

OVR Staff:

It has been a busy couple of weeks here in Frankfort. I spent November 5<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup> traveling to San Diego and back for the national Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) Conference. It was a wonderful opportunity to hear from representatives from the Department of Labor and the Rehabilitation Services Administration regarding continued clarification on the Workforce Innovation and Opportunities Act (WIOA) regulations that were released this past summer. There are bits and pieces of information that we will be considering in terms of changing our policies, but there is one interesting fact I would like to go ahead and share. With regards Pre-Employment Transition Services, there is a very broad list of options for documentation verifying that the individual has a disability. They include: case notes documenting counselor observation, a review of school records, a statement from school staff, a referral from a school, a copy of an Individualized Education Plan (IEP), and a letter verifying they are a Social Security benefits recipient. So, please keep this in mind as you are meeting with students and schools as you are providing Pre-Employment Transition Services.

Last week, the Kentucky Vocational Rehabilitation family lost a dear co-worker and lifelong advocate of people with disabilities from our sister agency, Office for the Blind – Nancy Tooley. Nancy had worked in Vocational Rehabilitation for 25 years. Please keep Nancy's co-workers, friends and family in your thoughts during this difficult time.

The Executive Leadership Team met this past Friday. We covered many topics: personnel, budget, the wait list, the Substantial Gainful Activities (SGA) grant, 2016 Awards, new forms for the PACE program, changes to eligibility policy and forms, a form and instructions for the potentially eligible, feedback from our WIOA training in October, information from the CSAVR conference, a review of ongoing activities at the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTTC), Regional updates, and service fee memorandums. We are continuing to see significant spending decreases, but we are still currently unable to hire new employees or serve consumers on our wait list.

My thanks to those districts who hosted visits this week from our friends from the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) who were meeting with staff that have participated in the SGA grant activities. Our Program Planning and Development Branch have done a lot of wonderful work through this grant and I appreciate their ongoing efforts on this project! There are many aspects of the SGA grant from which OVR staff and consumers have benefitted and we hope to continue to implement.

I will be working with Office for the Blind this week and next week to finalize the summary and responses of all the tremendous feedback we received from the WIOA training in October. Look for that information to be coming out soon. I appreciate the constructive comments and suggestions that were provided during the training and I hope the responses will provide you with answers to your concerns and questions.

As we approach the Thanksgiving holiday, please know how much you are appreciated. I know it is not a pay raise, a reduction in health insurance costs, more staff to help out with our ever-increasing workload, etc., but your work and dedication to this agency are invaluable. Remember that there are thousands of folks in the Commonwealth who are thankful for you and the impact you have had on their lives.

“Gratitude can transform common days into thanksgivings, turn routine jobs into joy, and change ordinary opportunities into blessings.” ~ William Arthur Ward

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