

CITIZENS' ADVISORY COMMITTEE TO THE READING OVR

SEPTEMBER 6, 2022

MEETING 1:00 PM TO 3:00PM

VIRTUALLY OVER MICROSOFT TEAMS

ATTENDEES:

- Meeting was called to order at 1:06 PM
- 11 in attendance + 2 guests
- Meeting began with introductions of current participants of call.

1. REVIEW AND APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

- CAC reviewed and motioned to approve March 2022 and June 2022 meeting minutes.
 - Brian D stated he did not receive the minutes.
 - Angel T stated he sent the minutes that morning.
- Mackenzie H motioned to accept minutes
- Andrew P 2nd motion

2. OVR REPORT AND LEGISLATION: (YVELISSE GONZALEZ)

- Transition Unit – Presented by guest, Kim B (Transition Supervisor at RDO)
 - Summer has been a busy season for the transition unit
 - My Work – Students work in local community
 - Reading Parks and Recreation – beautification of downtown Reading
 - Frackville Borough – program was featured in an article by the Pottsville Republican newspaper
 - Frackville Borough worked with OVR multiple summers, but this is the first year working with My Work program
 - Indicated the program was very successful
 - Professional Connections Experience (PCE)
 - Students visit other worksites to understand local businesses and skills needed to work there
 - 4 total programs were run by 3 providers
 - Abilities in Motion
 - NEPA Inclusive
 - Goodwill
 - NEPA Inclusive ran 1 program in Schuylkill County, held virtually due to transportation issues for many of the participating students
 - Feedback was positive from both students and businesses
 - SWEAP – community-based work program
 - Run by Goodwill
 - Sites were different locations in the community
 - Abilities in Motion STARS Program – OVR partnered to provide group Pre-ETS topics and presentations
 - Paid Work Experiences and Individual Job Shadows – for students that do best when not working in groups

- Engagement in summer programs was high. Usually student engagement drops off over the summer, but this year was different.
- Early Reach Coordinators and VRCs are currently going into public and private schools across the county to perform assessments for the schools
 - Meeting with special education and transition coordinators
 - Determining what the school has in place and what the school needs
 - Determining how OVR can help cover the school's needs for the next school term (this may include how approved providers may help cover those needs)
 - Each assessment is individualized to each school
- Project SEARCH 2022
 - Available for high school students in their last year of high school
 - Berks county students work with Penn State Health St Joseph each year, and this is found to be very successful
 - RDO is working on starting Project SEARCH with Schuylkill county students
 - Talking with Schuylkill County IU for 2023-2024 school term
- Professional Connections Foundations
 - A pared down version of the Professional Connections Experience held over the summer
 - In the works to start for the 2022-2023 school term
 - Will be 30 hours, running during the school year
 - If there are any virtual job shadows / tours and anyone is interested in attending to understand what the PCF would be like, contact Kim B and she will forward links to the virtual event as available
- There are no scheduled transition experiences running at this time because assessments are currently being made for the school year
- Reading Metro Taxi has been cleared to work with OVR as a transportation provider
 - This will be especially helpful for the transition unit
 - OVR can use Pre-ETS funds to pay for transportation of students to access Pre-ETS programming. A provider agreement must be in place for this to be used. This may include:
 - Reimbursement
 - Paying for mileage
 - Paying for transportation (taxis, Uber, Lyft, etc)
 - Brian QUESTION: How is Reading Metro Taxi service set up to handle transportation for physical, mental, hearing and visual disabilities?
 - Kim ANSWER: Paratransit is already available but requires advanced scheduling. OVR may be able to request a travel companion, but there may be an extra cost for this service. Reading Metro Taxi has a history of working with people with disabilities as a provider for Service Access and Management (SAM). They also have a history of working with individuals with mental health disabilities through their experience as a SAM transportation provider. Reading Metro Taxi was a good selection due to this experience.
 - Brian QUESTION: Can the OVR have a representative from Reading Metro Taxi come to talk to the CAC about how they would provide services to the disability community? The personal experiences across the population of individuals with disabilities has been very negative regarding Reading Metro Taxi.

- Yvelisse ANSWER: Part of OVR's regular work with a provider includes review by customers to see how customers found the service, including were their expectations met and how they can improve. Yvelisse G, Kim B, and the Early Reach Coordinators will be sitting down with Reading Metro Taxi to ensure that the service and expectations are understood by both sides of the agreement. OVR only invites contracted providers to come and speak.
 - Brian Commented it would be beneficial if we could talk to providers before contracted, to express our concerns and work them out ahead of time.
 - Yvelisse stated OVR will not have them come do a presentation of services.
 - OVR is also talking with BCIU, especially relating to transportation for Project Search
 - The primary Project Search site is the Penn State Health St Joseph site near the Reading airport
 - Some rotations are at the downtown campus, and it would be beneficial to let students access more rotations
 - Transportation is a HUGE barrier to employment for all individuals without regular access to transportation, but especially students who may not drive themselves and do not have access to another form of transportation
 - Project Search Schuylkill County
 - Discussions with Schuylkill IU began 2+ years ago, and RDO is beginning to see interest in this development
 - This is considered a large undertaking, but Schuylkill IU seems very committed to this project
 - The goal is to make Project Search Schuylkill available for the 2023-2024 school year
 - Goodwill remains a partner at this time
 - OVR would like a hospital for a business partner due to the variety and diversity of rotation opportunities
- Main OVR Report
 - Referrals have increased back to pre-pandemic levels of 35-40 per week
 - College students are returning to school, which means more vacancies in the local job market
 - Counselor vacancies – OVR now is down to 8 counselors after Keith Allcock retired in August 2022
 - There are currently no recent interviews for the openings to report on
 - The Civil Service listings for VRC positions has updated to include other masters degrees
 - This will hopefully create a more diverse candidate pool
 - VRCs are currently very busy and their caseload numbers are very high
 - Yvelisse is trying to alleviate high caseloads by making overtime available for interested VRC
 - The budget currently looks good and money is available for the services predicted to be needed
 - CareerLink liaison update
 - Berks VRCs continue to attend regularly per availability from CareerLink – daily except Wednesdays (CareerLink staff meetings) and Fridays (Careerlink requested no staff)
 - Schuylkill CareerLink – someone from RDO is present there every day as the Schuylkill field staff use the site as their headquarters
 - Language Accessibility
 - OVR currently works with Proprio for telephone translation services

- It is unknown if there are other options in development at this time
- Proprio is not OVR-specific, so some policies and language / diction is not translated easily for non-English speakers and some intention may be lost in translation
- Pennsylvania (outside of large cities) seems very behind compared with other parts of the country regarding multilingual accessibility. PA does not seem to make getting around / understanding services / etc. easy for non-native speakers

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS FOR GENERAL GOOD:

- CAC Goals
 - Social Media page
 - Can the CAC have a social media page?
 - James Whitonis from Central Office was in the meeting today and answered this: Yes, but the CAC can not mislead anyone into thinking information relayed is from OVR directly. A social media presence can be done, but the CAC has to be SUPER careful how it presents itself.
 - Once the social media page is developed, it would have to be approved by Central Office and the regional director
 - The naming of any CAC page would need to avoid using “OVR” as part of its name.
 - Improve Outreach
 - RDO no longer has a BSR, but it does have access to a Power Point file regarding disability awareness which was previously used by the former BSR.
 - Maybe the CAC can review the PowerPoint file to see if the information needs to be updated before it can be distributed to employers.
 - PaRC information is still not updated
 - Lee B will send the 2022 minutes that were approved by the CAC to James Whitonis for upload. The dates missing from the PaRC website are June-2021 to June 2022 .
 - An updated CAC brochure with Angel T’s name and contact information as CAC chair should also be on the PARC website. This must also be sent to James Whitonis for upload.
 - Upcoming Elections
 - Upcoming election for chair / co-chair is intended for December 2022
 - Chair position must be a current or previous CAC member and OVR customer
 - Angel T is currently in discussion with possible interested individuals

4. OTHER BUSINESS:

- QUESTION: I have a friend who wants to work part time but is on Social Security benefits. She is scared that she’ll lose her benefits if she pursues employment. Is there anything she can do?
 - ANSWER: The friend should reach out to the Social Security Administration or apply to OVR and request Benefits Counseling as one of her services. Goodwill, NEPA Inclusive, and AHEDD all offer this service and are approved providers for eligible OVR customers. They will be able to discuss her situation in detail. She may also choose to speak with Social Security directly about her situation, and they should be able to guide her through how much she can work without it negatively impacting her benefits.
- Is it possible to send the minutes and agenda a week ahead of time? This will allow appropriate time for review and comment

- Is it possible to send the bylaws to the CAC for ease of access?
 - Yvelisse G will add the bylaws to each upcoming meeting invitation
- The next PaRC meeting is scheduled 10/19/2022 from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM
- The next PA State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation meeting is scheduled 9/8/2022 and 12/1/2022 from 9:00 AM to 12:30 PM

5. AGENDA FOR NEXT MEETING:

- None

6. NEXT MEETING:

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

7. ADJOURNMENT:

- Meeting dismissed at 2:54 PM, no call for motion to dismiss.