

PA State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation

Best Western Premier, The Central Hotel
800 East Park Drive
Harrisburg, PA 17111

Minutes of Quarterly Meeting

December 5, 2019

9:00 am – 12:30 pm

State Board Members Present

Jerry Oleksiak	Don Rhoten	Mary Brougher	John Tague (via phone)
Shannon Austin	Mike Kiel	Fred Wright	
Liza Conyers	Ray Hoover	Joe Drenth	

OVR Staff Present

Melissa Hawkins	Sara Gales	Michele Bornman	Lee Ann Stewart
Kimberly Gerlach	Stan Swaintek	Stephanie Perry	Cheryl Novak
Amy Moore	Hillary McFadden	Russ Goddard	Ryan Hyde
Mike Kirby	Kaitlin Salvati	Ralph Roach	Jim Marker
Kathryn Hill	Hattie McCarter	Shelbi Smith	

Others Present

Steve Pennington	Jeff Iseman	Dawn Daignault	Joe Michener
Caitlin Chasar	Janetta Green	Randy Loss	Stan Donohue
Norman Bristol	Janet Fiore	Kate Chen	Amy Beck
Colon	Brandy Burnham	Peg Monaghan	Caitlyn Warrington
George Palmer	Lisa Mathis	Beth Harris	Gerald Curylo
Carol Ferenz	Joe Lee	Sue Soderberg	Lynn Heitz
Kendra Barlet	Tracey Turner	Ashley Shenk	Passle Helminski

Public Agenda

Welcome & Opening Remarks – Secretary Oleksiak

- Secretary Oleksiak welcomed everyone to the meeting and apologized for his late arrival.
- All Board members introduced themselves.

Action Items

Approval of Agenda

- MOTION to approve agenda
- Mr. Kiel moved, Mr. Rhoten seconded
- All in favor, none opposed – motion carried

Approval of Meeting Minutes – September 2019

- MOTION to approve minutes
- Mr. Drenth moved, Mr. Hoover seconded
- Mr. Tague asked if anyone from OVR followed up with the individuals that offered public comments at the last meeting. Ms. Austin confirmed that everyone was contacted.
- All in favor, none opposed – motion carried

Public Agenda

Executive Director's Remarks – Shannon Austin

- Budget update
 - \$27M reallocation received in August
 - So far, \$47.9M State funds, \$28M reallocation funds, \$18M Federal funds have been received, but full Federal budget has not been received yet
 - \$10M additional funds pending the most recent continued resolution
 - Overall, OVR has closed budget deficit from 2018-2019 FY through internal controls, cost savings, and containment measures.
- ILOB program within BBVS is being reimagined
- PETS guidance for BBVS summer program has been updated
- Spending is being closely monitored
- OOS training roll-out planned for 12/13/19
- Social Security reimbursements continue. Meetings planned with Florida VR to learn how they do their SS in hopes PA OVR can increase SS reimbursements.
- Currently have 4,958 customers on OOS wait list. Since 7/1/19, 3,523 customers placed into employment.
- Three key leadership positions have been posted – OVR Deputy Director, BVRS Deputy Director, BBVS Deputy Director. Interviews projected to start December or January. Also posting a Communications position.
- Ms. Austin has been attending labor relations meetings to try to restore and build relationships
- Considering implementing alternative work schedules, flex time, and/or home-headquartering across all District Offices as a means of staff retention
- OVR has entered into an agreement with WINTAC concerning PETS services
- RSA meetings bi-monthly
- Planning meeting on 12/17/19 with Bureau of Special Ed
- Paperless pilot is being conducted in six district offices
- OVR leadership recently attended CSAVR Fall Conference and had the opportunity to network with other administrators and directors from across the country to share info and establish best practices.
- Strategic planning is a priority
- Mr. Tague asked if vendor contracts were put in place by 10/1/19. Ms. Austin said there are roughly 114 PETS contractors in place for the State. Ms. Harris clarified that they are provider agreements, not contracts. The agreements are documents that set out the parameters of how OVR will make referrals, what the providers are to send for documentation, and the pricing of services. This allows more flexibility for OVR and customers.
- Mr. Tague also asked what the Board's role will be in OVR's strategic planning. Ms. Austin said that, over the next six months, OVR will engage with the Board and PaRC to get input on the direction the agency is headed.
- Ms. Conyers asked if PETS provider information can be tracked to make sure the OOS closure isn't negatively impacting these providers and shared with the Board. Ms. Austin confirmed this will be closely monitored.
- Ms. Conyers also asked if Workforce Development staff is being trained on how to handle customers referred to them by OVR and if those referrals can be monitored to identify any loss to services. Ms. Austin said that Ralph Roach has been working closely with Workforce Development and trainings and tracking are planned.
- Ms. Conyers asked what the staff response has been to the OOS training. Ms. Austin said this will be addressed in Ms. Perry's update.
- Ms. Brougher asked if the Board will be able to participate in the interview process for the three key leadership positions. Secretary Oleksiak said it has never been done before, but he

can check with HR to see if it's possible. Ms. Harris said she also isn't sure if this is permitted or not and that OVR doesn't have control over that decision.

- Ms. Brougher asked if it's possible for the Board to review the interview questions. Secretary Oleksiak said he thinks this would be more feasible.
- Ms. Brougher asked if the Board can have a representative at the planning meeting with BSE. Ms. Austin said she will follow up on that.

Stakeholder Reports

SILC – Jeff Iseman

- State Plan Independent Living (SPIL) Forums were held in six locations. At one of them, a disability liaison mentioned that many students at Clarion University are suffering from mental health issues and/or invisible disabilities. Some of the most common comments from the SPIL Forums included: staff need clarification on payments with OLTL, concerns about Workforce Investment Boards and CareerLink accessibility, needing clarification on how payments work with DHS and ODP.
- Mr. Iseman thanked OVR for their work on the intern program with CILs.
- Developing a quarterly newsletter
- Following the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP)/transportation broker
- Following Community Health Choices implementation and looking for clarification on how payment works for customers
- Secretary Oleksiak reminded everyone that CareerLink accessibility is not the responsibility of OVR.

PaRC – Passle Helminski

- PaRC is concerned about Civil Service testing and accessibility
- Also following the MATP
- Ms. Helminski praised OVR for the second Project SEARCH in Erie
- Ms. Conyers said she appreciates all the work PaRC did for the State Plan and endorses the recommendations PaRC made.

ODHH – Melissa Hawkins

- 80-90 vendors and 300-400 people attended the Hearing Loss Expo. The next Expo will be in 2022.
- Ms. Brougher asked if ODHH is involved with implementing a direct connect model in the Commonwealth to help individuals who are deaf/hard-of-hearing access services. Ms. Hawkins confirmed they are working on that and it's one of the Office's main focuses in 2020.

CAP – Steve Pennington

- Mr. Pennington suggested setting aside an extra hour at the beginning of the meeting to allow for the community to ask questions and discuss agenda topics to avoid going past the scheduled end time.
- When Secretary Oleksiak spoke at the Hearing Loss Expo, Mr. Pennington commented on the management directive dealing with issue of accessibility within State agencies. Mr. Pennington plans on submitting a Right to Know Request to OA to obtain documents supporting that management directive.
- Mr. Pennington commented that he both agrees and disagrees with Secretary Oleksiak on the CareerLink accessibility issue. He agrees that, ultimately, it is the responsibility of the CareerLink to ensure accessibility, but the general understanding has always been that it was OVR's job to enforce that. He recognizes that the primary obligation is on L&I. To that point, he submitted a Right to Know Request to OEO and received certifications for all CareerLinks except for Erie. Those certifications are all dated 2017 and, as 2020 approaches, it would be

appropriate for PaRC to look into those certifications and be involved in the certification process. Secretary Oleksiak said this can be added to the next agenda.

- Mr. Pennington commented that he thinks the most fascinating things under L&I are pre-apprenticeships and apprenticeships. He would like to see more structure and feedback from the community on those, not just as cost-saving measures, but to streamline the approach.
- CAP met with the director of the Statewide Transition Provider Partnership in July and will meet with her again in January. CAP's analysis found that 100+ hours have been spent by this partnership to develop a PETS program that meets OVR's needs that is also meaningful to the students.
- Mr. Pennington has been attending ODHH meetings. He believes that four people working in that office is not sufficient, and that for ODHH to do the job that is expected of them, 11 staff would be ideal. He would like to advocate for more funding and more positions to be made available for ODHH.

Action Items

Approval of 2020/2021 Meeting Dates & Locations

- Mr. Kiel asked if the dates/locations would be permanent because he doesn't want parts of the state to be neglected. Secretary Oleksiak said he doesn't believe so but he will check. Ms. Austin said that accessibility in some areas of the state proves to be a challenge, but for 2020, this is the structure that will be followed, and the possibility of adding different locations in 2021 can be explored.
- MOTION to approve 2020/2021 meeting dates and locations
- Mr. Drenth moved, Ms. Conyers seconded
- All in favor, none opposed – motion carried

Approval of Final Draft, 2020-2024 VR Services Portion of the Combined State Plan

- Brief update on State Plan – Lee Ann Stewart
 - Public meetings held 11/7/19, with public comment period following
 - Development of State Plan starts with Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment which is required by RSA every three years
 - PaRC made recommendations and OVR accepted all of them
 - Plan would become effective 7/1/2020 if Board approves VR Services portion
- Ms. Conyers asked for summary of comments received. Ms. Stewart said there weren't many comments and none of them would change anything in the Plan. Some were about OOS, public meetings, requesting information on certain programs.
- MOTION to approve final draft
- Ms. Brougher moved, Ms. Conyers seconded
- All in favor, none opposed – motion carried

Topics for Discussion

Census 2020 Outreach – Normal Bristol Colon

- US Constitution mandates census every 10 years
- Changing "citizen" to "resident" because it's important to have the most accurate count, regardless of immigration status
- Census is safe, private, and confidential and helps to further funding, representation, smart business decision, and redistricting
- In 2017/2018, Governor Wolf assembled the Census 2020 Complete Count Commission, with the duty to make sure individuals from across the Commonwealth are represented.
- Census numbers are due by 12/31/2020 and PA's count determines how much funding PA will receive for the next 10 years

Final Minutes, December 5, 2019

Approved March 5, 2020

- PA is more diverse than ever – approx. 1.5M African Americans, 1M Latinos, 500K individuals that identify as LGBTQ+. It is important to connect with those communities specifically to ensure accurate counting. It is also important to reach out to individuals who are poor, homeless, undocumented/illegal immigrants, refugees, college students
- Children under four years of age are the least counted population due to various family circumstances
- Impact for PA is more than \$27B a year. This is money that goes towards critical infrastructure, roads, bridges, Medicare, senior citizen programs, human services, and rural development.
- PA could lose one seat in the House if the count is not accurate
- Mr. Drenth asked how individuals who are blind/visually impaired can complete the census. Mr. Colon says this is the first digital census in US history and can be accessed online, via phone, or by mail.
- Secretary Oleksiak asked Mr. Colon to provide any information the Commission has so that it can be distributed to OVR staff to ensure customers are aware of available accommodations. Mr. Colon confirmed he can pass that along.
- Mr. Rhoten asked how accurate the census is projected to be. Mr. Colon said the Census Bureau already expects it to be the closest count in US history, but it likely won't be completely accurate.
- Mr. Kiel asked what the margin of error was last time. Mr. Colon said the response rate for PA was approx. 83% and that just one person under count can cost the State \$220M for the next ten years.
- Ms. Brougher asked if info collected in the census can be used against undocumented/illegal immigrants. Mr. Colon confirmed that, by law, this information cannot be used against anyone. In the original version of this year's census, the White House wanted to include a question regarding US citizenship status, but that was struck down in the Courts.
- Mr. Rhoten said that, for many individuals who are deaf, English is not the primary language and asks if it's permissible for interpreters to assist. Mr. Colon confirmed this is acceptable.
- Mr. Wright asked if hiring is still open. Mr. Colon confirmed they are still hiring.

Legislative Update

- Secretary Oleksiak reported that Joanne Manganello, who was the legislative director for L&I, is no longer in that position and the position has been posted. Joanne was supposed to provide an update on Employment First, but Secretary Oleksiak asked the Board to wait until next meeting to hear that update.

OOS Update – Stephanie Perry

- On 11/13/19, Harrisburg DO piloted the OOS training. Staff were presented with the OOS criteria in which they apply critical thinking, counseling practices, and analytical skills to existing cases. They learned about the over-arching paradigm shift in thinking about OOS. Staff felt the new criteria would give them communication skills and language to explain to customers how they fall under the OOS. Feedback on the training was mostly positive and was used to modify certain pieces of the training to prepare to deliver the training to all other offices on 12/18/19. This implantation will be continuously monitored. An accountability plan is also in the works.
- Ms. Conyers asked what the accountability plan looks like. Ms. Perry said it will be guidance for providers, policy-makers, administrators, and staff. Expectations will be provided and the plan will utilize the existing case review form. Staff will be trained on and supported through the implementation. More details will be provided at the next Board meeting.
- Ms. Conyers asked if the committee will continue to meet. Ms. Perry confirmed they will.

- Ms. Conyers commented that she expected more negative feedback and is looking forward to hearing how the training goes. Ms. Perry reported a 25-28% change based on existing cases in the piloted version, but 10-15% change statewide is anticipated.
- Mr. Drenth asked about the timeline of pulling people off the waitlist. Secretary Oleksiak said this is discussed several times a week and the hope is to start this as soon as possible, but there are currently too many unanswered questions related to the Federal budget. He also said the Board will be informed when ready to move forward.
- Ms. Brougher asked how many active cases there are. Mr. Hyde reported, as of 11/26/19, 45,100 total open cases. As for cases actively receiving services, 32,246 cases in Status 12.

OVR College Policy Update – Kaitlin Salvati

- Workgroup was formed in April 2018 to review current college policy and come up with a new draft of the policy to ensure customers are being best served
- Pulling the data related to fiscal impacts of the changes is proving to be a difficult task, with three people hand-pulling data from cases. Current spreadsheet has over 4,600 customers. Looking to compare current spending to what the policy proposes.
- Highlighted main differences from current policy to draft:
 - Looking to base OVR's contribution amount on per-credit averages of the State System Higher Education (SSHE) averages. Community college average rates are being replaced with SSHE averages. There will be separate rates for SSA and non-SSA customers. Formulas are based on tuition and mandatory fees, then add rate for books, supplies, and transportation. Both rates will be set amounts but are no longer based on full- or part-time schooling. Currently using 50% of current per-credit average as the basis for contributions.
 - Added credit and time limits for each type of training. Ideally, counselors will use new formulas to enter number of credits customer is taking each semester and the system will keep track of limit.
 - Developing training review form to be used across all DOs as checklist when determining if customer's training plan can be supported. This will use Labor Market Information in the determination process in the review form.
- Ms. Brougher questioned what type of impact reducing percentage of tuition subsidized may have on individuals whose income levels cannot support the adjustment. Ms. Salvati explained the amount funded is not going to change drastically, even after moving to 50%, because of how much the cost of college has gone up since implementation of current policy. As part of training review form, there will be a checklist explaining how other funding options and resources were explored.
- Ms. Conyers asked if the pie chart that showed money spent on this vs. other services will be reexamined at some point. Ms. Salvati said yes, but it would be after the implementation.
- Mr. Drenth asked if the draft includes additional research or simulated case studies in which people from different socio-economic groups are examined for the effects of changes in the policy. Ms. Salvati said this can likely be pulled from the spreadsheet.

Diversity & Inclusion Update – Hattie McCarter

- Initiative began in 2018 with main focus to develop strategies to work with under- and unrepresented populations in PA.
- Consists of two phases – research and training
 - Research phase, in collaboration with Dr. Gines of PSU, concluded as of April 2019
 - Three regional focus groups
 - Key interviews with community partners and leaders
 - Statewide assessment, including self-awareness and cultural competency, for all OVR staff

- Global Diversity and Inclusion Benchmark (GDIB) assessment consists of nine categories. Result of this assessment found OVR to be both active and inactive. This is not to be seen as a negative, but a chance for the agency to grow, not just with staff, but also with stakeholders and customers.
- Training phase ready to start in 2020
 - Some topics include unconscious bias, micro-aggressions, understanding demographic shift in PA, how to be a more inclusive leader, intersectionality, legislation, and other topics related to current events.
 - Each training will be foundation-based
 - There will be a Diversity feedback resource account for staff to indicate what worked, what didn't, and what topics staff would like to learn about
 - Trainings will take place over 2-3 year timeframe
- Mr. Drenth asked how often trainings will take place. Ms. McCarter said they will be held one Thursday each month, with a break in July and August, facilitated via webinar.
- Ms. Conyers asked if the trainings will be recorded. Ms. McCarter said that is the plan.
- Ms. Conyers asked for summary of report from research phase to be shared with the Board. Ms. McCarter confirmed she can send that to the Board members.

OVR Bureau Director Reports

HGAC – Jim Marker

- HGAC is celebrating 60th anniversary
- July-November 2019, \$6.7M in expenditures, which is \$6M less than the same timeframe in 2017. Each position is evaluated regularly to see if it's still needed. Penn State consortium for electric bill provides rebates every year and the Center is exploring the possibility of solar energy.
- Implementing requirement for all students to apply for FAFSA
- Continually monitoring programs for necessity. When a program ends, that creates the potential to lease to outside agencies.
- S&T Bank and Giant Eagle conducting mock interviews with graduating students
- Continuing to work with CVS, but looking to change that program to a pharmacy tech program
- Partnership with Southern Alleghenies Planning and Development Commission, who oversees CareerLinks around Johnstown. They can refer any student or potential student to HGAC, and the Center is looking at how this can be expanded statewide.
- Mr. Kiel said that at the last meeting, HGAC's complement was discussed and wonders if there's an update on positions being filled since then. Mr. Marker reported that the current complement is between 155-160. The complement had been around 150, so a couple positions have been filled, with several more in the process of being filled.
- Ms. Austin also mentioned that Starbucks may be coming to HGAC as a potential partner.

BVRS – Stephanie Perry

- Ms. Perry has met with each DO's management team, along with division chiefs and specialists to identify priorities for program operations. Talking closely about fiscal management, employee retention, effective program development. Goal is to maintain ongoing, active engagement to promote a good working relationship with managers and field staff.
- Effective 10/1/19, new PETS provider agreement, including guidance on definitions, purpose of services, referral workflow, and statewide established fees
- Employment outcome stats – as of 11/19/19, BVRS is at 40% of statewide goal
- SSA reimbursements have been \$7.5M as of end of FY
- Implementing Lean will support OOS via caseload management

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- New ADA in Harrisburg DO – Amy Moore
- Promoted 2 trainees, 13 trainees are completing their first year toward becoming VRC, hired a total of 32 individuals through the VRC trainee program
- Continue ongoing collaborations with HR and reviewing each position strategically
- Mr. Drenth said that since OOS closure, he's sure that caseloads are shrinking and asks if there is a target number of cases per employee that would trigger customers being pulled off wait list. Ms. Perry says that the Lean 5S caseload project helps determine if caseloads are too large, which could lead to customers not being served. Mr. Drenth clarified that his question is specifically related to caseload as it correlates to pulling customers off the wait list. Ms. Perry said those numbers don't exist yet, but there is an average of what a caseload should be. Ms. Austin said the hope is to lessen the caseloads by closing cases out, then as they become manageable, people could be pulled off the wait list.
- Ms. Conyers commended OVR for being ahead of goals despite agency strain

BBVS – Stan Swaintek

- BBVS has also been involved in Lean 5S caseload project
- Reimagined ILOB workgroup will be announced soon. In the past, all money obtained through Federal match has been given to field for ILOB and up to \$5M per year has been spent on staffing costs to run that program. That is being restructured.
- Obtained approval to move forward with 2020 summer programs again and hoping to continue through 2021, as well
- Bureau Director position has been posted
- New DA in Pittsburgh – Sarah Vogel, new DA in Philadelphia – Damon Johnson, new ADA in Altoona – Andrea Wagner
- Mr. Drenth asked about the Specialist Supervisor position, previously held by Shelly Faust-Jones. Mr. Swaintek confirmed that position has also been posted.

BCO – Ryan Hyde

- Fiscal team meets every week about budget. Continuing resolution process makes it more difficult to make decisions.
- Once college policy is approved, it will be a big job to get it built into CWDS system
- Working on RSA monitoring report. Based on notes and meetings, there will be some corrective action. Report is expected in March.
- Mr. Hyde reminded the Board that, while the requests for data are reasonable, the data team is only two people at the moment, so it is time-intensive to pull the data.
- Ms. Brougher appreciated the information about the data and commented that some attention should be given to improving this process.
- Ms. Conyers asked for information on summer internship to be sent out when available. Mr. Hyde confirmed this will be shared.

Public Comment

- Lynn Heitz reported that Associated Services for the Blind in Philadelphia's President and CEO is looking forward to piloting a structured Discovery training center at ASB in the near future. She also expressed concern about delays in services and how that impacts individuals.
- Janetta Green from CILCPA, which oversees the Deaf-Blind Support Services program, reported that a part-time education and outreach coordinator has been hired and there is still a part-time administrative assistant position open. She also reported that the program has receive five new customers since November.
- Mr. Drenth asked if the OOS gives any priority to job retention for those at risk of losing their jobs. Ms. Stewart confirmed that it does, but services are specifically limited to maintaining the job.

- Ms. Brougher commented that she looks forward to seeing how OVR plans to celebrate ADA 30.
- Mr. Iseman reminded everyone that public comment period is still open for SILC's state plan through 12/31/19 at the SILC webpage.

Wrap-Up

Closing Remarks – Secretary Oleksiak

- Secretary Oleksiak thanked everyone for their participation

Adjournment

- MOTION to adjourn
- Ms. Brougher moved, Mr. Drenth seconded
- All in favor, none opposed – motion carried