



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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OVR BUSINESS ENTERPRISE PROGRAM (BEP)

Ad hoc Committee Meeting

Minutes for September 19, 2025

10:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

Lynn Heitz (P)
Julia Barol (P)

Joan Myers Goodman (P)
Passle Helminski (P)

Andrew Pennington (P)
Michelle Mitchell (NP)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: Chris Harbert

PaRC Staff Present: Christopher Todd, Michelle Gerrick

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Ms. Joan Myers Goodman called the meeting to order after quorum was established.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Ms. Joan Myers Goodman recommended an addition to the agenda to discuss updates from OVR regarding the Business Enterprise Program (BEP).

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol for approval of the agenda with additions. Ms. Passle Helminski seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

Goals and Objectives

- Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR provided updates regarding the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) training, accommodations, academic testing, toolkits, accessibility, and evaluation processes. Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired about additional details regarding the toolkits, and whether evaluations begin at the District Office level. Ms. Heitz explained the importance of Orientation and Mobility training for participants of the program. Ms. Joan Myers Goodman inquired if applicants for the BEP program will fall under the Financial Needs Test (FNT) or if they will be

exempt. Members requested that Mr. Wes Runnels, BEP Director be invited to attend the next Committee meeting to share information about the evaluation process. Members requested PowerPoint presentation documents be shared with the committee regarding the Randolph Shepherd Act and the Pennsylvania Mini Randolph Shepherd Act. Members inquired about the timeline for individuals to begin instruction for the BEP program at the Commonwealth Technical Institute at Hiram G Andrews Center (CTI at HGAC). Mr. Harbert explained that he will follow up regarding member inquiries and requests.

- Members reviewed the goals and objectives document that was provided with the pre-meeting materials and had no changes or additions.

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to forward the BEP Ad Hoc Committee Goals and Objectives to the Executive Committee for approval. Ms. Passle Helminski seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Strategic Planning and Stakeholder Engagement

- Members agreed the Committee will initially meet on a quarterly basis.
- Members requested information for the next meeting regarding the number of vendors, contracts, recruitment efforts, waitlist for individuals interested in participating in the program, assessment requirements, District Administrator and counselor outreach efforts, how information is being provided to potential customers, ensuring informed choice for all Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) customers, methods of outreach to ensure even and accurate distribution of information, and what District Offices are currently participating in BEP.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz requested members be provided with access to attend or participate in the different District Office BEP staff training courses.
- Members requested that a representative of the PA Elected Committee of Blind Vendors (ECBV) be invited to a PaRC meeting to inform Council members of their activities and hold discussion regarding how to best generate interest in the BEP, determine more sites, and what is currently working well for the BEP. Members requested information on ECBV meeting requirements regarding the Sunshine Act and public attendance.

Schedule next meeting

- Members confirmed availability for the next meeting on December 12, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM.

Public Comment

- There was no Public Comment.

Adjourn

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