

DuBois 07/08/16 CAC MEETING MINUTES

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING FRIDAY, July 8, 2016 10:00 A.M. ATA JOHNSONBURG

In Attendance: Bob Mecca, LIFT; Dessa Chittester, ATA; Shawna Bevacqua, ATA; Marsha Dippold, Dickinson; Bryan Linton, Dickinson; Mike Jacobson, ADA, DuBois OVR. The call in option was not functioning due to passcode issues.

Welcome: Bob Mecca, Chairman, started off the meeting with a welcome and introductions.

Review of last meeting minutes: Bob Mecca stated that minutes have been received from the last meeting and asked if there were any questions. Marsha Dippold, Dickinson, indicated that she did not get the minutes and asked to be added to the distribution list. Mike Jacobson, OVR, assured Marsha it would be taken care of.

OVR Updates: Mike Jacobson stated that OVR had sent out a couple of policies that will be under review – Supported Employment policy and OJT policy. These will be significant changes for OVR. Supported Employment (aka Job Coaching) is a critical shift in how providers are paid and their accountability. Pay is based on outcome and performance. He indicated that individuals with a vested interest in job coaching should review the policy and OVR will make sure any comments or concerns are forwarded to the right people.

Marsha Dippold, Dickinson, said some of the lingo was confusing and she had several concerns. One of her concerns was “licensed” job coaching. She questioned where and how the licensing will occur – classes are from a few hundred to thousands of dollars. Their turnover and their costs are really high. It will be a problem for them to send folks for expensive training due to their turnover. Is it mandatory? How long after they are hired do they have to be trained? There would be hotel costs and meals associated with training as well.

Mike Jacobson read the section of policy that pertained to some of Marsha's concerns and informed that it will become official in a year from the point of approval. Providers will need to meet the qualifications to be able to provide the service. Waiver of qualifications may be granted under special circumstances, however, they would then have a year to be compliant.

Marsha Dippold stressed that this will be an extensive burden placed upon providers when they are not seeing an increase in the amount of funding they are receiving. The financial burden will be very difficult for them to continue. She was in a meeting with Elcam and Goodwill recently and they all agreed that it is hard to keep staff anymore. The costs of them to keep training people only to have them not stay will be very difficult for them. She stated that she has had turnover in as little as 9 days, to 5 weeks. When they are able to pay \$9 - \$10.50 an hour for 4 year college degree employees, they only stay until they can find something else.

Mike Jacobson inquired as to whether Marsha had looked into the costs of any of the trainings. She stated that she had looked at a couple of them and they did range from a few hundred dollars to a few thousand. Mike pointed out that for urban areas, this wouldn't be as cumbersome and asked that Marsha look at some additional numbers and submit them to OVR. He added that OVR needs to have options for the customers in the rural areas that they serve, and if good options are lost, it is going to be difficult to provide a quality service. He will be sure to pass these concerns on and does think it would be good for her to submit some numbers as to how these added costs associated with training the employees will affect Dickinson.

Marsha Dippold added that in a rural area, the transportation costs for her job coaches to travel are high where an urban area doesn't face the same problems; they wouldn't have the excessive overage costs that Dickinson has. She reiterated that she is concerned with the costs and the rapidness of it. Will they receive compensation in the units they receive? Dickinson wants to be able to provide the services and still stay afloat.

Mike Jacobson indicated that it may be a possibility that the LOUs and MOUs may need to be looked at if we are afforded that opportunity. He again asked Marsha to put together something that illustrates her situation. He informed the committee that the State Board Meeting will be held in DuBois on September 8th. The time and location is to be announced soon.

Mike Jacobson, OVR, did touch on the OJT policy noting that changes are not as drastic. One of the changes is that the WIOA definition of a student has expanded now up to age 21 if they are in post-secondary training. Now we will be able to provide work based training services. Unsure at this time how that will affect OJT policy. WIOA information is now available on RSA website. Some changes include focus on competition integrated employment and places an emphasis on assistive technology and OVR providing funds for people to advance in employment. Performance will begin to be analyzed differently at the federal level now.

Dessa Chittester, ATA, asked about the elimination of subminimum wage. Mike Jacobson stated that before someone can be placed in a subminimum wage position, they would have to come to OVR to be evaluated to be determined that is their only option. If it is determined to be their only option, OVR will have to follow-up with them yearly to see if it is still their only option. This has not yet started up and OVR will be working out those details now that the regulations are out. OVR will not be supplementing wages. Their goal would be to get them into something that paid minimum wage if at all possible or whether subminimum is their only option.

Marsha Dippold asked about those adult individuals who need a day program. Is there an age cut off? She is referring to ages 24 and up who have never worked and want to get into the workforce.

Mike Jacobson advised that youth is classified as under 24. OVR has internal training next week on Section 511 and hopefully will get more information. The flow of ODP referrals to OVR is still being worked out. The supports coordinator will initiate and it will then go to OVR. He assured Marsha and the rest of the committee that they can always call OVR if they have any questions or concerns.

Mike Jacobson updated committee on new OVR staff. We have a high school student intern Tony who will be with OVR every Friday through August. Other days of the week he is located at the DuBois Career Link. Dan Osborne is our new transition counselor for the DuBois/Jefferson County transition caseload. OVR still has two Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor positions, one Early Reach Coordinator (ERC) position and one Business Service Rep (BSR) position open. The ERC position will be the DO's second ERC on board -- Missy Franklin has been with the DuBois DO for about a

year. The ERCs work with younger families to educate them on services before they reach the age of application. A name has been submitted for this second ERC position and hopefully in the next month or so that individual will be coming on board. Interviews for the BSR have begun.

Mike again reminded the committee of the upcoming State Board meeting scheduled for September 8, 2016, in DuBois. This will be at Comfort Suites.

Marsha Dippold indicated that OVR had sent out a Survey Monkey on OVR services that she encouraged all staff to complete.

LIFT Updates: Bob Mecca informed that LIFT is hosting a Disability and Agency Expo on August 3. There are 7 spots available for vendors. If anyone wants to have a booth there who has not signed up let them know. Sign up is through Representative Matt Gabler's office. Call LIFT's office with any questions.

Bob updated that LIFT will have a few job openings in the future. Charlie Williamson has given his two weeks' notice and will be moving on. Bob anticipates that Charlie's job will be filled from within. He noted that if some grants go through, there will be another job or two open.

As of October 1st, LIFT will be providing services through PIAT. TDDP (Telecommunications Device Distribution Program) and ATLL (Assistive Technology Lending Library). Bob stated that LIFT is happy to be providing those services again.

ATA Updates: Dessa Chittester talked to the committee about ATA. ATA is one of the state's providers for persons with disabilities. Penn DOT sponsors people from age 18-64. Penn DOT will reimburse 85% of the fare and the individual is responsible for only 15% making some fares as low as \$0.55. One of the requirements is that they have a local advisory committee consisting of agency reps and consumers. Dessa stated that ATA has a 6 county region and is difficult to have consumers attend. If anyone has any suggestions for people that could be constructive committee members, please advise -- the committee is large already. Anyone with any information to share can email Dessa or email RideATA.com. ATA is seeking constructive comments that will help the large area. Mike Jacobson asked Dessa if OVR has a rep on the committee. She will look into it and inform Mike. Mike stated that an OVR rep (presumably either Chris Palmer or himself) would be willing to attend if there is not one on the committee already.

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Dessa asked that agencies contact the division manager if there is a particular consumer having an issue. They do try to accommodate the bulk of the people; however, sometimes they are unable to accommodate someone. She encouraged members to call and see if there is anything that can be worked out for special requests.

Marsha Dippold, Dickinson, asked about weekend services. Dessa informed that Elk and Clearfield have one vehicle that services the whole county on the weekends. It is door to door so it is a little higher cost. Bradford has some weekend service too on a fixed route. ATA subsidizes services and so it is hard for them to expand. They struggle with getting new fixed routes without expanding on hours and costs. They do track all trips that they are unable to meet so that they have the data there to look at future options.

Marsha Dippold mentioned that she has employers who want to hire and people who want to work, but transportation for second shift can be very difficult. She doesn't even bother calling ATA as she knows it is outside of their operational hours. Shawna Bevacqua of ATA stated that there is some service between St. Marys and Emporium on a fixed route now for individuals who may need to go from one town to the other.

Dessa Chittester informed that if complimentary passes are needed to do some transportation training with a customer, to call ATA and let Shawna Bevacqua know. This training will help the individual with their comfort level. Mike Jacobson, OVR, stated that OVR will continue to support bus passes for our customers as appropriate.

Dessa Chittester discussed unlimited monthly passes are becoming more available in certain regions such as Punxsutawney, Clearfield and Bradford (DuFast has for DuBois). They cost \$40 a month and the individual is given an ID as someone who is a monthly holder and can ride the fixed route as much as they want in the month. It generally takes about 16 trips to make it worthwhile. It is easier for customers to not have a handful of passes to worry about. Contact ATA with any questions or concerns.

Mike Jacobson, OVR indicated that it is good to hear about the unlimited monthly passes and informed that OVR is open to collaboration on how we can provide better services – wants to see transportation improve.

Dickinson Updates: Marsha Dippold stated that Dickinson has recently placed 4 individuals. One of them is a youth right out of high school who was placed full time with benefits at a local factory. Another individual was hired full time in the logging industry in Emporium. A third placement was full time at a factory in Ridgway. Another individual who is not quite ready to work was placed in a volunteer position with the VA. She anticipates two more placements should be done today as well.

Two Community Based Work Assessments are wrapping up. One of the individuals wanted IT work and they found him a spot doing IT at the County Courthouse. He did a fantastic job. He is doing another part with the news paper doing archiving for them. Releases have been signed and a story will be coming out in the paper in the Ridgway, Kane and St. Marys areas. They are excessively missing Ron Berguson (recently retired OVR counselor for McKean County) and wish that Ron was here to celebrate this customer's success.

Marsha also noted that Dickinson is finally at full staff.

Mike Jacobson, OVR, thanked Marsha for passing on the success story of one of Ron Berguson's customers and noted that Ron will be very difficult to replace. He also stated that he is sad to hear that Charlie Williamson of LIFT is moving on. He went on to explain that one of the struggles that OVR has is the limited pool of qualified counselors. A lot of schools are getting more focused on the MH therapy side of counseling rather than the vocational side of things. He is hoping in the future that they will open up the qualifications to other related masters degrees to give OVR more qualified/quality candidates. OVR's ERC (Early Reach Coordinator) is a social worker and the types of folks they are seeing for that position are incredible. Currently it is very hard for DuBois OVR to fill these vital positions as they have to compete with all of the other District Office's to get the good candidates because the candidates primarily look for more urban areas.

Other: Mike Jacobson, OVR, mentioned that on November 9th, OVR is hoping to have an AT day for AT Awareness Month. It will be held at the PSU DuBois Gymnasium with a projected time of 11-3. Please let him know if you want to be included. Bob Mecca stated that LIFT will definitely be involved.

Bob Mecca, LIFT, wanted to inform the committee of an event they are planning called "Disability and the Arts". They are seeking to get artists with and without disabilities involved to display their artwork at the event to be held on November 19th at the Red Fern. Separately in the evening there will be a formal dinner. They are asking that one piece of artwork be donated to be auctioned off for LIFT.

Mike Jacobson asked that LIFT send the information to OVR as OVR has many customers who are artists. Bob indicated he will send a poster. Mike suggested that Bob contact Perry Winkler of the Winkler Gallery in DuBois to see if he has any interest in being involved.

Marsha Dippold, Dickinson, stated that they will be having an event that will spotlight both employees and employers for NDEAM. More information will be available at a later date. On October 17th and 18th they will be attending a PADES seminar in Erie. Also, she has asked the Elk County Commissioners to write a proclamation.

Mike Jacobson, OVR, indicated that DuBois OVR NDEAM events have not been really planned at this time, but will be beginning very soon. State Representative Dush's office has contacted OVR to look at some ideas.

Next Meeting: The next CAC meeting will be held on October 14, 2016, at 10:00 a.m. Bob Mecca will contact Chris Palmer, District Administrator OVR DuBois, and will put out information in the near future as to where the meeting will be held.

Bob thanked ATA for their participation in the meeting and invited them to attend future meetings as well.

Looking ahead, the January 2017 meeting is scheduled for January 13, 2017, at the OVR DuBois District Office.