



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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PaRC CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) AD HOC COMMITTEE Meeting Minutes for March 5, 2026, 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

Andrew Pennington (P)
Passle Helminski (NP)

Christie Cyktor (P)
Julianna Rodrigues (P)

Cindy Duch (P)
Michelle Mitchell (NP)

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

PaRC Staff Present: Christopher Todd, Michelle Gerrick

Guests Present: Brian D'Amico, Tom Burgunder, Angel Torres, Suzanne Erb, Linda Carmona-Bell

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Mr. Andrew Pennington called the meeting to order after quorum was established.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

There were no additions.

MOTION was made by Ms. Christie Cyktor for approval of the agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Cindy Duch seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

REVIEW, DISCUSS, and VOTE ON COMMITTEE GOALS and OBJECTIVES

- Members agreed that the committee's recommendations will be submitted to OVR prior to beginning Goal #3, which involves reviewing the Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) training manual.
- Mr. Brian D'Amico requested clarification regarding Goal #2, which involves gathering public input, noting that public comment opportunities are already provided in accordance with the Sunshine Act and Robert's Rules of Order.
- In response to Mr. D'Amico's request, Members said the goal is to expand

opportunities for public input by adding a comment period after the committee discusses each option, and by creating a clear process to keep participation organized and orderly.

MOTION was made by Ms. Cindy Duch to approve the committee's goals and objectives. Ms. Christie Cyktor seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION OF OVR CAC REVITALIZATION OPTIONS

OPTION 1: Dissolve the CACs and Focus on Existing Groups that Provide Feedback to OVR

- **Current groups OVR is engaged with:**
 - **State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation**
 - **PA Rehabilitation Council**
 - **Employment First Commission**
 - **Statewide Independent Living Council**
 - **Advisory Council for Blind Pennsylvanians**
 - **Advisory Council for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing**
 - **Business Enterprise Program (BEP) – Elected Committee of Blind Vendors**
 - **PA Workforce Board (Statewide and local)**
 - **Local transition coordinating councils**
 - **Other local groups and councils**

- Members agreed there was a consensus not to recommend Option 1, emphasizing the importance of gathering customer input at the local level through CAC meetings.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Ms. Suzanne Erb stated that dissolving the CACs would be a mistake and noted that the Philadelphia CAC combines participation from the region's Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRS) and Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS), providing an opportunity for multiple disability perspectives to be represented and discussed.
- Mr. Brian D'Amico stated a concern about the language included in the revitalization document and emphasized the importance of maintaining CACs to ensure customer feedback at the local level.

OPTION 2: Continue Current Structure and Reinforce Expectations

- **Continue with each standing CAC and reinforce office expectations and recruitment**
- **Update existing CAC guidance and manuals to improve consistency and expectations**
- **Develop standard questions and reporting mechanisms for**

feedback

- **Note – This has been tried before and there has not been increased engagement and offices staff are frustrated and feel that the meetings have become talking heads vs feedback. When asked for feedback, participants rarely speak, or it is the same individuals expressing personal grievances.**
- Members noted the following: 1) the current CAC structure has been in place for more than eight years, during which some CACs have updated their bylaws and outreach materials; 2) there is currently no consistent process to ensure CAC feedback is reviewed and addressed; 3) grievances come from personal experiences and need to be discussed as other customers may have similar experiences; and 4) those attending CAC meetings are engaged and provide valuable input.
- Members recommended that a process be established for District Office staff to manage that includes following-up on customer concerns that are shared during the CAC meetings.
- Mr. Andrew Pennington reported that efforts have been made over the years to increase engagement and that CAC members have requested assistance from OVR in conducting outreach to customers.
- Members agreed that recommending Option 2 remains a possibility and that a final recommendation will be made after reviewing all five revitalization options.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Mr. Angel Torres stated that OVR assistance is needed to recruit CAC members, as confidentiality requirements prevent CAC members from accessing customer contact information.
- Ms. Suzanne Erb stated her disappointment with language in the revitalization document which indicates that some staff are frustrated and view CAC meetings as presentations rather than opportunities to receive feedback.
- Mr. Brian D’Amico stated that he is offended by some of the language in the revitalization options document. CAC meetings provide an opportunity for citizens to raise concerns about government programs and noted that recurring concerns may indicate issues that require attention. The Reading CAC is presented with information regarding compliance, success rates, and other data but staff need to be made aware of negative feedback so that customer concerns can be addressed. The District Office staff have access to customer information and surveys. CAC members are not provided with this information and cannot connect with customers to provide outreach directly. There have been efforts to update brochures and recruitment materials. The Reading CAC has begun holding its quarterly meetings in different locations which has resulted in increased engagement.
- Mr. Tom Burgunder stated that the Pittsburgh BBVS CAC maintains a positive working relationship with District Office staff and recommended that OVR continue informing customers about CAC meetings. CAC members also encourage members

of their organizations to participate in their CAC meetings. Comments and complaints are not recurring but are only heard from a very limited number of people.

Continued discussion by the committee:

- Ms. Cindy Duch noted that she was unaware that some CACs were divided by BVRS and BBVS District Offices and suggested that combining CAC meetings in some regions may increase engagement.
- Mr. Pennington explained that OVR staff sometimes address customer concerns individually after meetings due to confidentiality considerations. Members emphasized the importance of ensuring customer feedback shared during meetings is acknowledged and considered.
- Members agreed that it is important for all voices to be heard, even if it does not pertain directly to the services that OVR provides, the CAC meetings are an opportunity for the disability community to hold discussion about what is happening at the local level regarding employment. All issues affecting employment of people with disabilities should be discussed, including access to transportation.
- Due to time constraints, the committee agreed to table discussion of the remaining revitalization options until the next committee meeting.

SCHEDULE NEXT MEETING

- Members agreed to meet on April 8, 2026, from 2:00 PM to 3:00 PM.

Adjourn

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