



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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OVR Policy & State Plan / Customer Satisfaction Committee Minutes for October 21, 2025, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

Lynn Heitz (P)
Sylenithia Dent-Siebenlist (P)
Twana Jones (NP)
Michelle Mitchell (NP)

Julia Barol (P)
Cindy Duch (P)
Julianna Rodrigues (P)

Christie Cyktor (P)
Passle Helminski (P)
Susan Tomasic (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: Audrey O'Connor, Ralph Roach, James Whitonis, Chris Harbert, Cheryl Novak

Project Staff Present: Michelle Gerrick, Chris Todd

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Ms. Lynn Heitz called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM after a quorum was established.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions to the agenda.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

MOTION was made by Ms. Passle Helminski to approve today's agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Julianna Rodrigues seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

OVR Policy and State Plan Updates

- Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, informed attendees he will provide PaRC personnel with a response to questions regarding the survey project in writing. There were no updates or pending approvals regarding OVR policies.
- Mr. Jim Whitonis, OVR, reported that the 2 planned Public Comment meetings regarding the 2 Year Modification of the 2024-2028 VR Portion of the State Plan

were held as scheduled. No comments have been received to date but at least 1 comment is expected prior to the end of the Public Comment period scheduled for October 24, 2025. The draft Statement of Work for the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) was forwarded to the legal department for review.

Review and possible recommendation to the Executive Committee regarding Southpaw Insights' proposal to complete the Customer Satisfaction Survey Project

- Members explained that the proposal the Council received for the survey project may not include information needed for the development of a Statement of Work (SOW) and inquired if it would be possible to share with the organization a generic or example Statement of Work from OVR to provide clarity on what is being requested. Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, explained that without a live procurement there may not be a document available to share. Additionally, after speaking with OVR's legal and procurement offices they were informed that any entity that is involved in the creation of a specific OVR survey proposal could not bid on the work that is posted to be awarded with the specific contract. This would not disqualify the entity from bidding on other state proposals across the Commonwealth as a vendor, but it would disqualify the entity on bidding on any postings that relate to that specific proposal the entity drafted. They cannot be a party to a proposal the feeds their own business interests.
- Members inquired if a different entity were to submit a Statement of Work for the surveys would Southpaw Insights have the ability to submit a bid to procurement and if PaRC could submit a Statement of Work to procurement. Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, explained that there are a lot of hypotheticals to be able to provide a direct answer, good data is always appreciated and that the Council is good at making solid recommendations that outline best practices.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired with the Committee members how they would feel about creating and submitting a Statement of Work if OVR could share any required instructions and guidelines for this project. Members agreed to develop language for the SOW and Mr. Harbert agreed to reach out to the appropriate staff for a document that outlines any requirements and needs.

Review Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) Training Manual, Handbook, and By-Laws (PDF)

- Members held discussions regarding the different OVR District Office local Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs) history, community and provider participation, the history of other states' CACs, and efforts to increase community and provider involvement. Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, reported he is working on identifying the needs of the CACs, uniformity for CACs statewide, improving participation, and developing a presentation on these topics to inform and educate the OVR staff, District Administrators, providers, and community about the CACs.

- Members inquired about adding a question to the Customer Satisfaction Surveys to inquire if they would be interested in participating with their local CAC and providing information to OVR customers.
- Members inquired about how to improve engagement or starting a CAC for areas where the CACs are not currently active. Ms. Lynn Heitz explained that in the past District Administrators have provided outreach to providers, stakeholders, and the community and held meetings to develop bylaws, schedule meetings, and elect CAC officers.

Schedule next meeting

- Members agreed to meet again on December 4, 2025, at 11:00 AM.

Public Comment

- Ms. Lynn Heitz provided Public Comment as a member of the public and as President of the Pennsylvania Chapter of the National Federation of the Blind (NFB). Ms. Heitz explained that she reached out to the Commonwealth in preparation for the NFB convention regarding a potential presentation on Pennsylvania's hiring system and hiring people with disabilities. Materials for this topic were requested in large print and Braille. A PDF was provided to Ms. Heitz that she explained is not accessible for screen reader technology. Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, requested that the document be sent to him so that they may assist with converting the document into accessible format and to look into following up on the request for Braille. Ms. Heitz agreed to forward the email she received from a Commonwealth Civil Service employee and to share the document with Mr. Harbert.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Ms. Cindy Duch to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.