



CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Minutes

September 28, 2016

12:00 – 2:00

Allentown - OVR

IN ATTENDANCE:

Michelle Mitchell
Susan Firman
Kathleen Britton (teleconference)
Amy Beck (teleconference)
Jane Styer
Susan Storm
Whitney Hall
Alison Heck

ABSENT:

Glenn Firman
Jane George
Nelson Lauver
Sherry Mast
Gwendolyn Rasul

Susan Storm introduced Alison Heck, BSR and Whitney Hall, VRC Intern to the CAC. They spoke briefly about their immediate goals and how they became part of the OVR. Whitney Hall asked the CAC to explain its function. Michelle responded that basically the CAC helps the OVR become known in the community and also help with outreach opportunities. They represent the community and provide options that would be good to reach the community. If the OVR has a problem or question and needs ideas, the CAC would try to answer them. The CAC is different than the CAP, who deals with grievances, etc.

The CAC is celebrating its 30th year in existence today!

After some discussion and corrections, a motion to approve the June 29, 2016 minutes was made by Jane Styer and seconded by Sue Firman.

AGENCY REPORT:

OVR Report – Susan Storm

Susan Storm spoke briefly about Whitney Hall and Alison Heck who joined OVR September 19, 2016. They are learning a lot and the hope is that they will be able to start seeing customers within a short time frame.

There are three open counselor positions which became available due to two counselors who were promoted to supervisory positions. Corey Cook was promoted to a supervisor position from a transition counselor for the Northampton school district. Howard Kuntz who was a counselor in Northampton and who moved to the Quakertown case load was also promoted to a supervisory position. We now have four supervisors. We were able to add on the fourth one due the increase of counselors over the past 2 years.

We are interviewing for counselors and will probably send up two recommendations within the next couple of days. Our hope is that they will accept our offer. Right now we are hitting the prime time for people who are looking for internship positions and they are interviewing in multiple places.

Our next step is to pull our VRC list and these are people who have already completed their degree requirements and would be coming in as a professional staff person, once we find out how many positions we can fill from our two recommendations. The other position we still have open is our Early Reach Coordinator. We had some good interviews and the person who we wanted to recommend had some life circumstances and they were no longer available, so we have to go back to the drawing board unfortunately.

Questions were asked about seating arrangements for all the new people. Susan explained that people are doubling up on some cubicle spaces and a conference room is now being used by Rick Walters and a mailroom has been repurposed for Howard Kuntz. The new counselors who will come in will be using our sign in area for their desk space.

Kathleen asked a question regarding population. How is it calculated? How many counselors are needed in different designated areas and expertise? A lot of the recent additions weren't necessarily driven by population. The one we used population for was the transition position and because the law stated we not only had to service our customers, but potentially eligible customers. Now, we've opened up the door to several thousand students potentially to many because the age is going to 14.

Our regular case load for the supervisor positions, the population was really based upon labor and industry guidelines that gave the number of people someone should be supervising, there is a standard ratio and we were over it when we looked at trading that transition unit and the numbers, that supported that increase. When we look at changing caseloads, a lot of it is dependent upon changes in the law and/or population. With the last position change that was made we didn't necessarily get a new position for it, we had an annuitant working with ODP customers because of change in law to limit the use of the minimum wage and to work more closely with the Office of Developmental Programs to encourage especially young adults, students and people who were in sheltered workshops to consider competitive employment. So we saw that as a need area and we now have a dedicated counselor. We shifted someone to that annuitant position because we had enough numbers of individuals in the areas who were in sheltered employment or were considering sheltered employment to justify that. I hope that helps because it not just population but the law that has to go along with it to push forward the ability to gain extra staff.

Another question asked was who takes over the previous caseload of the counselor who is being moved or promoted to a supervisory position? We have a team of counselors who have volunteered to do overtime. They add their names to the overtime list and work on cases after their shift is over.

Michelle brought up the problem of having a gap in caseloads when there is a change in counselors and how that can be avoided. She stated that it makes it difficult to develop a

relationship with a counselor and have a change in counselors once or twice. There was discussion about how that can possibly happen. OVR tries to avoid it as much as possible.

Jane Styer brought up an issue she had when counselors were changed. She wanted to know what should be done in that scenario because she feels she didn't receive the necessary support. She wanted to know if notifications were ever given to the consumers with the new supervisor's name. Susan said that information is generally not given because the contact should be with the counselor and not the supervisor. In the instance a customer is not getting the support he/she feels they need they can call and ask for any supervisor because they all will cover for one another. Susan said this could be used as a recommendation as a fail-safe move to avoid these type of issues.

Kathleen suggested that when a counselor is assigned a consumer that customer should be given a business card at that time with their contact information. Another idea is when there is email communication. The counselor could include the current supervisor's information in their signature. She said that in that way in every email current information would be dispensed.

Globally with OVR, WIOA regulations have been finalized and working with PETS (Pre-Employment Transition Services). Employment First provisions in the PA, getting more involved with minimum wage and sheltered workshop environments. This week Susan will be attending a meeting at Goodwill with Amber Phillips who is our ODP counselor. Goodwill came to us a couple of weeks ago to inform us they are going to be phasing out sheltered workshop employment. VIA and APF are still going with the sheltered workshops. The law is requiring us to look at employment first and looking at specific education and engagement. At this time, Goodwill has decided to focus on competitive employment versus sheltered workshops. There's going to be more to come on that. They have notified their employees and will be notifying parents and customers. We want to engage with them as soon as possible. There are about 69 individuals who by June 2018 will need other employment or programs. Some individuals may plan to retire because of their age. She believes Goodwill is doing this statewide not just here in the Lehigh Valley.

Kathleen spoke about the Sheltered Workshops – Goodwill is the only agency who is taking the road of shutting down in about 1 ½ years. Also is it a question of wages or work? Are there other state models to view?

We are struggling a little bit with the change in rules for purchasing tickets from Lanta. This weekend, October 1, 2016, they are longer going to accept an invoice for bus tickets. We normally used a purchase order, they would sign it and when the invoice would come in we would send it over to Harrisburg for processing. They want to be paid by check when the tickets are mailed to us. OVR was given about 3 weeks' notice prior to this rule being in effect. Susan asked for suggestions of companies that may be able to help with transportation. Some of the suggestions were: Travel Aid, AAA, Community Exchange through the Lehigh Valley Health Network. Last year we spent \$31,000 on bus tickets through Lanta. Kathleen suggested when Susan speaks with the person at Lanta that she reminds them we are a major purchaser as a leverage to negotiate or re-negotiate a contract.

Amy Beck suggested contacting CAP to see if united they could advocate on behalf of OVR's customers to Lanta. The other thing she suggested is reaching out to Penn Dot because this is a picture of government funded agencies who won't play together in the sand. Tony Schwartz is still a member of the Lanta board and is going to be nominated to the board of directors of the LVCIL. He might be someone who will be able to assist OVR as well. She also suggested we might not want to lean heavily on the cost of our expenditures last year because OVR's riders are

riding under the ADA and the rate is probably a lot different from the normal rate. Amy will email Tony Schwartz and copy Susan on it.

OLD BUSINESS:

Michelle will draft a letter regarding membership to be sent to the current individuals on the membership listing. A letter to introduce the CAC, support if someone has something they would nominate someone or themselves. This letter would also be given to the counselors in case they have a customer who may be interested in participating in the CAC as well. Kathleen wanted to know if should include the brochure we have on hand. Sue Firman will take the letter with her to her meeting in the upcoming week.

Glenn Firman contacted Michelle to inform her he is withdrawing his membership from the CAC. Kathleen suggested the CAC should receive withdrawals in either email or postal mail so that there is something in writing.

Michelle talked about Nancy D. There may be a conflict of interest with her appointment. There was discussion around suitable candidates to approach to include in CAC membership. Guardian Life Insurance and Cigna Insurance Co. were also mentioned. These companies would bring a business prospective. Has anyone thought to approach SHRM at one of their meetings?

Michelle is scheduled to be on a conference call with PaRC, Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council, scheduled for October 6th. They have the ability to advocate and monitor what is going on in the State PAR. Michelle is unable to attend and would like someone to take her place.

Michelle said there has never been any problems/issues between the CAC and the DA in Allentown. Some other CAC's have experienced problems. Some CACs are struggling with membership due to location and other things and some are very strong with 15 to 17 members.

Michelle asked Susan about the letter that was drafted and sent up through the Central Office regarding on-the-job training and employment feedback. Susan reported that the September board meeting was held in Dubois Both the on-the-job training and supportive employment training memo were brought up for approval and they both passed. The LVCIL sent two representatives and there were other people in attendance. Based on some of the inputs they made a change on how they were calculating the regional rates. She is hopeful as we move forward that change will help us work a little better and work the policies that will make it a win for everybody.

In reference to the supportive employment policy, we are probably looking at 6 months to a year before it really becomes effective because it is a total change to our system. Staff will have to be trained and we will need to bring providers into the system. Michelle asked if OJT will stand as is or with a recommendation? Susan offered to provide Michelle with a copy, but she didn't notice a lot of OJTP changes to the document.

Susan commended Joe from the LVCIL and the other person who traveled with him for attending the meeting. She asked Amy to pass along her thanks and said that it shows very good commitment because they took time out of their schedule to travel such a distance to show their support. She spoke about the great providers we have in the Allentown area.

Kathleen asked what is a job coach? Susan answered that it's a person who is responsible for going on site who works with a person from the beginning with applying and looking for jobs and once on the job by assisting with one on one individualized services as needed. Some people may need help with actual task and others may need assistance managing the haters on the job.

Kathleen wanted to know how many job coaches there are now. Susan estimates the number is over 20.

NEW BUSINESS:

National Employment Disability Month (NDEAM) is October and one of the plans is having an expert panel at LCCC where several of the members here at OVR are going to be on the panel. Susan Storm, Rick Walters, Amy Beck and Dolly Singley have said yes to participate. It is going to be open to the public, so questions will not be scripted. The location is the Rothrock Library.

Susan announced OVR's NDEAM event is going to be an employer specific education event this year. It will be held on October 27th at the CareerLink. It is focused on trying to find businesses who have not heard about OVR and who are not really sure about what we do. It's not open to the public per se, but really targeting employers and trying to get education to them. We are doing some individual job fairs with specific employers in our office. Some of them may happen in November. We have had a lot of success with having an employer here for a day and putting out to counselors that there is a date and time to have their customers come in and meet with employers. The last one we did was through Threshold. They had 6 positions and they hired 5 people that day.

The other event, if anyone is willing to help will be the Transition night event. This event targets parents and students, which will be October 18th in Allentown and on in Monroe on October 13th. Volunteers are need in Allentown beginning at 5:45. The session starts at 6:00.

Michelle is going to send out an email to see who would like to be part of the committee in charge of finding a place for the holiday meeting and also to get the names of the people who are interested in attending.

Upcoming Meeting
December 14, 2016 (Agenda due November 30, 2016)

Sue Firman made a motion to close the adjourn the meeting and Jane Styer seconded the motion.

NEXT MEETING: December 14, 2016

ADJOURNMENT