

MINUTES

CITIZEN ADVISORY COMMITTEE MEETING - Harrisburg

Wednesday, June 8, 2016

Stephanie Varner called the meeting to order. Present at the meeting were the following individuals: Frank Abror, OVR's Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS), and staff CAC Coordinator. Patrick Kane, VR supervisor, Bureau of Vocational Rehabilitation Services (BVRs). Ron Davis, BVRs staff Business Services Counselor. Daron Crawford, BVRs. Anna Banks, BVRs. Yoland Mitchell, BVRs. Judy Stammerman, BVRs. Cathy Long, Secretary of this CAC, representing Capital City Chapter, Pa. Council of the blind. Dave Garrett, BVRs. Fred Bell, parent of BBVS customer. John Horst, Director of Community Affairs, Pa. Council of the blind. Don Rabinski, BVRs. Daniel Ranchaw, BVRs. David Strass, BVRs . Maria Henry, BVRs . Nicole Moore, and Beth Moore, BVRs. Vincent Boucher, BVRs. Tina Stasaw, BVRs. Tonya Long, BVRs. Elaine Welch, Director, Pa. Association for the Blind. Dennis Steiner, Vision Corps, Lancaster, PA. Laura Gilbert, BVRs. Jill Danewhite, BVRs. Earl Densen, BVRs. Alisha Hubbart, BVRs. Skip Minnich, BVRs. Kelsi Bowman, BBVS customer. Danette Blank, Director, Vision Resources of Central PA. Tammy Warner, BVRs. James Harris, BVRs. Arthur Sullivan, BVRs.

Stephanie thanked everyone for attending. Stephanie asked for the reading of the minutes for the CAC meeting held March 9, 2016. Cathy stated they are nine pages in Braille, and she proceeded to summarize them. She did. Cathy told the group that the CAC meets on a quarterly basis. In March the minutes for December, 2015 were read and approved with corrections, which were made. She spoke about the web site to obtain guidelines about the CAC and why we meet, and other pertinent information pertaining to the CAC. We are an advisory Committee only. The agencies do not have to take our advice, but we are happy if/when they do. At the last meeting we discussed the OVR State Plan. It is a combined plan and addresses all agencies within OVR in its state plan which is generally updated annually. Each year, usually in March, a State Plan meeting is held to gather comments from customers and service providers. These comments are held in all Districts of BVRs and are included in the State Plan, along with the agency's commitment to remedy any concern that was broached by customers or service providers. Most recently OVR has combined its State

Plan with the Department of Education. The Federal Government is in the process of finalizing things. In the most current State Plan OVR promises to support the CAC more. We also discussed expanding the CAC and met by conference call on April 13th to discuss it further. We do need a vice-chair. Stephanie stated John Horst agreed to chair meetings if Stephanie could not be available for any reason. John Horst made a motion to approve the minutes for the March meeting as summarized. The motion was seconded by Judy and passed unanimously.

Elaine Welch asked Stephanie if anyone in the room can vote. She was told yes. Frank corrected this statement by saying any OVR staff member in attendance cannot vote.

Stephanie and Cathy attended a conference call held by management of OVR, including its director, David DeNotaris. He will be in attendance at our next CAC meeting, to be held on September 14, 2016 at the BVRS and BVRS Harrisburg District Office conference room, this very location. Therefore, we look forward to everyone here today to be in attendance in September. David will discuss the new program to be rolled out soon: Employment First. The reason why Mr. DeNotaris is not here today is because he had a previous engagement in State College, PA. Danette Blank recommended that for the next meeting we have a microphone available. It was hard for people sitting in the back row to hear. This was duly noted, and Cathy contacted agency staff in writing after the meeting to make this formal request.

Each fall the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS) holds a White Cane Safety day. At that event brochures and literature about the agency are disseminated to people on the streets. It is an effort to educate the public about the existence of the White Cane law, what the white cane is for, how it assists people who have vision loss or no vision at all, etc. Stephanie is hoping to form sub-committees, which could include anyone from youth to senior citizens. Stephanie would like to see agencies working cooperatively together.

Frank gave a brief overview of why we have a CAC. The Committee at the district level works with the Rehabilitation Advisory Council, (RAC) which is a body of people who meet quarterly to advise OVR about its services. The

RAC is appointed by the Governor and has a budget. This CAC is not appointed and does not have a budget. The RAC is made up of individuals throughout the Commonwealth, most of whom have a disability. The RAC is mandated to be in existence by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 as Amended. Every state has an advisory council, but Pennsylvania wished to have advisory committees within each district office of OVR as well.

Stephanie opened the floor for people to discuss their concerns and to provide feedback and recommendations. Mrs. Moore and her daughter spoke about their experience with BVRs. Beth Moore is attending college and is finishing. They were told that OVR does not help people find jobs. It has been an up-hill climb for them just to get the counselor who serves those students attending college to get the bills paid on time. OVR demands college transcripts timely but is not always timely with regard to paying tuition and fees. Beth does well on interviews but she and her mother feel that when she shows up to interview in her wheelchair, that changes everything. They are nice to her but never call her or give her a chance. Can OVR assist her? Ron Davis spoke briefly about his role and said yes, BVRs can help. Ron Davis and Pat Kane asked the Moores to wait after this meeting for a more private chat about Beth's situation and her mother's concerns. Another customer spoke about her difficulty getting clear, concise, and complete instructions from the families of the people she was caring for. She was told to do certain things and she did, but then the family complained to her management that she did not do other things that they had not asked her to do.

A customer expressed concern about the lack of parking in the garage, and a lady gave details of lightly tapping a car of someone who worked for BVRs or BBVS. The insurance bill was over \$2,000, not that much damage had been done. We were told that someone should be watching the parking garage or there should be cameras rolling to prevent problems. Elaine Welch would like to dialogue with Stephanie Varner and BBVS to express ideas she has to improve services to BBVS customers. Another BVRs customer would like to see if someone from BVRs could review applications, especially applications for federal employment, make suggestions/recommendations, specifically for veterans or people who have worked previously for the federal government. This customer was told to chat with Ron Davis after this meeting.

BBVS report: Frank Abror. As we meet, the Executive Director of OVR is meeting with all the District Administrators, otherwise previously known as District Managers . BBVS currently has two VR counselors, so are at 50 percent complement. Two Orientation and mobility specialists are employed, and BBVS is looking for the third one to fill its vacancy. BBVS also will take interns who, after their internship, are able to be hired for full-time employment.

BVRS report: Pat Kane. Open positions for VR counselors. Some are in the process of being hired. BVRS is attempting to hire a local fiscal assistant to process the bills when counselor purchase needed items for their customers. BVRS is looking to hire an early outreach coordinator to work with kids between the ages of 14 to 18, to prepare them to work with a VR counselor, and doing the pre-employment transition services. Also, looking to hire another Business representative to connect customers, especially young customers, guiding BVRS to work with younger people. BVRS has placed over 200 people this fiscal year. Last week five people graduated from Project Search through Hershey Medical Center, and all five are now working. Pat went on to explain what Project Search is and what it does.

Meeting adjourned at 1:00 p.m. Hope to see everyone on September 14, 2016 at this location. At 12:00 noon.

Respectfully Submitted,
Cathy Long, Secretary