

DRAFT

CAC ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING

HARRISBURG BVRS AND BBVS

Wednesday, March 8, 2017

In attendance were Danette Blank, Kelsi Bowman, Chris Ament, Neshia Hubbard, Mark Henderson, Kay Masci, Elaine Welch, Patrick Kane, Fred Bell, Stephanie Varner, Ruth Lotz, Cathy Long, Judy Stammermon, Bouyak Fogana, David Benet, Yolanda Mitchell, John Horst, Bree Ann Zipco, and Alan Margulies.

Stephanie Varner called the meeting to order and each individual introduced himself or herself. We did not have a microphone so we were instructed to project our voices as loudly as we could when communicating so all could hear without difficulty.

Motion was made for approval of CAC minutes for the 12/14/2016 meeting. After motion was seconded, vote indicated unanimous passage of motion.

BBVS report: Ruth Lotz. BBVS serves eight counties in South Central PA. At full staff complement, BBVS would have 22 staff members. There are two vacancies and a new position being added. VR counselors-4. Social workers-3, but 2 currently working, and 1 vacancy. O&M specialists-3. VRT's-2. Clerk typists-4. Fiscal assistant-1. Supervisors-2 but one position is vacant, working to hire a supervisor. District Administrator-1. Assistant District Administrator-1. New position: Assistive technology Specialist. The title of the position is Employment Facilitator. Civil Service test is open. Encourage qualified individuals to take the Civil Service test.

Summer Academy, Junior Summer Academy, and STEM Event Update. Students are applying. This District Office has five students who will attend Summer Academy. 24 of the 25 slots are filled. Currently the Junior Summer Academy is filled, and five students are on the wait list. Junior Summer Academy can accommodate 15 students, and we are halfway there. The STEM program for students who have completed Summer Academy has room.

Blind Expo. There will be a Blindness Awareness Expo on Tuesday, May 23, 2017 from 9:00 until 2:00 p.m. An award will be presented, so the agency is accepting

nominations until 03/31/2017. Ruth reviewed the categories and criteria.

John Horst asked about the financial limit for individuals receiving Independent Living Older Blind services. Ruth explained that there is a \$500 limit for each person now. That decision was made to assist BBVS to have ability to serve all individuals. This would include low vision services, but any services provided to customers by in-house staff, such as O&M or VRT, would be considered as a no cost service. Products are provided to ILOB customers that are needed to improve independence in the home and in the community, such as mobility canes, OTT task lights, calculators, signature guides, 20/20 pens, bold line paper, bump dots and lock dots, talking clocks, products to write Braille, etc., through the IL Bulk List and these items are not deducted from the \$500 limit per customer. Any item recommended that is not on the bulk list would be considered as a cost service, however, the bulk list is quite comprehensive and would meet the majority of VRT and O&M needs of customers. Note: this short list is, by no means, all inclusive of what is on the bulk list. It was just written here to provide an example of what would be considered a normal service without cost to the customer. Natalie Barbush further explained, and Chris Ament asked some specific questions with regard to a magnifier, etc. He appeared to be satisfied with the response to his question.

BVRS Report: Patrick Kane. Two new staff have recently been added, graduate students, VR Counselor Interns. BVRS has approximately 20 VR counselors, 4 supervisors, 1 District Administrator, 1 Assistant District Administrator, 1 fiscal assistant, typists, and Early Outreach counselors—2. There are about 110 individuals who have received services from BVRS and have obtained employment since October 1, 2016. The goal is 330, so BVRS is working diligently with customers to reach customer and BVRS goals. BVRS also has a Business Services Program. Three individuals: Pat Kane, Supervisor, and two field workers. BVRS is making business connections with employers in order to help customers secure employment. Pat provided examples. Hershey Park hires 5,000 part-time workers in the summer, and BVRS/BBVS is working with Hershey to hire some of our customers. It would be a win-win proposition. As with all facets of life for people with disabilities, transportation is a barrier for many who want to work. Carpooling was questioned. No information on that possibility. Business Service section does provide Disability Etiquette for employers and businesses. All services to businesses are free. There are also on-the-job training grants to help a customer get his/her feet in the door. The goal is to help the customer obtain employment, taking into consideration the customer's skills and abilities, and to satisfy the needs of the employer. Training for

employers also could include training on the Americans with Disabilities Act, and what is possible with the use of assistive technology. BVRS also has its equivalent to the Summer Academy, known as Early Outreach Initiative, and it is held at Penn State University, Middletown campus. BVRS can accommodate 30 students.

Ruth reported about the Talent Acquisition Portal. This is where employers post the jobs they want to fill by hiring people with disabilities. Customers of BBVS and BVRS can apply through the portal. Only state VR agencies and their customers receive these job leads. Note: this is not just state-wide, it is nation-wide. Ruth also briefly discussed the Employment First initiative, and the webinars that are held the fourth Tuesday of every month, beginning February, 2017 through August, 2017. Cathy is attending and gave a brief overview of what happened at the February, 2017 webinar. Although you should register on line for the webinar, you can attend by phone. For more information, contact Ruth at rulotz@pa.gov.

Stephanie reported on a meeting she attended with John Horst at the Hilton for CAC Chairs. This was in partnership with the Pa. Rehab Council.

Cathy mentioned another group she is involved with through the Center for Independent Living of Central Pa. Specifically, the group is known as Wheels in Motion. Cathy stated at the moment she is the only individual NOT on wheels. The number to call for information is 717-731-1900. Ask for Pam Auer at Extension 226. Note of disclosure: Cathy and Pam are colleagues but now also friends.

One individual at this meeting preferred to have the CAC meeting earlier in the day so that the work day would not be interrupted mid-way through to attend. Some CACs meet in the evening. It would be more difficult for this group to meet, since traditional share ride services stop about 6:00 p.m.

We will have a speaker for June, 2017 meeting.

A customer discussed the need for more specific items to be added to the agenda and sent out prior to our meetings. This could generate interest, thus, more people might attend. This customer spoke about the fact that so much of our meetings are directed toward people with visual impairments or blindness. She would like the focus to be widened. An example of this is that a woman attended a CAC meeting where a statement was made

that the agency was hiring caseworkers, a position for which this woman said she is qualified to do. However, the woman had a VR counselor and was never apprised of the opportunity. We do not know if this lady had taken the Civil Service test or anything specific about the situation, so we hope the lady did speak with her VR counselor to address her concerns. This is a BVRS customer. The thought seems to be that BVRS is not matching people with specific skill sets to specific job criteria. Helping them get any job is adequate for BVRS purposes, according to the opinion of some customers. I can understand this thinking, realizing that the impetus is always on the job seeker to take the lead, instead of waiting for the counselor to hand feed job opportunities to them. We may have lost this lady due to this situation, and we truly are sorry about it.

Stephanie is thinking about setting up a sub-Committee to formulate a better agenda and work on this.

A lady at this meeting is interested in how many placements by gender were made. Pat Kane and Ruth Lotz were not sure that the CWDS system reports this, as it is focused on job positions, not gender. They will try to determine how to get an answer to this question.

Several individuals in attendance were able to state why they came to this meeting and what they were looking for. Sadly, those are the people who most likely left unfulfilled. We are looking into getting a speaker who is a woman with a disability, has graduated from college and is now successfully employed, but not necessarily blind or visually impaired. Our Students Services Coordinator for Lebanon Valley was in attendance and will see what she can do.

Meeting adjourned. Our next meeting will take place on Wednesday, June 14, 2017. We will not meet in the BVRS/BBVS office, but we will meet in the building. On the 8th floor there is a room adjacent to the snack bar, soon after getting off the elevator. We will have a presenter. Hope to see everyone at the meeting and maybe even more people.

Respectfully Submitted,

Cathy Long, Secretary