



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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Executive Committee Meeting Minutes for April 23, 2025, from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Committee Members (P = Present) (NP = Not Present)

William Paz De Melo (P)	Susan Tomasic (P)	Michelle Mitchell (P)
Lynn Heitz (P)	Joan Goodman (P)	Christie Cyktor (P)
Andrew Pennington (P)	Julia Barol (P)	

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Present: Chris Harbert

Staff Present: Michelle Gerrick, Christopher Todd

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington to approve today's agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Lynn Heitz seconded the motion. All were in favor.

AGENDA ITEMS

CHAIR REPORT

Review Executive Committee goals for FY 25-26

Draft Agenda: Full Council Hybrid Meeting 05/07/25

- Members agreed to remove steps 2 and 3 from Committee Goal #2 because the PaRC Governance Committee now provides oversight of the items listed including the PaRC new member orientation and PaRC Mentorship Program.

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington for approval of Executive Committee goals with revisions discussed for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Ms. Lynn Heitz seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Members reviewed the draft agenda for May 7, 2025, Full Council meeting and agreed to add a report from the director of the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) and update from the Board/Council Ad Hoc Committee. Members requested an email be sent to Full Council providing an opportunity for all members to submit

questions and/or topics of interest in advance of the Full Council meeting so that OVR staff and stakeholders can prepare to address them during the Full Council meeting.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS / UPDATES

Action/Social Media – Joan Goodman, Chair

Committee goals for FY 25-26

- Committee Chairs provided updates regarding their approved Committee goals for Fiscal Year 2025-2026.

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol for the approval of all PaRC Committees' goals for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Ms. Joan Myers Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Ms. Joan Myers Goodman reported that the next Social Media Committee meeting is scheduled for May 14, 2025.

CareerLink – Andrew Pennington, Chair

Committee goals for FY 25-26

- Mr. Andrew Pennington reported that Ms. Twana Jones has been elected as Committee Chair and Ms. Julia Barol has been elected as Committee Vice Chair for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. The next CareerLink Committee meeting is scheduled for May 20, 2025.

Governance – Susan Tomasic, Chair

Committee goals for FY 25-26

Nominations for PaRC Officers for FY 25-26

Revisions to the PaRC Bylaws

Application for membership – Tim Krushinski representing the State Department of Education

- Ms. Susan Tomasic shared that there have been many nominations for PaRC Officers received for Fiscal Year 2025-2026. Mr. William Paz De Melo explained that the nominations will remain open until the election of PaRC Officers is held during the May 7, 2025 Full Council meeting.

MOTION was made by Ms. Susan Tomasic for approval of the PaRC Bylaws revisions. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Members reviewed the application that was submitted by Mr. Tim Krushinski to represent the State Department of Education. Ms. Susan Tomasic explained that the application was initially tabled by the Governance Committee due to the applicant's residency being out of state however, the Council has received guidance from the Office of Chief Counsel that residency is not a requirement for

PaRC membership. Members questioned whether the applicant may serve as a voting member or an Ex-Officio member and have requested further clarification.

MOTION was made by Ms. Susan Tomasic to recommend that the PaRC's State Department of Education representative be an ex-officio member contingent of clarification that would otherwise make them a voting member. Ms. Lynn Heitz seconded the motion. All were in favor.

MOTION was made by Ms. Susan Tomasic to accept Mr. Tim Krushinski's application to represent the Department of Education currently as an ex-officio member, to be further determined regarding their voting status. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Legislative & Public Awareness – Christi Cyktor, Chair Committee goals for FY 25-26

Support State Bills HB487 and HR10 and Federal Bills H.R.1175 and H.R.1529 Public Comment regarding PDE's proposed grant application under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act for FFY 2025

- Ms. Christie Cyktor provided review of State Bills HB487 and HR10 and Federal Bills H.R.1175 and H.R.1529 and explained how each piece of Legislation relates directly to the employment of people with disabilities.

MOTION was made by Ms. Joan Myers Goodman to support State Bills HB487 and HR10 and Federal Bills H.R.1175 and H.R.1529. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Ms. Christie Cyktor informed attendees that the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is accepting Public Comment regarding their proposed grant application under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2025. This revision would extend eligibility for public education for students with disabilities until their 22nd birthday, rather than ending services at the conclusion of the school term in which they turn 21. This would align student eligibility for Transition Services with State and Federal law. PDE will accept Public Comment until May 16, 2025, and Ms. Cyktor recommended that PaRC submit Public Comment in support of this revision.
- Mr. William Paz De Melo explained that the Council's comments would need to be honed in on Transition Services and employment. Mr. Andrew Pennington recommended that comments should reflect the need for Transition Services and how they transpire. Mr. Paz De Melo agreed with Mr. Pennington and explained the language should include an emphasis on Transition Services due to the inequities of Transition support within the education setting. Additional language should include the weight this revision puts on OVR regarding students not transitioning appropriately, the need for local school districts to share information with OVR regarding upcoming Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings and students that are transitioning from school, federal and state funding for Transition

Services, and that OVR's Pre Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) is not a substitute for the schools' Transition Services. Ms. Barol agreed the comments should include language, recommending the blending of funds and support for students with disabilities so that we may see them graduating with a seamless transition into employment and/or post-secondary education. Mr. Pennington recommended including the Transition portion of the IDEA to focus on what the law requires of PDE for the Transition process. Members agreed to also include language regarding the use of Compensatory Education (Comp Ed) supports and services toward Transition Services. Ms. Lynn Heitz explained that she thinks PDE should provide more support for students who are blind or have a visual impairment with Braille education and orientation and mobility (O&M) education. Ms. Michelle Mitchell agreed to provide language regarding technical schools, community colleges, and the Commonwealth Technical Institute at Hiram G Andrews Center.

- Members agreed to develop draft language prior to May 7, 2025, Full Council meeting for review, discussion, and approval during the meeting. Correspondence will be sent to all Council members providing an opportunity to share input for Public Comment.

Policy/State Plan/Customer Satisfaction – Lynn Heitz, Chair

Committee goals for FY 25-26

Revised goal and objectives for improving accessibility and engagement of Customer Satisfaction Surveys

Revised OVR Customer Satisfaction Survey questions

2024-2028 State Plan modifications

- Ms. Lynn Heitz explained that survey questions were reviewed, and revisions recommended by the Committee were previously shared. Revisions for the 2 Year Modification of the 2024-2028 State Plan were discussed during the most recent Committee meeting. The 2 Year Modification language and questions will be reviewed by OVR leadership, and no vote is required at this time.
- Mr. Pennington explained that other states provided valuable information about their customer satisfaction survey process during the CSAVR/NCSRC Spring 2025 Conferences and requested them to attend and review ideas with the Policy Committee during their next meeting. Ms. Heitz welcomed Mr. Pennington to attend and share that information with the Committee.

MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz for approval to recommend the revised OVR Customer Satisfaction Survey questions. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Ad Hoc Committees

- Mr. Andrew Pennington provided an update on the Impartial Hearing Officer/Mediator Ad Hoc Committee and explained that the Office of Chief Counsel

provided a response that they are working on PaRC's role in the process as was delivered by members during previous Committee meetings.

- Ms. Michelle Mitchell provided an update on the Board/Council Ad Hoc Committee and explained that they are working with PaRC staff on implementing next steps to expand Board member participation with the PaRC including targeted emails with specific Committee meeting information/invitations.

OVR UPDATES

Joint advocacy letter regarding the Direct Care Worker Crisis

- Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, reported that the State Board of VR has determined that it would be important to provide a letter regarding the Direct Care Worker Crisis to all members of the Pennsylvania General Assembly. Stakeholder groups have expressed interest in signing up to support this effort and the Employment First Oversight Commission has provided draft language for the letter. PaRC members shared their support for this effort and requested that the draft letter be shared with Full Council for review once the language is developed.

PUBLIC COMMENT (3 minutes per attendee)

- Mr. Andrew Pennington provided Public Comment and acknowledged PaRC Support Personnel and OVR Staff for their involvement and follow-up provided with Office of Chief Counsel regarding PaRC's role in the Impartial Hearing Officer/Mediator screening and training process.

ADJOURN

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Michelle Mitchell seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.