill Transport Services but they have not returned the call
    - Possible other Schuylkill contacts:
      - Hazle Taxi (Tamaqua area)
      - Lyft & Uber (often unreliable)
      - Carbon Taxi (closer to Carbon county)
    - BCIU has busses and vans that they use to transport, and they have been asked to become a provider, especially for Project SEARCH. BCIU is the primary referral maker for Project SEARCH
- Supported Employment updates
  - New provider available – Kencrew
    - Familiar with Norristown and Philadelphia offices
    - 2 specialists live in Berks county and want to expand territory into Berks county
- Social Media update
  - CAC will not be able to have its own page on social media as it is related to a state agency, but it may be able to post within another group
    - Yvelisse hopes to have more information at the next meeting
    - No further information yet – there are many changes in central office, and this question seems to have gotten lost
- Central office is working on the following:
  - FNT changes – FNT is completed for every customer
    - Maximum allowed household income increasing July 1, 2022 from \$38,000 to \$100,000 for one year.
    - Increase is effective for fiscal year starting 7/1/2022 to 6/30/2023.
    - This will make more individuals eligible for services without cost. This is to help with financial stress of inflation.
    - FNT is eliminated for HGAC attendees

- Expected contribution for OVR will be exempt for college and post-secondary for this fiscal year.
  - Maximum of funding for college students is \$7000 per semester or \$14,000 per year for 7/1/22-6/30/23
- CareerLink Berks County liaison site
  - Yvelisse met with Helen Konnick in March 2022 at Berks County CareerLink and invited Ms. Konnick to a staff meeting at RDO
  - Yvelisse instructed RDO staff to tour the CareerLink
  - VRCs are beginning to form relationships with CareerLink staff
  - VRCs and CareerLink staff are referring for each others' agencies as needed
  - VRCs attend Berks County CareerLink on Mondays, Tuesdays, and Thursdays.
    - CareerLink is closed Wednesday mornings
    - CareerLink is extremely busy on Fridays and would not be a good time for VRCs to attend
  - There is already a regular OVR presence in the Schuylkill CareerLink, so there is already a good rapport between the offices
  - QUESTION: Can the CAC tour Careerlinks, either in Berks or Schuylkill
    - Yvelisse will send Angel Ms. Konnick's email so that they can schedule; CAC members can probably just show up to Schuylkill CareerLink to request a tour
- RDO continues to invite different programs to staff meetings to improve community outreach
  - Upcoming staff meeting will host Reading Area Community College (RACC) for adult education and English as Second Language courses as well as Prospectus Berco's Supported Employment program specializing on individuals with IDD
  - QUESTION: Does RDO do anything with Threshold?
    - BPN, Threshold's parent organization, is a provider with RDO and has a close connection already
    - BPN also has a bilingual employment specialist
- OVR Application Process – Is there an improvement to this process?
  - RDO can send paper applications to SAM and other similar organizations in the community, as the online application process is still complicated
  - Most Pre-Apps are completed over the phone with clerical support
    - Clerical support to complete pre-app has always been available
  - Public can enter RDO and request a pre-application directly
  - No one should leave RDO without completing a pre-application if they want to complete one
- PARC website – information is still not updated
  - New specialist in Central Office for CAC activity
  - Yvelisse will meet with new specialist on Thursday at 1:30 PM to discuss how the specialist can support the CAC
  - Yvelisse will ask if Angel can join this meeting
  - Yvelisse has sent the new specialists the minutes that have not yet been posted to the PARC website

### **3. ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR GENERAL GOOD:**

- None

### **4. OTHER BUSINESS:**

- None

**5. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:**

- Scheduled CAC election for December 2022
  - Angel is calling possible interested members to inquire level of interest in anyone being the chairperson
- Social Media follow-up
- Outreach improvement
- Upcoming PARC meetings

**6. NEXT MEETING:**

- CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE READING OVR
- SEPTEMBER 6, 2022
- MEETING 1:00 PM TO 3:00PM
- VIRTUALLY OVER MICROSOFT TEAMS

**7. ADJOURNMENT:**

- Motion to close: Sarita
- Second: Andrew
- Meeting closed at 2:26pm