



# Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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## **PaRC CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE (CAC) AD HOC COMMITTEE Meeting Minutes for May 11, 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, Angel Torres, Suzanne Erb, Linda Carmona-Bell, Christine Hunsinger, Sherri Rodgers, Tom Burgunder

### **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. Cindy Duch for approval of the agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Julianna Rodrigues seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### **DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:**

#### **CONTINUE TO DISCUSS OVR'S REVITALIZATION OPTIONS**

##### **5. CACs Managed by PARC**

- Members expressed concerns regarding inconsistent attendance at Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings and challenges with effectively sharing information and receiving responses to questions raised during CAC meetings.
- Mr. Andrew Pennington reviewed CAC Revitalization Option #5, which would place management of CACs under the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC). Mr. Pennington noted that the PaRC Action/Social Media Committee has been effective

in sharing PaRC meeting information, and a similar structure could improve communication related to CAC meetings. This approach could create a new pathway for sharing meeting information and addressing concerns or barriers through enhanced communication. However, implementation of this option would require funding through the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR).

- Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, clarified that this option is currently hypothetical. If adopted, funding would be provided through the agency.
- Members asked where additional funding would originate if PaRC were to manage the CACs. Mr. Harbert explained that OVR would not eliminate programs or reduce services to customers to support this change. Management of CACs would likely be considered an administrative cost. If pursued, this responsibility would be incorporated into the PaRC administrative support contract. Ms. Michelle Gerrick, PaRC staff, noted that the PaRC administrative staff contract operates on a one-year term with the option to renew annually for up to four additional years.
- Members agreed that the provision allowing a PaRC member to serve as a CAC Chair could be removed if the committee advances a recommendation related to this option.
- Members generally agreed that Option #5 remains a possibility but would require additional discussion and further development of details.

#### **PUBLIC COMMENT (3 minutes each): following the committee's discussion**

- Ms. Christine Hunsinger provided public comment and emphasized the importance of establishing a clear mechanism for moving issues and questions raised by CACs forward to OVR leadership. Ms. Hunsinger stated that she is currently unaware of what occurs after CAC meeting minutes are submitted to District Office staff and expressed concern about the lack of visibility into how CAC input is tracked or addressed. She emphasized that she does not view the District Office as an adversary, but rather as a partner in identifying solutions and working collaboratively to improve outcomes for customers. Ms. Hunsinger also stated that providing CAC members with performance metrics would be helpful in informing discussions and strengthening the committee's ability to provide meaningful recommendations.
- Ms. Suzanne Erb provided public comment and agreed that access to metrics is essential for CAC members to effectively evaluate program performance and make informed recommendations. Ms. Erb stated that she supports approaches that encourage collaboration and communication among PaRC members, CAC members at the local level, and District Office staff. She emphasized the importance of ensuring that CAC Chairs and members can accurately represent concerns specific to their respective District Offices, including both the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) and the Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRS).
- Mr. Brian D'Amico asked about the current resources allocated to CACs and whether an estimate exists for the funding that would be required if PaRC were to assume responsibility for managing CACs. Mr. Harbert responded that there are currently no dedicated resources allocated to CAC operations and that OVR does

not currently have the information necessary to estimate potential costs associated with this option. Mr. D’Amico then provided public comment and stated that PaRC does not have oversight authority over OVR District Administrators or District Office staff. He expressed concern that issues related to CAC inactivity would remain unresolved unless District Administrators are held accountable for ensuring CAC meetings occur and function effectively.

### **DISCUSS REMAINING OPTIONS UNDER CONSIDERATION (OPTIONS #2 AND #5) AND POSSIBLE RECOMMENDATION FOR A PREFERRED OPTION**

- Members discussed next steps in the decision-making process, including the need to identify and review the advantages and disadvantages of the remaining CAC revitalization options under consideration.
- The options currently under review are Option #2: Continue Current Structure and Reinforce Expectations and Option #5: CACs Managed by PaRC.
- Members agreed that the committee should further evaluate the structure and chain of communication involved in CAC operations. Some members suggested that a final recommendation could potentially incorporate elements of both options.
- Members agreed that each committee member should prepare and submit a list of priorities, concerns, and desired outcomes related to CAC operations prior to the next committee meeting. This information will be used to support further discussion and assist the committee in developing a well-informed recommendation.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT (3 minutes each): following the committee’s discussion**

- Mr. Brian D’Amico provided public comment and stated that ongoing challenges exist regarding cooperation and communication between CACs and OVR. Mr. D’Amico expressed the view that transferring CAC management responsibilities to PaRC would not necessarily resolve these underlying issues.
- Ms. Suzanne Erb provided public comment and stated that PaRC involvement could add greater visibility and weight to CAC recommendations. Ms. Erb expressed support for exploring a hybrid approach that combines elements of Options #2 and #5. She also suggested that the PaRC Ad Hoc Committee continue meeting with CAC members to gather input and better understand local concerns.

### **REFINE A PREFERRED OPTION & DEVELOP ACTIONABLE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- This topic was not discussed due to time limitations.

### **PUBLIC COMMENT (3 minutes each): following the committee’s discussion**

- This topic was not discussed due to time limitations.

### **Adjourn**

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