Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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OVR Policy & State Plan / Customer Satisfaction Committee
Minutes for October 27, 2026, 11:00 AM - 12:00 PM

Members Present (P)		Not Present (NP)
Andrew Pennington (P)	Julia Barol (P)	Christie Cyktor (P)
Julianna Rodrigues (P)	Michelle Mitchell (NP)	

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

Project Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Mr. Andrew Pennington called the meeting to order at 11:00 AM after a quorum was established.

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Ms. Julia Barol suggested discussion of the Pre Employment Transition Services (Pre ETS) provider agreement requiring a customer survey return rate of at least 90%.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to approve today's agenda with additions and past meeting minutes. Ms. Christie Cyktor seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION ITEMS:

Determine Committee Vice Chair for Remainder of FY 2026-27

- Ms. Christie Cyktor nominated Ms. Julia Barol for Committee Vice Chair for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2026-2027 and she accepted. There were no additional nominations.

MOTION was made by Mr. Andrew Pennington to elect Ms. Julia Barol as Committee Vice Chair by acclimation. Ms. Julianna Rodrigues seconded the motion. All were in favor.

OVR Updates
Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)
State Plan
OVR Policies

- Mr. Jim Whitonis, OVR, provided updates regarding the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) as they continue to review data and language regarding ineligibility, timeframes, and referrals within the report. Members suggested tracking data regarding the length of time customers that are designated as unserved and underserved receive OVR services. Language regarding Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) has not been removed from the CSNA.

- State Plan revisions that were requested by the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) were submitted in September 2026. The revised language is regarding the Hiram G Andrews Center (HGAC). The corrections provide justification for renovations to the physical site as they are related to rehabilitation.

- Ms. Audrey O'Connor, OVR, explained that their current focus regarding policy is with the apprenticeship pilot program which was given approval by the State Board of VR. A workgroup regarding this policy will be developed in 2027 and will include OVR staff, State Board, PaRC, and the Client Assistance Program (CAP). OVR continues to work closely with Workforce Development on the initial draft to gather feedback.

- Ms. Cheryl Novak, OVR, explained that they continue to work on the feedback received regarding the Small Business policy.

Continued Discussion of the Text-based Customer Satisfaction Surveys

- Mr. Ralph Roach, OVR, explained that the text-based surveys are not provided to customers that are under the age of 18 and do not include questions specific to Pre ETS customers.

- Mr. Mike Jacobson, OVR, reported that approximately 23,921 customers were enrolled in the text-based survey via customer cell phones. OVR received 2,099 responses. Those surveys are provided to the customer 15 days after the initial Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE) and annually on that same date until case closure. The text-based system provides surveys and other communication to customers such as reminders. A detailed presentation on the surveys will be provided next month. Members requested the presentation be added to the next Policy Committee meeting agenda.

Discussion of the Pre Employment Transition Services (Pre ETS) Provider Agreement Requiring a Customer Survey Return Rate of At Least 90%

- Members shared concerns regarding the Pre Employment Transition Services (Pre ETS) provider agreement requirement of a 90% return rate for customer surveys. OVR Transition customer satisfaction survey return rates have historically been at or less than 5% and members explained it is unfair and unrealistic to require providers to have a 90% return rate. Members explained this will be further discussed during the PaRC Transition and Education Committee meeting in December 2026. Members inquired about funding for the surveys, what occurs if providers do not meet the requirement, what questions the surveys must include, if surveys were previously required of providers, and why this requirement has been requested in the new agreement.

- Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, explained that he will share member concerns and questions with the Bureau Director and the Transition team. The provider agreement considers the Employment First Oversight Commission (EFOC) recommendations regarding survey return rates that target 70%. Provider surveys are a monitoring benchmark that do not prevent payment for services and are used to identify barriers, quality improvement, and efficiency of provider services.

Schedule next meeting

- Members agreed to meet on November 24, 2026, from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM.

Public Comment

- Ms. Christie Cyktor provided Public Comment and shared that she appreciates OVR taking member input regarding the service provider agreement.

Adjourn

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