

Pittsburgh BVRS CAC Meeting 6-16-25

Monday, June 16, 2025

3:17 PM

Pittsburgh June 2025 Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting

- In Attendance
 - Andrew Pennington - CAP
 - Pete Huey
 - Sara Corrado
 - Jim Lilley
 - Linda Leavy - ESCA
 - Cindy Duch
 - Chris Rodocker
 - Hunter Steinitz
 - Jim Whitonis
- Goal
 - Successful Case Closures
 - Pittsburgh BVRS 830 (Office Goal 758)
 - Statewide 6,001 successful closures (Goal was 4,770)
 - Timeliness
 - Status 02 (Eligibility Determination)
 - PGH 95% of cases have an eligibility determination within federal guidelines (generally 60 days)
 - Expected level of performance is a minimum of 95%
 - Pittsburgh BVRS is participating in a Resolution Based Action Plan (RBAP) as a result of dipping to 94% for a single month in the rating cycle
 - Status 10 (IPE Development)
 - PGH 97% of cases have an IPE completed within federal guidelines (generally 90 days)
- Staffing
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
 - 3 vacancies
 - 1 VRC returning from an extended deployment on 6-23-25
 - 1 positions responsibilities absorbed by existing staff
 - 2 position covered on overtime
 - Clerical Assistant 2
 - 3 vacancies
 - All covered on overtime by remaining 10 staff
 - Vocational Rehabilitation Supervisor
 - 1 vacancy
 - Responsibilities and staff absorbed by remaining 8 VRS positions
 - Early Reach Coordinator
 - Cover 106 educational sites in Allegheny County
 - 1 vacancy
 - Covered on OT by remaining 3 ERC's
- OT coverage is more problematic for ERC positions due to customer availability

- This has been the primary position that local management has advocated to have filled as soon as practically possible
 - Anticipating vacancies due to pending retirements of a Local Office Fiscal Assistant and Clerical Assistant 3 over the next 3-6 months
 - OVR is operating under a hiring freeze due to the Commonwealths restriction on hiring, travel, and procurement for federally funded programs
 - Any positions that our executive team requests to fill have to go through an exemption process
 - Locally we do not expect any of our vacant positions to be filled in the near future
- Budget
 - OVR has been operating with the understanding that we would continue to be flat funded for the foreseeable future (FFY24, FFY25, and into the future)
 - On April 21, 2025 OVR received its final Grant Award Notification (GAN) for the 2025 Federal Fiscal year
 - This GAN included a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) in the amount of \$16,784,173
 - This was welcomed news but COMPLETELY unexpected
 - As a result OVR administration had the opportunity to review our current status and utilize that funding
 - MyWork Program
 - Expanded from 4 weeks to 6 weeks
 - Increased from 16 to 20 hours per week
 - Added 5 participants locally
 - Overtime increased from 10 to 15 hours per vacancy
 - Reviewed to determine if individuals on the waiting list could be released sooner than expected
 - Pennsylvania state budget proposal includes an additional \$5 million for VR
 - [Federal Budget Proposal for FFY 2026](#)
 - There are a number of changes that could potentially impact the national VR program if enacted
 - Includes COLA but adds a change in mandatory program that results in a post-sequestration level of funding for the VR program at FFY24 amounts. This would mean that PA OVR would go back to about \$144M in federal funds for FFY26 which is a reduction of about \$16.6M compared to FFY25.
 - Elimination of federal funding for the Client Assistance Program
 - CAP is a required program and this would cause the states to fund the program
 - Roughly \$450 K per State Board Meeting
 - Elimination of funding for the Technical Assistance Centers on the federal level which support state VR programs
- Order of Selection
 - Given our organizations current fiscal situation the decision was made to implement an Order of Selection (OOS) limiting service provision to those individuals under the Most Significantly Disability (MSD) classification on April 1, 2025

- The Order of Selection is a tool that is utilized to ensure that we serve those customers who have the most significant impairments first in situations where there is not sufficient funding to serve all applicants
- As of 6-12-25 there were 409 cases on closed Order of Selection classifications
- OVR has consistently received feedback from RSA that our Order of Selection does not effectively assess, triage and prioritize eligible customers as roughly 92% of eligible customers are in the MSD classification
 - As a result changes to the definitions for Order of Selection classifications will be implemented on July 1, 2025
 - These changes will go into effect for customers who have not yet developed an IPE, those in plan status will continue to receive services regardless of their OOS classification
 - For the Most Significant Disability classification an individual must meet all of the following criteria:
 - Have a physical, mental, or sensory impairment(s) that seriously limits 4 or more of the individual's functional capacities (an increase from 3 functional capacities)
 - Be expected to require 2 or more services
 - Required services on are expected to last more than 6 months from the date of the IPE or be needed on an ongoing basis to reduce an impediment to employment
 - For the Significant Disability classification an individual must meet all of the following criteria:
 - The physical, mental, or sensory impairment(s) must seriously limit 1-3 of the individual's functional capacities (an increase from 1-2 functional capacities)
 - Be expected to require 2 or more services
 - Required services on are expected to last more than 6 months from the date of the IPE or be needed on an ongoing basis to reduce an impediment to employment
 - For the Individual with a Disability classification an individual must meet all of the following criteria:
 - The individual has a physical, mental, or sensory impairment that does not meet either of the previous definitions for MSD or SD
 - Encompasses individuals who do not require 2 or more services, AND/OR who are not expected to require services for 6 months from the date of the IPE or be needed on an ongoing basis
 - Functional Limitation Categories as a reference

Review of Functional Limitation Categories



Seven Categories	Broad Definition
MOBILITY	Limitations moving efficiently from place to place
SELF CARE	Limitations in skills needed to fulfill basic needs related to health, safety, hygiene, and financial management
WORK TOLERANCE	Limitations carrying out physical and/or cognitive work tasks in an efficient and effective manner over a sustained period of time
INTERPERSONAL SKILLS	Limitations interacting in a socially acceptable, mature manner with colleagues and the public to facilitate the normal flow of work activities
WORK SKILLS	Limitations in critical skills needed to carry out essential work functions such as functional academics, motor skills, processing speed, memory, and communication
COMMUNICATION	Limitations accurately and efficiently transmitting or receiving information verbally or non-verbally
SELF-DIRECTION	Limitations in planning, initiating, and monitoring behavior with respect to a desired outcome that serves to benefit the individual
Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation	
25	

- - As our fiscal situation allows individuals will be released from the closed categories on the OOS waitlist based on their status 02 (Application Completed) effective date
 - We have been notified that we will begin a rolling opening of the Order of Selection on July 1, 2025
 - Offices will be notified of individuals on the wait list that are able to move forward with plan development
- The Whole Story Publication
 - Central Office team working on a publication highlighting success stories, both customer outcomes and community partnerships
- [OVR Annual Report](#)
 - The OVR annual report for the 23-24 program year was released in early May and is linked above
- Summer Programing
 - MyWork
 - 45 students
 - 10 sites (municipalities and non-profits)
 - 6 weeks at 20 hours per week
 - Community Work Instruction
 - Can happen at any employer
 - 4 going on this summer
 - 16 students in total
 - 8 hours a week for 6 weeks
 - Paid Work Experience
 - Students that need more 1 on 1 support
 - Job Shadows are ongoing

- Early Reach Coordinators
 - Trying to provide a replacement for Professional Connections Experience
 - Wednesdays and Thursdays for 8 weeks
 - Employer tours in PM
 - Educational activities in AM
 - Each of 3 VRC's will complete 8 job shadows in coordination with our BSR Jen Coperich
- Professional Connections Foundation
 - Service being provided on a limited basis
- Questions
 - Are Citizens Advisory Committees required? - Linda Leavy
 - Jim Whitonas - Not expressly required by RSA, but yes it is the goal to have one for each DO
 - Linda has inquired in Westmoreland but has been told that there isn't sufficient interest to have CAC meetings there
 - Pete expressed that Linda is always welcome to participate in the Pittsburgh CAC
 - Cindy Duch - With CAC it is often a "build it and they will come" scenario
 - [CAC Training Manual](#)
 - What are the responsibilities of the Business Services Team
 - Mike Sroka - VRS
 - Jen Coperich - Business Services Representative
 - Outreach and interaction with community employers
 - Compiling listings of job leads
 - Stacey Unger and Sean Stankovic BSC
 - Monthly workshops
 - Interview prep
 - Resumes
 - Work individually with customers
 - Work with embedded liaison programs
 - Andrew Rossi
 - MyWork and CWI's
 - Primarily handles Business Services sponsored or offices larger scale that are PreETS