

Public Policy Committee

Minutes

April 17th, 2025

9:00am – 10:00am

Attendees: Committee Chair, Diana Merzweiler, Amy Luttrell, Allison Johnson/Proxy of Gretta Hylton, Andrew Johnson, Katie Wolf Whaley, and Jeff White

Staff Attendees: Nanci Howard, KYOVR Administrator, Holly Hendricks, KYOVR Director of Field Services Director and Anu Kumari, KYOVR Administrative Specialist Senior

Members Absent: Cora McNabb and Luv Tesha Robertson

Welcome: Employment First Public Policy Committee Chair, Diana Merzweiler welcomed everyone to the meeting. The agenda was reviewed by all participants.

Review of Order of Selection (OOS) Proposal

Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator (KYOVR), Nanci Howard shared an announcement regarding KYOVR's OOS.

- Two, virtual public forums were held on April 14, 2025, at 10:00am and 6:00pm.
- A 10-day public comment period will close April 17th, 2025, at 4:00pm (EST).
- Questions, answers and comments from the forums will be posted on the agency website no later than April 25th, 2025, at noon (EST).

KYOVR's [website](#) and the link for public comments was provided to the committee.

Chair Diana Merzweiler, opened the floor for discussion on how OOS could affect, consumers, providers and other entities.

Brief discussion was held regarding the reasons for the closure of all categories. Statistical data was read aloud from the [KYOVR OOS Public Forum PowerPoint](#).

It was said that under OOS, KYOVR will continue to conduct assessments for new applicants only. The agency will continue to utilize Community Rehabilitation Programs (CRPs) and collaborate with vendors for assessment services. Individuals with assessment results can then use them as a resource for a workplace accommodation, etc. KYOVR plans to continue to provide services for over 15,000 Kentuckians with disabilities who currently have a signed Individualized Plan for Employment (IPE).

Members shifted their focus on how the impact of OOS could affect provider services throughout the Commonwealth. It was suggested to conduct research and provide additional resource materials to the provider base regarding alternate funding sources, potentially through the Kentucky Career Centers (KCC)

Amy Luttrell highlighted the Goodwill Opportunity Centers. These nine locations are located throughout Kentucky in, Louisville, Lexington, Morehead, Pikeville, Somerset, Corbin, Elizabethtown, Bowling Green, and Paducah.

An inquiry regarding KYOVR staff and their capacity to take more time establishing eligibility was raised. The agency does not foresee that determining eligibility for consumers would take longer to complete. The average time it takes counselors to determine eligibility is 30 days. It was said that over time, counselors' caseloads may be smaller due to consumers naturally exiting the program, but this will take several months before seeing the impact. Counselors will have more time to complete intake and eligibility and less time working on service delivery. Additionally, it was said that currently KYOVR is not filling positions that are vacant.

It was mentioned the KYOVR State Plan cannot be submitted until the definitions of categories one and two are rewritten, according to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA).

Questions from the committee regarding definitions:

- What can the committee do to develop recommendations to address and eliminate the policy barrier of the redefining categories one and two?
 - Unknown until there is more OOS information available.
- Can the committee submit comments and who would those be directed to?
 - Yes, until April 17th, 2025, at 4:00pm.
 - Comments from the committee can also be submitted to Council Administrator, Nanci Howard or KYOVR Field Service Director, Holly Hendricks.
- What is the process for addressing the category definitions, submitting them, etc.? Have the definitions been written and submitted?
 - Public comment period ends; edit definitions begin; submit State Plan to RSA; approval of State Plan. The definitions will not be written until after the public comment ends as per RSA.

For the most current information about OOS, it was advised to refer all individuals to the [KYOVR website](#).

The reason for OOS was explained further by KYOVR Director of Field Services, Holly Hendricks. She said category one and two both state “most significant disabilities”, KYOVR must treat them the same resulting in the closing of all four categories as directed by RSA.

Chair Diana Merzweiler asked, how the Council could express concerns regarding the impact the state match would have if the federal funding is not received and what that situation would look? It was explained that KYOVR Director of Field Services, Holly Hendricks, there is a state match program and what federal funds are available determines the state match requirement. There is a formula to determine this set by RSA. It was stated, that whether the congressional budget for the public VR program is increased or decreased, it is going to have an impact on what is required from the Commonwealth to match those funds.

Chair, Diana Merzweiler asked if there will be funds available to allocate over and above the match. KYOVR staff support for the committee, stated yes, there is. However, there is a reallocation process that RSA conducts should states not receive their full federal match dollars. Additionally, KYOVR is unable to fill any vacant personnel positions because of the lack of funds unless that position is related directly to Pre-ETS.

The Chair then asked if there was a path the committee can advocate at a federal level? Committee member, Amy Luttrell, and several individuals from Goodwill Industries, Inc., will be traveling to DC at the end of April to discuss some items with Congressmen and will mention the barriers to funding.

It was decided among the committee to meet again before the July full Council meeting once more information is received regarding OOS definitions and funding. At that time, the committee will discuss how they can move forward with potential recommendations. It was decided among the committee to meet in May 2025.

It was asked once the KYOVR State Plan is submitted, will it be made public? The State Plan will not be made public until it is approved by RSA.

Action Steps

- ✓ Schedule additional Public Policy meeting to review OOS.
- ✓ Review OOS Comments/Questions and Answers at [KYOVR website](#) once available.

2025 Annual Report Recommendations

No recommendation addressed.

Public Comment

No public comment addressed.

Adjournment

Council Chair, Diana Merzweiler, thanked everyone for their contribution and adjourned the meeting.

Next Meeting

Date: May 15th, 2025

Time: 9:00am to 10:00am

Nanci Howard

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