Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

55 Utley Drive, Camp Hill, PA 17011

Voice: (717) 975-2004 or (888) 250-5175 TTY: (717) 737-0158 Fax: (888) 524-9282

Email: parc@parehabilitationcouncil.org Website: parehabilitationcouncil.org

Full Council Quarterly Meeting
August 12, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

Council Members:	Present (P)	Not Present (NP)
Julia Barol (P)	Christie Cyktor (P)	Cindy Duch (P)
Joan Myers Goodman (P)	Passle Helminski (P)	Twana Jones (P)
Michelle Mitchell (P)	Andrew Pennington (P)	Dorian Rhodes (P)
Julianna Rodrigues (P)		

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Present: Ryan Hyde, Chris Harbert, Colleen Woodring, Denise Verchimak, Marci Katona, Kim Robinson, Ralph Roach, Cheryl Novak, Susan Storm, Natalie Herberg, Dawn Sokol, Tammy Burke, Douglas Rand, Jim Whitonis, Stacy Collins, Christopher Zakraysek

Stakeholders Present: Jeff Iseman, Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Michael Moss, PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs, George Palmer, Statewide Independent Living Council, Deb Schwartz, Esq., Office of Chief Counsel, PA Department of Labor & Industry, Paul Cassarly, SE&M Solutions / Cassus Media, Scott Morris, Disability Rights of Pennsylvania, Lynn Heitz, National Federation of the Blind of Pennsylvania, Christine Hunsinger, Pittsburgh Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Melissa Hawkins, Office for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing, Hunter Cramer, PA Department of Labor & Industry, Brian D'Amico, Reading Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Sherri Rodgers, Pittsburgh Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Dr. Carole Clancy, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, Suzie St. Clair, Pennsylvania Department of Education, Bureau of Special Education, Kristen Bentz, PA Department of Labor & Industry, Nicole Hicks, PA Department of Labor & Industry, Jaritza Nguyen, Center for Independent Living (CIL Opportunities), Cathy Long, Harrisburg Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC), Megan Van Fossan, Washington Citizens Advisory Committee (CAC)

PaRC Support Personnel Present: Michelle Gerrick, Christopher Todd

Moderator of Zoom: Nichole Wade

CART (CAPTIONER): Christal Shew

Interpreters: Ashley Shenk, Joshua Baugher, Sarah Campbell, Ramona Martin

WELCOME & OPENING REMARKS: Michelle Mitchell, Chair

- Ms. Nichole Wade conducted roll call. A quorum was confirmed for the meeting.
- Ms. Twana Jones read the PaRC mission statement.
- Ms. Michelle Mitchell informed attendees of the request to amend the agenda so that Mr. Ryan Hyde and Dr. Carole Clancy may provide their individual reports at the beginning of today's meeting.

MOTION was made by Ms. Twana Jones for approval of today's amended meeting agenda. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

MOTION was made by Ms. Joan Myers Goodman for approval of Full Council meeting minutes from May 6, 2026. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.

OVR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT: Ryan Hyde, Executive Director

- Mr. Ryan Hyde, OVR, provided updates regarding staffing, federal and state funding levels, funding reallocation, and the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA). The Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) has been moved to the Department of Health and Human Services through an administrative agreement. This has not resulted in any changes to OVR operations to date.
- There are approximately 1400 people in the Order of Selection (OOS). A determination regarding the OOS will be made in early 2027 and is dependent upon the COLA.
- Mr. Hyde provided report on summer programs, MY Work program, OVR internships, apprenticeships, events and outreach attended by Secretary Walker, student activities, and many OVR partnerships including those with the Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR), employers in the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh regions, and Pennsylvania's First Lady.
- Information and data were provided on the Commonwealth Technical Institute at Hiram G Andrews Center (CTI at HGAC) regarding their graduation rate, externships, internships, employment rates, registration, referrals, employee training, and the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) training.

- OVR purchased text-based survey software for its Customer Satisfaction Surveys. Approximately 24,000 customers will be enrolled in the program in August 2026 following the planned data fix for CWDS. This will not include customers under the age of 18 or those who did not register their cell phone information with OVR. Customers being enrolled in the new text-based survey system will be informed by email and by written letter, which is also available within CWDS.
- Mr. Hyde provided updates on the State Plan amendments, Pathways to Partnership grant, annual report and success story publication, OVR Small Business policy clarifications, federal audit, and OVR's participation of conferences.
- Mr. Hyde responded to Council members' questions on many topics. Regarding the IT computer networking programs at HGAC, OVR is always working towards improving implementation of training to keep curriculum relevant. Business Enterprise Program (BEP) vendors toured the training facilities at HGAC and provided positive feedback. There are currently 10 individuals working toward completing their online training before the in-person BEP training will begin at HGAC. New BEP vendor opportunities are not currently expected to begin at the Navy Shipyard in Philadelphia as the facilities are being updated for private industry use. BEP recruitment efforts are ongoing at the local District Office level. Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor (VRC) caseloads are generally kept at approximately 120 customers, varied based upon type and region, and there is not an official maximum, but caseloads of 150 customers are considered too high. Students are provided with opportunities to receive training for programs such as welding statewide, not just HGAC. 100 to 150 customers have been released from the OOS monthly, and that number is anticipated to grow to 200 per month. There are opportunities for internships to be extended but many full-time jobs are part of civil service which requires all applicants to go through the Commonwealth's application and interview process.

STAKEHOLDER REPORT: Dr. Carole Clancy, Department of Education | Bureau of Special Education, Director

- Dr. Carole Clancy, BSE, provided updates on federal and state-level developments in Special Education. At the federal level, she noted that RSA's move to Health and Human Services should not immediately impact field operations, and the final federal monitoring report showed no corrective action needed. State updates included revised guidance on developmental delays, increased graduation rates, and ongoing recruitment efforts for school psychologists with stipend programs for high-need districts.

- Dr. Clancy also announced new initiatives including targeted training for school leaders, increased support for teachers of the deaf and hard of hearing, and plans for development of a consortium model for higher education programs in low incidence areas.
- Dr. Clancy presented updates on resources for parents and practitioners, including a new regional resource map and transition newsletter, which will be developed over the next year.

FISCAL REPORT Q4: Julianna Rodrigues, Vice Chair

- Ms. Julianna Rodrigues provided the Fiscal Report for the 4th Quarter of Fiscal Year (FY) 2025-2026. April expenses totaled $12,148.39, May expenses totaled $6,831.81, and June expenses totaled $4,477.00 with total spending during the 4th quarter of $23,457.20. The grand total spent for the FY 2025-2026 was $65,721.76. The PaRC contract has been renewed for the 4th year, and the budget will be $80,000 for FY 2026-2027.

CHAIR REPORT: Michelle Mitchell, Chair

- Ms. Michelle Mitchell reviewed the recommendation of the following 2027 Calendar Year Full Council meeting dates and format:
  Wednesday, February 17, 2027 - Virtual via Zoom
  Wednesday, May 12, 2027 - Virtual via Zoom
  Wednesday, September 1, 2027 - Hybrid: in person location to be determined
  Wednesday, November 10, 2027 - Virtual via Zoom

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to approve the recommended Full Council meeting dates and format for Calendar Year 2027. Ms. Julianna Rodrigues seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Members discussed potential themes for the FY 2025-2026 PaRC Annual Report including the theme from the National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) and a Pennsylvania inspired NDEAM theme. Members agreed to continue this discussion as a starting point during upcoming committee meetings.
- Ms. Mitchell congratulated Ms. Rodrigues on her recent appointment to the new Governor's Advisory Committee on People with Disabilities.

OVR REPORT: Jim Whitonis, VR Specialist
Update on State Plan and Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment

- Mr. Jim Whitonis provided updates on the State Plan and Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA), noting there were data corrections requested regarding Sensory Disabilities for the CSNA and that RSA has requested changes for the State Plan regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) language along with additional information about CTI at HGAC programs.

PRESENTATION: Mike Moss, Chief, Division of Reintegration, PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs | Bureau of Reintegration and Outreach

- Mr. Mike Moss provided a presentation on the work of the PA Department of Military and Veterans Affairs along with information about federal programs for veterans, including specially adapted housing grants, special home adaptation grants, adaptive vehicle grants, and Veterans' readiness and employment programs. Mr. Moss discussed limitations of these programs, particularly the requirement to own a home, and highlighted the importance of supporting Veterans' transition from military to civilian life. Mr. Moss also presented on PA VETConnect, a program launched in 2019 to connect veterans with local resources and organizations across Pennsylvania.
- Members inquired about potential partnerships between VA Vocational Rehabilitation services and OVR. Ms. Denise Verchimak, OVR, confirmed that they have existing partnerships and noted that while VA provides strong services, OVR counselors can offer local support and guidance. Ms. Michelle Mitchell thanked Mr. Moss for his presentation and emphasized the Council's goal to ensure that PaRC, OVR, and stakeholders all work together to support Veterans with disabilities with employment in their chosen field.

COMMITTEE REPORTS
Action / Social Media Committee: Joan Myers Goodman, Chair

- Ms. Joan Myers Goodman reported that she was re-elected as the Action / Social Media Committee Chair for FY 2026-2027 and that Ms. Julianna Rodrigues was elected as the Committee's Vice Chair. 2 members have recently joined the Committee. The PaRC Video Project has been reformatted to focus on PaRC recruitment, member success stories, and their journey. Filming of the documentary style interviews for the video is scheduled to begin following today's Full Council meeting. The Committee continues to meet on the first Wednesday of each month from 9:30 AM to 10:30 AM.

MOTION was made by Ms. Joan Myers Goodman to approve the revised format and script of the PaRC Video Project. Ms. Twana Jones seconded the motion. All were in favor.

CareerLink Committee: Twana Jones, Chair

- Ms. Twana Jones reported that she was re-elected as Committee Chair for FY 2026-2027 and that Ms. Passle Helminski was elected as Committee Vice Chair. The next committee meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2026, at 1:00 PM.

Governance Committee: Julianna Rodrigues, Chair

- Ms. Julianna Rodrigues reported that Mr. Rob Wallington, representing the Business/Labor/Industry category and serving as Member-at-Large, resigned from the Council for personal reasons, necessitating a new election to fill the Member-at-Large vacancy.
- Ms. Rodrigues also announced the appointment of Mr. Logan Iman to the Council, representing the Young Adult category.
- Ms. Rodrigues reported that the Council is actively seeking candidates to fill several membership vacancies, including representatives from the State Department of Education, State Workforce Development Board, Statewide Independent Living Council, Business/Labor/Industry, and disability advocacy groups representing individuals with mental health and intellectual disabilities.
- The Council previously submitted applications to OVR for consideration in the Sensory Disability and Physical Disability categories and is currently awaiting a decision regarding those appointments.
- Ms. Rodrigues conducted a roll call vote for PaRC Member-at-Large for the remainder of FY 2026–2027. Ms. Christie Cyktor and Ms. Julia Barol were nominated, and no additional nominations were received. Nominations were closed, and members cast their votes by roll call. The results were as follows:

Julia Barol – **Christie Cyktor**
Christie Cyktor – **Julia Barol**
Cindy Duch – **Christie Cyktor**
Joan Myers Goodman – **Julia Barol**
Passle Helminski – **Julia Barol**
Twana Jones – **Julia Barol**
Michelle Mitchell – **Christie Cyktor**
Andrew Pennington – **Christie Cyktor**
Dorian Rhodes – **Christie Cyktor**
Julianna Rodrigues – **Christie Cyktor**

- Ms. Nichole Wade, Moderator, reported the voting results: Ms. Cyktor received 6 votes, and Ms. Barol received 4 votes. Ms. Rodrigues confirmed Ms. Cyktor's election as Member-at-Large for the remainder of FY 2026–2027.
- Ms. Rodrigues announced that Ms. Barol will represent PaRC at the NCSRC/CSAVR Fall Conference in Texas in November 2026.

Legislative Committee: Christie Cyktor, Chair

- Ms. Christie Cyktor explained that the Pennsylvania Legislative Services (MYPLS) Communication Connection is an annual subscription that the PaRC utilizes to distribute newsletters to State Legislators and their staff and tracks contact information for all Legislators and their staff. The cost is $2000.00 for a one-year renewal that would begin on September 1, 2026.

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington for approval of renewing the MYPLS Communication Connection service. Ms. Joan Myers Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Ms. Cyktor provided an update on the letter of support that was provided to 15 different Legislators and their staff on June 1, 2026, to Legislators regarding the proposed additional $1 million in funding for the Support Services Provider and Specialized Serviced Adult and Child programs. This was based upon discussions the committee had with Legislators in April and May of 2026.

Policy Committee: Andrew Pennington, Chair

- Mr. Andrew Pennington reported that he was elected as Committee Chair for FY 2026-2027 and Ms. Cindy Duch was elected as Committee Vice Chair.

Transition Committee: Julia Barol, Chair

MOTION was made by Ms. Joan Myers Goodman for approval of inviting all PaRC members to attend Hiram G. Andrews Center (HGAC) graduation ceremonies on a rotating basis, ensuring each member is provided the opportunity to attend at least once during their term. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. All were in favor.

- Ms. Julia Barol announced that she was re-elected as Committee Chair for FY 2026-2027. Ms. Barol provided report on her attendance at the Bridging Knowledge to Know How Conference, explaining that she facilitated the Council’s

exhibit table during the event and provided PaRC networking and membership recruitment opportunities to many conference attendees.

- Ms. Kim Robinson, OVR, presented on the updated 2026 Pre Employment Transitions Services (Pre ETS) General Provider Agreement, explaining that the new structure will consolidate seven agreements into one master agreement with standardized provider qualifications and simplified service codes. The changes aim to reduce administrative burden, improve consistency across the state, and expand individualized service options while maintaining access to current services. Key updates include creating a unified work-based learning continuum under the "My Work" brand, standardizing service delivery models, and increasing provider rates. The new agreement is expected to go live on October 1, 2026, with provider office hours and information sessions planned before implementation.

Ad Hoc Committee - Business Enterprise Program (BEP): Joan Myers Goodman

- Ms. Joan Myers Goodman reported that BEP vendors provided recommendations regarding the training program to HGAC and that 10 trainees are set to begin the program soon. The next Committee meeting is scheduled for August 21, 2026.

Ad Hoc Committee – Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs): Andrew Pennington

- Mr. Andrew Pennington reported that the Committee continues to work towards developing a preferred option and recommendations regarding CAC operations. The Committee is scheduled to meet again on September 9, 2026. CAC members and the public were encouraged to attend these meetings.

Ad Hoc Committee – Impartial Hearing Officer & Mediator: Andrew Pennington

- Mr. Andrew Pennington reported that there were no new updates as the Committee awaits a written response to their actionable recommendations regarding PaRC's role in the screening and training processes for OVR Impartial Hearing Officers and Mediators from Central Office.

STAKEHOLDER REPORTS
Client Assistance Program: Andrew Pennington, Director

- Mr. Andrew Pennington, CAP, provided updates on CAP guidance regarding OVR policies, recommendations previously provided to the State Board, and ongoing

efforts with Central Office regarding service provisions, trainings, and OVR Small Business Ownership program.

Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing

- Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, provided ODHH updates regarding services, referrals, community participation, internships, Summer Academy, Support Service Providers program, providing resources and communications access, and continued advocacy efforts for deaf, hard of hearing, and deafblind individuals.

Statewide Independent Living Council: Jeff Iseman, Public Policy & Outreach Coordinator

- Mr. Jeff Iseman, SILC, provided updates on the SILC's membership, appointments, committee initiatives, transportation Legislation, State budget, federal funding, and the Pathways to Partnership grant. Their next meeting is scheduled for August 13, 2026, and will include presentations from PennDOT and the Governor's Disability Advisory Committee.

State Workforce Development Board: James Martini, Executive Director

- This topic was not discussed.

PUBLIC COMMENT

- Ms. Janet Fiore shared her professional background in disability employment, training, and consulting. She expressed appreciation for the work of OVR and PaRC, and members encouraged her to consider applying for Council membership.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz, former PaRC member, expressed concerns that OVR has not adequately acknowledged or responded to PaRC committee efforts related to IHOs/Mediators, customer satisfaction surveys, accessibility, social media projects, Citizen Advisory Committees, and State Board participation. In response, Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, said he would follow up with PaRC Committee Chairs, emphasizing that they do not want anyone to feel overlooked.

ADJOURN

MOTION was made by Ms. Joan Myers Goodman to adjourn. Mr. Andrew Pennington seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.