The Mission of the Council is: To inform and advise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Governor on the diverse issues affecting vocational rehabilitation.
This report covers the activities of the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) for the fiscal year beginning October 1, 2014 and ending September 30, 2015. Alternate formats and additional copies are available upon request. Contact:

Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council Support Project
Office Location: 485 St. John’s Church Road
Shiremanstown, PA 17011

Mailing Address: 925 Linda Lane
Camp Hill, PA 17011

1-888-250-5175 (Voice)
1-888-559-2658 (TTY)
racucpca@parac.org

Current and past reports are also available on the PaRC website www.parac.org.

Pennsylvania State Law requires the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) publish an annual program report on a different time line than this product. Therefore, traditionally, the PaRC does not include OVR data in its report. The OVR Program report may be requested from:

Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
1521 N. 6th Street
Harrisburg, PA 17102

COVER PHOTOS

1st Picture
Pride of the Susquehanna Riverboat

2nd Picture
Overlooking snowy frozen Susquehanna River and the city of Harrisburg.
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Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council Members
October 2014 – September 2015
(Including Category of Representation)

Michael Vovakes, Acting, Ex-Officio, OVR Special Assistant to
The Secretary of Labor and Industry (From 10/14 until 05/15)

David DeNotaris, OVR Executive Director (From 06/15 until Present)

Brian Bierley – Rehabilitation Counselor (Until July, 2015)

Mary Brougher – Business/Industry/Labor

Silvia Buzzanco – Young Adult

Bill Chrisner (Chair) – Blind and Visual Disabilities

Rebecca Davis – State Department of Education

Robert F. Fox, III – Physical Disabilities

Passle Helminski (Vice-Chair) – Cognitive Disabilities

Zainab Jama - Statewide Independent Living Council (Until May, 2015)

Lee Lippi – Client Assistance Program (Until January, 2015)

Madonna Long – Business/Industry/Labor

Kelley McKee – Rehabilitation Counselor (From August, 2015)

John McNally – State Workforce Investment Board (Until July, 2015)

Robert Mecca – Community Rehabilitation Provider


Donna Partin – Business/Industry/Labor

Jody Saitsky – General Advocacy

Matthew R. Seeley, Esquire - Statewide Independent Living Council (From June, 2015)

Heidi Tuszynski (Member at Large) - Mental Health

Maureen Westcott – Intellectual Disabilities

Frederick Wright – Business/Industry/Labor
Friends and Fellow Advocates:

The 2014/15 Federal Fiscal year was a year of transition for the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR). With the passage of the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act (WIOA) in the summer of 2014 came a new emphasis on services for transitioning youth and services to business customers. Prior to the passage of WIOA, OVR had already begun to address these areas of need by establishing its Early Reach Initiative and its Business Services Division. These programs are now fully operational and are being guided by OVR’s new Executive Director, David DeNotaris.

The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) continued to work closely with OVR to assist with the employment of people with disabilities throughout the Commonwealth. The PaRC began the year by approving the project report and recommendations on Customer Satisfaction of OVR's business and consumer customers. The report was immediately forwarded to OVR for its review and implementation as deemed appropriate. The Council has been and will continue to work with OVR on this effort. The council also focused its attention on the effectiveness of OVR's local Citizen Advisory Committees. The Council believes that these local committees can help to improve services on the local level and help the Council and OVR to improve services statewide. The Council ended the year with a day long look at its own effectiveness and compliance with the mandates of WIOA. Because of this, the Council decided to focus on what's required under the law going forward because of all that needs to be done and given our members’ time. The Council will be continuing to work on all of these areas this fiscal year and much more. A detailed account of the Council’s and its Committees accomplishments is included in this report.

During this year, the Council expects to review and update its Mission and By-laws. The Council wants to increase participation and the effectiveness of its own Committees in our effort to help OVR better serve its business and consumer customers. We hope to also increase consumer customer participation in the local Citizen Advisory Committees. If you are interested in getting involved at the local or state level, or if you may want more information on the PaRC and/or OVR, please check out our Web site at (www.parac.org). Also, you may call our office at 1-888-250-5175 toll free or TTY 1-888-559-2658. Finally, if I can be of any assistance, please feel free to send me an email at (wdchrisner@gmail.com) or by calling me at (412) 592-7480.

Remember that: Together, we can and do make a difference.

Respectfully,

W. D. Chrisner, III, Chairperson
Council Responsibilities under the Rehabilitation Act as Amended by WIOA 2014

Review, analyze, and advise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) regarding the performance of its responsibilities, particularly those related to eligibility (including order of selection); the extent, and scope and effectiveness of services provided; and the functions performed by State agencies that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes under Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services.

Partner with OVR to develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities in accordance with the VR State Plan. The Council and OVR evaluate the effectiveness of the VR program and submits reports of progress to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Commissioner.

Advise OVR on activities authorized to be carried out under the VR State Plan. Assist in the preparation of the State Plan, and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations.

Conduct a review and analysis of the effectiveness of vocational rehabilitation services and consumer satisfaction regarding functions performed, VR services provided, and employment outcomes achieved.

Prepare and submit an annual report to the Governor and the Federal U.S. Department of Education Commissioner of RSA on the status of vocational rehabilitation programs operated within the State.

Coordinate activities with other disability related councils within the State.

Establish working relationships between the Council, the Statewide Independent Living Council, and Centers for Independent Living.

Perform other functions consistent with VR services deemed appropriate by the Council.

Representative Roae, Passle Helminski with her service dog and Heidi Tuszynski.
What We Accomplished as a Council This Year

(2014 – 2015)

This has been a year of transition for the Council and the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) due to the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA). We want to thank both Mr. Michael Vovakes, Acting OVR Executive Director through May 2015 and Mr. David DeNotaris, new OVR Executive Director as of June 2015 and OVR staff for recognizing and continuing to build the strong partnership between OVR and the Council.

OVR has already made strides in implementing many of the new requirements under WIOA as well as the recommendations from the “Defining Positive Customer Service in the State Vocational Rehabilitation System.” This study was completed in 2014 and the Final Report accepted by the Council at their October 29, 2014 Full Council meeting.

We also acknowledge the many volunteer hours of work by the Council members to meet their responsibilities each year.

Federal law requires/mandates the Council to do the following:
Review, analyze and advise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) regarding the performance of its responsibilities, particularly those related to eligibility (including order of selection); the extent, and scope and effectiveness of services provided; and the functions performed by State agencies that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes under Vocational Rehabilitation services.
Partner with OVR to develop, agree to, and review State goals and priorities in accordance with the VR State Plan. The Council and OVR evaluate the effectiveness of the VR program and submits reports of progress to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Commissioner. Advise OVR on activities authorized to be carried out under the VR State Plan. Assist in the preparation of the State Plan, and amendments to the plan, applications, reports, needs assessments, and evaluations.

Overview of Outcomes from our mandated work and other activities this year include:

• Council developed and submitted the State Plan attachment 4.2 (c) upon approval at the October 29, 2014 to OVR.

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• PaRC members attended and presented at ten hearings in the spring of 2015 across the state to answer questions on the Council’s State Plan attachment and to discuss the work of the Council.

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• The PaRC completed and submitted their 2014 Annual Report to their fellow Pennsylvanians, the Governor, RSA Commissioner, State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, PA Legislators, Stakeholders and State Workforce Development Board in December 2014.

To view the 2014 Annual Report and other reports from previous years, go to www.parac.org .

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• Council continued their working relationships with other disability related Councils and agencies in the state/country some of which are mandated including: OVR State Board, OVR Citizen Advisory Committees, Statewide Independent Living Council, Client Assistance Program, Parent Education Network, Local Workforce Investment Boards, Disability Budget Coalition, Disability Rights Network, PA Transportation Alliance, Governor’s Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities, National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils, and White House Disability calls.

• Four presentations were made to the members of the OVR State board by the PaRC Chair/Vice Chair/Member on the work of the Council throughout the year.

• Four Public Quarterly Full Council Meetings were held this year to conduct Council business. Educational speakers this year included: Mr. Jonathan Fister, President/CEO of Keystone Blind Association on their services, Ms. Maureen Westcott, Executive Director of the ARC of Lancaster Co. and PaRC member presented a PowerPoint presentation on disability history, Mr. Russell Goddard, Statewide Coordinator of Deaf, Hard of Hearing and Deaf-Blind Services explained and answered questions on OVR’s audiology policy, Mr. Donald Gordon, Center for Independent Living Central PA Program Manager, Deaf-Blind Living Well services programs presented on their new grant, Mr. David DeNotaris, Director, Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services presented on smart phone technology and apps for persons who are blind or have low vision, Mr. Dale Derr, Director, Berks Co. Veteran’s Affairs along with Ms. Denise Verchimak and Ms. Cathy Frey, who is OVR’s Veterans’ Services representative from the Reading area presented on veteran’s services and how OVR and the county work together to serve veterans, and Ms. Pamela Needham, Ms. Miranda Martin and Ms. Paula Mirinak, employees of the Civil Service Commission presented on the processes and accommodations in place for persons with disabilities. Additionally, OVR staff provided updates at each meeting on the State Plan and the various OVR services/programs provided in the state.

• Outreach/Advocacy/Educational trainings – Members participated in the following conferences, trainings and expos this year many at which the Council provided resource materials: Transition Conference in State College, Disability Employment Summit (PADES), Disability Awareness Event, Your Voice Matters Forum, 11th Annual Transition Conference at Hiram G. Andrews Center, Lunch and Learn event co-sponsored by OVR/PaRC - presentation by RSA Commissioner, Ms. Janet LaBreck on new WIOA changes and opportunities, NRA Governmental affairs conference and advocacy visits with federal legislators, NCSRC Training in Bethesda, MD, Blindness Awareness Expo, APSE Conference in Philadelphia, From Rights to Action, 21 and Able Employment meeting and Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act webinar provided by OVR staff and Business Enterprises.

• The PaRC and OVR continued their collaboration to provide local Citizen Advisory Committees (CAC) meeting agendas, minutes, and schedules, etc. on the PaRC website to support the local CAC groups. The Council is aware of the importance of local input from the CACs and supports them in their work. This year the Executive committee hosted several conference calls with CAC chairs across PA to listen to concerns and offer support.

• Some members attended and participated at local Workforce Development Board meetings and OVR Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) meetings in their local regions. Some PaRC members are also the CAC Chair in their local areas.
Outcomes from Council Committee Work - The Council had six standing committees this year in addition to the Executive committee - Legislative and Public Awareness, Policy and Evaluation, Transition and Educational Services, CareerLink, Customer Satisfaction and Counselor Recognition. Fifty-five conference calls were held by these committees this year. Listed below by committee is the major work and activities of each committee for the year.

**Executive Committee – main activities/work**
- Handled day to day operations of Council and oversight of Council’s finances along with PaRC staff.
- Recruitment of new members – Council welcomed and provided orientation to seven new members and submitted paperwork on three individuals for reappointment.
- Oversight of PaRC website – continued updating of Citizen Advisory Committee meeting information; increased information for persons with disabilities on the website.
- Oversight of Annual Report preparation and distribution with PaRC staff.
- Planning of agendas, speakers, trainings, orientation, etc. for Full Council meetings.
- Planned Council’s Strategic Planning meeting including a SWOT (Strengths Weaknesses Opportunities Threats) analysis.
- Reviewed and make recommendations on OVR’s State Plan Goals and Priorities.

**Legislative and Public Awareness Committee – main activities/work**
- Followed state and federal legislation that effects employment for persons with disabilities recognizing bills they support, oppose and watch.
- Developed position papers to use in state and federal visits with legislators regarding the needs of persons with disabilities in the state including increased funding for retraining the workforce population, strengthening transition services, and improving services for veterans returning with brain injuries.
- In the state, Employment First Policy has been a main area of focus this year including sharing wording for legislation and sending letters to the Governor requesting support for Employment First.
- Members of the Legislative Committee visited/or provided information to approximately one hundred plus state legislators and aides in Harrisburg this year to present the Council’s position paper and discuss areas of concern regarding employment for persons with disabilities in the state. These visits continue to be planned in conjunction with PaRC quarterly meetings in Harrisburg.
- Five members of the Legislative Committee participated in the National Rehabilitation Association’s Governmental Affairs annual conference in Washington this year and met with and/or provided information to legislators in Washington on Capitol Hill. In the Federal position paper members emphasized transportation services for persons with disabilities as well as supported the Able Act to include an amendment with wording to include “all people with disabilities.”
- See position papers at the end of this section.

**Policy and Evaluation Committee – main activities/work**
- Reviewed, made recommendations and approved the following OVR policies: Audiology, CWDS System, Small Business System, College Policy, OVR Case Filing System Records Retention, Statement of Work for Pre-Employment Transition, Appeals, Legal Requests, Release of Information, and OVR Fiscal Procedures and Documentation. Members have participated in various workgroups with OVR on these various policies.
• Members developed and submitted the State Plan attachment 4.2 (c) based on information received from State Plan hearings, public meeting comments, RSA monitoring report, Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment and committee member input. There will be changes in this process now with the implementation of WIOA. See the State Plan attachment at the end of this section, after the position papers.

• Members participated in ten State Plan public hearings across the state to listen to comments on the Plan and provide information on the Council’s State Plan attachment.

• Members have been working with OVR to see how changes in various policies such as the College Policy, for example, have impacted students.

**Transition and Educational Services Committee – main activities/work**

• The committee continued their work this year in the following areas:
  - Participation in the PA Department of Education’s annual conference and the Statewide Transition conference, improving communication with the Bureau of Special Education regarding transition via our Department of Education member on the Council, regular reports from OVR on their Early Reach, Project Search and PASS programs, and working with Department of Education to teach schools best practices regarding transition.

• The Council was pleased to learn that the Hiram G. Andrews Center has been re-accredited by the Commission on Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) International for a period of three years for Comprehensive Vocational Evaluation Services. The accreditation will extend through June 2018. This Accreditation helps assure that students are job ready when they graduate which had been a goal of this committee.

• With the passage of WIOA, there is even more emphasis on providing transition services to youth with disabilities. OVR has been updating the committee on current/future services they will be providing in this area.

**Customer Satisfaction Committee – main activities/work**

• This year saw the realization of the joining of OVR’s and the PaRC’s customer satisfaction surveys. Members reviewed and made suggestions to improve the surveys and are continuing to review the survey format with OVR, to identify additional areas of improvement as well as the survey results to monitor and evaluate progress.

• Members participated with OVR in the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment meetings with Temple University staff. Information learned from the needs assessment is used by OVR and the PaRC in developing goals, priorities and planning.

• A workgroup was formed with OVR staff and members of this committee to work to implement recommendations of the “Defining Positive Customer Service in the State Vocational Rehabilitation System,” a study which was completed at the end of last year with recommendation implementation beginning this year.

• This committee also reviews the number and reason for appeals customers have with OVR. In PA, it is rare that a case goes to a hearing.
Counselor Recognition Committee – main activities/work

- The committee continued to develop the process and forms to recognize exemplary OVR counselors on an annual basis. The nomination form had been placed in the 2014 Annual Report and on the PaRC website. In further discussions with OVR and during the Strategic Planning work this year, it was decided for the Council to turn the work completed by this committee over to OVR to utilize as they determine appropriate for use in conjunction with their current recognition program.

CareerLink Committee – main activities/work

- The committee continued to monitor concerns related to CareerLink accessibility with OVR staff. OVR has been conducting (Sensitivity training and ADA assessments) to address these concerns. OVR’s Business Services teams are receiving the physical accessibility training as well.

- The members have developed a training checklist to use in educational trainings with their local Workforce Development Boards. These trainings are done in conjunction with the local OVR District Administrators.

- A representative from Equal Opportunity participates on this committee’s conference calls to discuss concerns and report progress.

- The committee is working towards better communication with all parties involved to ensure persons with disabilities in the state receive equal services.

- This committee also is working to ensure persons with disabilities, who need to take a civil service exam have the accommodations they need.

Representative Bizzarro, Passle Helmsinski with her service dog, Heidi Tuszyński, Bob Fox, Representative White and Kelley McKee.
The Mission of the Council is to inform and advise the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, the State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation and the Governor on the diverse issues affecting vocational rehabilitation.

The Rehabilitation Act plays an important and necessary role in:

- supporting the employment of persons with disabilities and empowering them to become independent
- helping people to integrate into the work place and community

The PaRC respectfully submits the following position paper for your review and consideration.

**Implementation of the Rehabilitation Act**

*(Title IV of the Workforce Innovations and Opportunities Act)*

The Rehabilitation Act as it exists provides states the freedom to administer programs which are responsive to the needs of its customers. It is essential that a dedicated funding stream from the federal government continue in Pennsylvania. In 2014 alone, the federal, state and local taxes paid by competitively employed customers of OVR throughout Pennsylvania averaged approximately $56,174,434.00.

The Rehabilitation Act must be strengthened through the implementing regulations to provide customers greater flexibility and control over the services and programs available to them.

**During this implementation period of the reauthorized Rehabilitation Act, we urge you to support the following:**

- Keep public Vocational Rehabilitation a mandatory program with single source funding.
- Dramatically increase funding to help support states such as Pennsylvania who are handling an increased need for vocational rehabilitation services for the veterans returning from active duty.
- Increase the number of individuals pursuing master level degrees in vocational rehabilitation and their retention by restoring and increasing federal funds to support the education and
training authorities of the Act (Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended, Title III, Section 302). Further, we support the restoration of changes to the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) that reduced the standards/requirements to be a “qualified rehabilitation counselor” working with business customers on behalf of consumer customers, but especially for rehabilitation counselors working directly with consumer customers.

- Continue screening returning veterans for brain injury, provide immediate services and require all commercial health insurance to cover brain injury rehabilitation for everyone.

- Increase funding for retraining/rehabilitating, the workforce population (adults 45 and older), who need to keep working to remain financially independent.

- Promote career development and job advancement through the opportunity for post-employment continuing education and training by expanding the definition of and funding for “post-employment services” to include “training and other services necessary for career advancement and upward mobility”. This is necessary because of the increased emphasis on “transitioning” in the Act as reauthorized.

- Clarify when individuals must be advised of the right to request review of a decision made by vocational rehabilitation, and when they must be informed of the services available through the Client Assistance Program.

- Protect the due process rights of individuals who may want to request review of a vocational rehabilitation decision by requiring notification of state established timeframes in which a request for mediation or review must be filed.

- Require training of all impartial due process hearing officers and staff. For example, training varies from state to state, and even from hearing officer to hearing officer. As a result, in Pennsylvania some hearing officers are attorneys, while others are not. Some may have life experience in dealing with the Rehabilitation Act, while others do not.

- Expand the role of the Client Assistance Program to allow for advocacy and assistance even after an individual has achieved their employment outcome, and to allow CAP to provide legal representation to individuals in any matter related to the provision of vocational rehabilitation services and/or efforts to gain, regain or maintain employment; only to the extent that this does not conflict with the requirements and responsibilities of the PAIR Program.
Transportation

Transportation is an extremely important policy issue for people with disabilities. The lack of transportation options in many communities and the persistent gaps in compliance continue to create significant barriers to employment opportunities. Accessible, affordable and safe public transportation are key components for ensuring people with disabilities can effectively participate in the workforce.

- The PaRC supports changes to the public transportation system that will ensure the opportunities for people with disabilities to successfully obtain and retain employment. People with disabilities should have equal opportunity to utilize public transportation.

The Able Act

- The PaRC supports an amendment to include “All People with Disabilities”.

Passle Helminski with her service dog, Representative Neilson, Heidi Tuszyinski, Bob Fox and Kelley McKee.
The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC) is mandated by the Rehabilitation Act of 1998, as amended, to review, analyze, and advise the Pennsylvania Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) regarding the performance of its responsibilities, particularly those related to eligibility (including order of selection); the extent, and scope and effectiveness of services provided; and the functions performed by State agencies that affect the ability of individuals with disabilities in achieving employment outcomes under Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) services.

Members are appointed by the Governor to the PaRC for their expertise related to specific categories of representation, as required in the Rehabilitation Act.

One of the goals of the PaRC’s Legislative Committee, is to educate and advocate for legislation to meet the needs of persons with disabilities, as related to training and employment in the state of Pennsylvania.

With this in mind, the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council’s Legislative Committee respectfully submits the following position paper for your review and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

The Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council’s Legislative Committee

Standing under the Capitol’s dome, looking straight up.
**Full Funding for OVR Services to match all available Federal Funds**

The Commonwealth must match Federal Title I funding awarded to OVR with 21.3% state dollars. These funds are used to provide services to OVR customers in the 21 district offices, which include six offices in the Bureau of Blindness and Visual Services (BBVS), as well as to provide administrative and operational support to OVR and the Hiram G. Andrews Center.

In past years, the fiscal code included language that earmarked almost $2.5 million that cannot be used to match the available Federal funds, to non-profit commonwealth organizations. These earmarks have the effect of reducing funds available to OVR to draw federal funds, and limits OVR’s ability to provide services to persons who have disabilities. Given the inclusion of the earmarks, OVR needs $45 million in the “Transfer to the Vocational Rehabilitation Fund” appropriation in the Labor and Industry Program portion of the budget in order to draw down and utilize all available Federal Funds and provide fully funded state services for people who have disabilities.

**Action Requested**

Funding for the “Transfer to the Vocational Rehabilitation Fund” needs to be at least $45 million due to the use of the earmarks (which do not have a federal match) for non-profit commonwealth organizations. This will allow OVR’s level of funding to remain constant with previous years and make sure OVR is able to draw down all available federal funds.

**Collaboration of Services for Persons with Brain Injuries in Pennsylvania**

There is no bridge for continuation of services to individuals with brain injuries in Pennsylvania. People are being missed who have potential and never receive services because they are rejected too quickly.

**Action Requested**

Collaboration is needed between all state agencies working with persons with brain injuries to ensure that there is no break in services from in home services to employment services. Additional dedicated funding is needed for this population.

**Adequate Funding of the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH)**

The ODHH was established in 1986, as a state agency that works to ensure all government programs and services are accessible to adults and children who are deaf, deaf-blind, or hard of hearing. The ODHH primary functions are advocacy, information, referral, and training. With the passing of Public Law 492, the Sign Language Interpreter & Transliterator State Registration Act (Act 57-2004) ODHH is responsible for the implementation, management & enforcement of the Interpreter registration program, effective July 2005. The law was passed to protect consumers and create a minimum standard for interpreters working in the Commonwealth.

ODHH accomplishes these functions and fulfills Act 57 by collecting demographic information, having three ODHH Representatives covering specified service areas across the state, maintaining an on-line resource directory, providing individually and system advocacy, participating in advisory meetings, and following through with the duties assigned by Act 57 by having a web-based software application to track required information, expiration, penalties, and an improved searchable registry for public use.
ODHH is administratively responsible for the statewide Advisory Council for the Deaf & Hard of Hearing (ACDHH). ODHH provides support, keeps records, plans meetings, processes and reimburses members for travel and accommodations as needed. The 17-member Council is comprised of nine public members, four of which are mandated by law to be deaf or hard of hearing, and eight members representing state departments (Aging, Education, Health, Public Welfare, and Labor and Industry), the Legislature, and the Governor’s Office.

**Action Requested:**
Continued funding through General Government Operations of the ODHH existing staff (director, administrative assistant, and three regional representatives) is absolutely necessary in order to carry out the above listed functions on a statewide basis.

**PaRC supports the following regarding Centers for Independent Living (CILs)**
After analyzing the Centers in Pennsylvania, as well as reviewing the practices and policies of some other states, the PA Council on Independent Living and Pennsylvania Statewide Independent Living Council requests that the State of Pennsylvania establish a base level of funding of $300,000 for Centers for Independent Living. This base would include any federal funds a Center might receive under Title VII, and Pennsylvania General Revenue Funds. No Center would be established for less than this amount, and those Centers who currently receive less than this amount would be provided funding increases to bring them up to this level.

Locally, CILs, which are non-profit organizations, are controlled by boards of directors, the majority of whom have disabilities. In addition, the majority of staff have disabilities. CILs serve all those who are touched by disability directly or within their family unit regardless of their age or diagnosis. Core services include information and referral; independent skills training; peer mentoring; and individual and grassroots advocacy. CILs are also instrumental in assisting many individuals not served by other programs in obtaining employment. Many reach out to businesses to educate them about disabilities. Many also assist individuals in transitioning from costly nursing facilities to much less expensive home and community based settings and services.

CILs have seen dramatic cuts over the last several years. They can no longer do more with less. It is time for the Administration and Legislature to make a commitment to the disability community by funding CILs at a level where they can remain a viable, robust and integral part of the community.

**Action Requested**
Line item appropriation of $2.7 million.

**PA should have an official “Employment First Policy”**
Employment is the first priority and preferred outcome of people with disabilities. Employment First is a concept to facilitate the full integration of all people with disabilities in the workplace and community. The PaRC fully supports the establishment of an Employment First State for all people with disabilities.

An example of the wording is for either legislation or an Executive Order, “It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania that competitive and integrated employment shall be considered its first option when serving persons with disabilities who are of working age to obtain employment. This policy applies to programs and services that provide services and support to persons with disabilities. All State Offices and Departments shall follow this Policy. However, the
Department of Education, Department of Human Services, and the Department of Labor and Industry, in particular, shall take all necessary steps to ensure that this Policy is effectively and cooperatively implemented in all the programs and services at the State and local levels.

PaRC can help acquire other State laws like was done in Delaware, Kansas, Vermont and Washington.

“Competitive employment” means work in the competitive labor market that is performed on a full-time or part-time basis in an integrated setting; and for which an individual is compensated at or above the minimum wage, but not less than the customary wage and level of benefits paid by the employer for the same or similar work performed by individuals who are not disabled.

“Integrated setting” means with respect to an employment outcome, a setting typically found in the community in which applicants or eligible individuals interact with non-disabled individuals, other than non-disabled individuals who are providing services to those applicants or eligible individuals, to the same extent that non-disabled individuals in comparable positions interact with other persons.

Action Requested
The PaRC fully supports the establishment of an Employment First State by enacting legislation or by an Executive Order. Other states have done this.

Transportation
Transportation is an extremely important policy issue for people with disabilities. The lack of transportation options in many communities and the persistent gaps in compliance continue to create significant barriers to employment opportunities. Accessible, affordable and safe public transportation are key components for ensuring people with disabilities can effectively participate in the workforce.

The PaRC supports changes to the public transportation system that will ensure the opportunities for people with disabilities to successfully obtain and retain employment. People with disabilities should have equal opportunity to utilize public transportation.

Action Requested
All private ride share providers, like Uber and Lyft, as well as all taxi service providers must be required to provide accessible vehicles on demand to people with disabilities. Also, they should likewise be required to show that all drivers have been educated/trained on the requirements of the Pennsylvania Human Relations Act and the Americans with Disabilities Act; especially with respect to the provision of service to individuals who use service or guide dogs.

The State must work with Amtrak and the Federal Government to ensure that all train stations in the Commonwealth are physically and programmatically accessible, which is not the case today.

The Rural Shared Ride System should be regionalized to enable transportation providers to cross County lines to assist people with disabilities who use these rides to obtain, maintain, and/or regain employment.
Attachment 4.2(c): Summary of Input and Recommendations of the State Rehabilitation Council
Approved by the PA Rehabilitation Council on October 29, 2014.

This attachment is the Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council’s (PaRC) input to the State Plan. The following documents were used to develop these recommendations to Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR):

1. The PaRC’s annual report (FFY 2014)
2. PaRC Customer Satisfaction Survey
3. Review of items in last year’s Attachment 4.2(c)
4. Comments received at 2014 State Plan Meetings
5. Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring Report
6. Statewide Needs Assessment
7. Workforce Development Statistics

Commendation:
PaRC commends the leadership of OVR for their partnership with PaRC in regard to policy development and review and Council representation on workgroups. PaRC praises OVR leadership for encouraging and supporting stakeholder input such as their involvement in the PADES and Transition conferences, and the customer satisfaction advisory committee.

Transition
Issue: Support for students between ages 14 to 21 is critical to creating an expectation for employment after school is finished.

Recommendations:
   a. Work with Youth Leadership Network and Youth WIBs
   b. Continue relationships established with Department of Human Services (and ODP), and Department of Education
   c. Continue evaluating Early Reach program for effectiveness

Training for OVR staff and Counselors of Consumer Customers
Issue: Important that the public face of OVR be one that is understanding and helping individuals to achieve employment goals.

Recommendations:
   a. Continue working on improving Consumer Customer satisfaction
   b. Work towards implementation of recommendations from “Defining Positive Customer Service in the State Vocational Rehabilitation System” report
CACs Citizen Advisory Committees
Issue: The CACs are the connection between OVR and Consumer Customers. Each district has their own process for the meetings and for notification about the meetings.

Recommendations:

a. OVR to take a more active role in the guidance and development of the CACs
b. OVR to issue a memo to DA on expectations on utilizing and promoting CACs and citizen involvement (for example including a calendar of PaRC meeting schedule and request to not schedule local meetings at the same time)
c. OVR to gather best practices from the CACs that are effective and well attended by consumer customers and share with all CACs
d. Continue to advise CACs on use of PaRC’s website for agendas and minutes

Information Sharing
Issue: It is important to get information to consumer customer quickly and in a manner they can access. This will allow greater involvement and lead to a positive customer experience.

a. Use current technology to get word out
b. Make sure all communication is accessible
c. Make sure captioning is available in all public meetings OVR holds
d. Review lead times for dissemination of information to make sure it is far enough ahead

Partnership with PaRC
Issue: PaRC and OVR have mutually benefited from a collaborative relationship as the advisory body in reviewing policies and priorities.

Recommendations:

a. Continue involvement in OVR leadership with Council
b. Continue seeking involvement in policy review and implementation
OVR Staff and Counselors as role models

Issue: People with disabilities need to see Counselors and Management and staff of OVR that have disabilities. This is a benefit to both Consumer and Business Customer to see the possibilities of people with disabilities.

Recommendations:

a. Continue and increase outreach to people with disabilities and cultural minorities in Counselor and leadership roles within OVR
b. Review data (such as what is found in Attachment 4.10) to see if numbers are increasing

Bob Fox, Bill Chrisner, Passle Helminski with her service dog, Devon Grant, and Heidi Tuszynski.
PaRC Responsibilities and Goals for 2015-2016
by Committee

**CareerLink Committee**

**Goal #1:** Work with OVR to help the WIB to ensure each CareerLink is physically and programmatically accessible at all its locations.

**Goal #2:** Identify, review and monitor the CareerLink reportage system for both the Department of Labor and Industry and Equal Opportunity Commission.

**Goal #3:** Increase the PaRC’s participation in state and local WIB meetings.

**Goal #4:** Work with OVR and WIB to understand all provisions of WIOA and how they impact persons with disabilities.

**Customer Satisfaction Committee**

**Goal #1:** Partner with OVR to review, evaluate and make recommendations based on results on the combined Customer Satisfaction Survey.

**Goal #2:** Partner with OVR to implement recommendations from the Customer Satisfaction project.

**Goal #3:** Partner with OVR to develop, implement and review the comprehensive statewide needs assessment survey.

**Goal #4:** Partner with OVR to review due process issues to assure good quality outcomes for consumer customers. OVR will share same report that goes to OVR Board on a quarterly basis.

**Executive Committee**

**Goal #1:** Continue to improve relationships and collaboration with the PA State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation, the Citizen Advisory Committees and other stakeholder organizations in the Commonwealth to avoid duplication of efforts and enhance the number of individuals served.

**Goal #2:** Continue to provide leadership and guidance to new and all members and committees in accordance with the Mission and Bylaws of the Council and the Rehabilitation Act.

**Goal #3:** Continue to increase public awareness in Pennsylvania about OVR services and the Council’s mission and responsibilities through increased attendance and participation at stakeholder meetings, youth organization and disability and civic organizations.
**Goal #4:** Continue oversight of the following: PaRC budget, quarterly meeting agendas, annual report, website, strategic planning, annual retreat, member recruitment and election of officers.

**Legislative Committee**

**Goal #1:** Increase the PaRC’s advocacy on behalf of persons with disabilities in regards to obtaining and maintaining employment.

**Goal #2:** Increase advocacy on behalf of the returning disabled veterans who are seeking employment and employment supports through Pennsylvania state services.

**Goal #3:** Develop collaborative relationships with other organizations which have similar missions and mutual legislative goals, to maximize our combined legislative impact for people with disabilities.

**Policy & Evaluation Committee**

**Goal #1:** Maintain a positive working relationship with the Department of Labor and Industry, OVR and Bureau of Workforce Partnership & Operations.

**Goal #2:** Development of the Attachment 4.2(c) to the State plan.

**Goal #3:** Input on the OVR State Plan.

**Goal #4:** Monitoring of OVR policies and procedures.

**Transition and Educational Services Committee**

**Goal #1:** Participation at the Transition Conference and the PA Department of Education’s (PADES) annual conference for awareness on what the PaRC does and our purpose.

**Goal #2:** Improve communication with Bureau of Special Education regarding transition.

**Goal #3:** Increase competitive employment options through the implementation of the Employment First Policy.

**Goal #4:** Committee will work with OVR and the Department of Education to teach schools best practices regarding transition throughout the State.

**Goal #5:** To have OVR evaluate their training programs at Hiram G. Andrews to assure that students are receiving top technical training and certifications, so that graduates are job ready.

Silvia Buzzanco and Passle Helmsinski with her service dog.
If you are interested in becoming a PaRC member please review the standards below that members have developed.

**PaRC Standard of Expectations**

**Active Participation:**
In order to fulfill its federal requirements, the Rehabilitation Council must have active participation by its members. Active participation is defined as:

- Attend all four (4) of the scheduled full Council meetings in any fiscal year. Severe weather and personal emergencies are understandable exceptions.
- Participate on at least one standing committee or ad-hoc committee during the fiscal year.
- Respond to action items during or between Council meetings. Examples may include, but are not limited to:
  - Review of support documents for meeting action items.
  - Review and return of surveys, draft documents, etc. when requested.
- Attend Office of Vocational Rehabilitation public meetings, State Board meetings, Consumer Advisory Committee meetings, etc. when feasible.

**Represent the Rehabilitation Council in Meeting and Work Groups:**
Although members represent diverse constituencies and points of view, it is important for the Rehabilitation Council to speak as a single entity in meetings and work groups. The Council recognizes that individuals may also wish to convey additional opinions or information during discussions. In order to assure consistency without restricting members’ actions, the following guidelines were adopted on April 14, 1999:

If a Rehabilitation Council member is serving on a rehabilitation related work group, committee or is giving testimony as a **designated and official spokesperson of Council**, the following guidelines will apply:

- The Council member shall state that s/he is representing the Rehabilitation Council.
- The Council member shall state the Council’s official position on the subject being discussed if one exists or is known. If the Council’s official position is unknown or has not been developed, the Council representative shall indicate that s/he will request the Council’s office to forward the position or ask the Council to review the subject and render an official position if one is needed.
- The Council member may have a different, personal opinion on the subject being discussed. If this is so, the Council member should state that it is a personal opinion and not the official position of PA-Rehabilitation Council.
- The Council member shall not commit financial support and/or other resources of the Council to any non-RC committee, workgroup, function, etc., without the previous authorization of PA-Rehabilitation Council.
- In order to receive reimbursement for expenses occurred while acting as a designated Council spokesperson, the member shall follow established procedures for obtaining reimbursement.

These objectives are meant solely to improve and expedite the accomplishments of the Rehabilitation Council, so as to better the lives of persons with disabilities. Your cooperation and time are appreciated.

If you are interested in becoming a member and can meet the expectations, please complete the Appointment Request Form on the next page and return to: Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council Office, 925 Linda Lane, Camp Hill PA 17011. Also, forward a word document of your resume and two references familiar with your disability related work/experiences to racucpca@parac.org.

**When the Appointment Request Form, Resume and References have been received in the office, the PaRC members review them and make recommendations to the Governor’s Office. The Governor appoints all members.**
# APPOINTMENT REQUEST FORM

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Underline the category/categories that you could represent on the council (underline as many as apply):  
- State Independent Living Council (SILC)  
- Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA)  
- Client Assistance Program (CAP)  
- OVR Customer (Past/Present)  
- Human Resources Investment Council (HRIC)  
- State Dept. Of Education  
- Rehabilitation Counselor  
- Community Rehab Provider  
- Education Service Provider  
- Business/Labor/Industry  
- Physical Disability  
- Cognitive Disability  
- Sensory Disability  
- Psychiatric Disability  
- Intellectual Disabilities  
- General Advocate

**ORGANIZATION REPRESENTING (if applicable)**

**OTHER AFFILIATIONS/ORGANIZATIONS**

**BRIEFLY DESCRIBE HOW YOUR SKILLS, EXPERIENCE, ETC. MATCH THE ROLE AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE REHABILITATION COUNCIL.**

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*Please Attach a Resume or Brief Biography and two written references. Documents should be emailed to racucpca@parac.org in word document format.*

* This information is required by the Executive Office for all appointments made by the Governor.

** Please Note: RC appointments are by individual, not organization. Alternates may attend as members of the general public, however they may not vote on any action items.  
Form revised 10/15.
Meeting Schedule for Calendar Year 2016

- March 2, 2016 (Wednesday)
  Harrisburg – Hilton & Towers

- May 4, 2016 (Wednesday)
  Harrisburg – Hilton & Towers

- August 24, 2016 (Wednesday)
  Harrisburg – Hilton & Towers

- October 26, 2016 (Wednesday)
  Harrisburg – Hilton & Towers

These meetings are open to the public. For more information or for persons who require special arrangements including a sign language interpreter, real time captioning, or alternate format, contact the PaRC Office at (717) 975-2004.

We welcome any questions or comments you may have and appreciate your interest in the work of the Council.
PaRC Council Members


Submitted to:
The Pennsylvania Legislature
The Rehabilitation Services Administration
Tom Wolf, Governor of Pennsylvania
The State Board of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation
The PA Workforce Investment Board
In compliance with the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, as amended.

Production of the Annual Report is supported by the Pennsylvania Department of Labor and Industry, Office of Vocational Rehabilitation, Contract #4000016941

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