

Minutes | SCVR 4th Quarterly Meeting

October 23, 2023

Hybrid Meeting

Physical Location: Frankfort, KY – Kentucky Transportation Conference Center

Zoom Platform

- APPROVED -

Members Present:

Chairperson David Allgood, Vice-Chairperson Joe Cowan, OVR Executive Director Cora McNabb, Member-At-Large Todd Stephens, Kelly Knoop, Terrie Terlau, Danielle Burton, Bri Sweatt, Necholyia Wright, Kelly Bass, and Jeffrey Edwards.

Members Absent:

Christopher White, Benjamin Henderson

Staff Present:

Susie Edwards, Helga Gilbert, Holly Hendricks, Corey Marcum, Alan Gullet, Jonathan White, Kristen Beach, Brent Sturgill, Jason Wathen, Gay Pannell, Jennifer Withrow, Kellie Scott, Chad Hunt, Chris Sheeting, Lametta Isaacs, Brooke McDaniel.

Guests were present.

SCVR Chairperson David Allgood welcomed everyone to the meeting and read aloud the mission statement of the council. Introductions were made. A roll call was taken by Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Administrator, Lametta Isaacs. A quorum was established.

Open Forum

Public comment was made concerning a change of a Pre-Employment Transitions Service Fee Memo and the returning of FY 2022 funds by OVR. A discussion was had regarding the issues, and it was requested that the issues be further discussed by OVR with the Council at the next meeting.

Executive Directors Report

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Executive Director Cora McNabb provided the report. OVR is currently in the process of applying for an Equitable Transition Models Demonstration Grant for Transition Services, to increase transition outcomes. The quarterly Corrective Action Plan was recently submitted to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Cora notes a lot of progress has been made regarding internal controls. RSA has released KY OVR from some of its findings; however, internal policies are still a work in progress. There are two upcoming State Plan Forums to be held at the Charles W. McDowell Center for the Blind on October 24th, a morning and evening session, both with hybrid in-person and virtual attendance options. Cora reports staff from VRTAC Assistance Center are on-site at the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center and the Charles W. McDowell Center for the Blind to provide training to OVR staff on Common Performance Measures and Measurable Skill Gains. The new Case Management System (CMS) is an ongoing project with Geo Solutions (GSI) and Cora reports some progress is being made, however, not as quickly as hoped. A NEON application is currently in the works through the Employment First Council for provider capacity.

Cora announced she and several staff will be traveling to Savannah, GA to attend the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) meeting, where she will serve on two panels. One panel will focus on the RETAIN grant and the Inclusive Workforce Summit held recently in partnership with the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce. OVR continues to work on capital projects, having recently submitted a large prior approval request to RSA, in hopes of improving accessibility at both the CDPVTC and McDowell Center facilities. Cora reports just over \$2M of Pre-Employment Transition money returned for 2022. OVR has never returned Pre-Employment Transition money up to this point, noting this being the first

instance as a direct result of the pandemic. Chairperson David Allgood posed questions surrounding the return of funds. Cora anticipates this will not be a recurrence and is the first instance in several years where funds have been returned. Cora reviews the Strategic Plan goals with the Council, which include: Implementing sound fiscal management, quality assurance, maximizing staff resources, improving center operations, improve quality outcomes for consumer services, and implementing an ongoing outreach plan toward public awareness. [To view the Strategic Plan in its entirety, please refer to [Appendix A | KY OVR Strategic Plan 2023-2027](#)]

Member Necholyia Wright asked about OVR's current marketing and advertisements and explained that she has only heard about OVR through conversations, not advertisements. Cora agrees that "word of mouth" is heavily relied upon, and notes there are federal limitations on the types of advertising OVR can produce. Cora mentions the OVR website and Facebook page, as well as school systems and job fairs, etc., help toward outreach. Member Jeffrey Edwards asked how OVR could increase Supported Employment Providers. Cora stated the beforementioned NEON grant will help, if awarded. Member Terrie Terlau questioned if there were currently any provider outreach in the medical field. Cora responds there is not currently active recruitment in the medical field, and Blind Services Division Director Helga Gilbert adds that the yearly optometry conference she and her staff attend and provide starter packets of OVR materials could be considered medical field outreach. Chairperson asked for a motion to accept the goals as laid out in the Strategic Plan. Terrie Terlau provided the motion. Necholyia Wright, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously. Cora concluded her report.

Division Director's Reports

The Division of Blind Services

Blind Services Division Director Helga Gilbert provided the report. The Charles W. McDowell Center dorms are officially open and currently operating at about half capacity. The McDowell Center recently held a White Cane Day event and Helga reports the event was successful. Listening events were held with staff at the McDowell Center, with feedback being

focused on training and more conversation around diversity and inclusivity. Helga reports the McDowell Center needs another Orientation and Mobility instructor and would like to add a specialized instructor for the Older Individuals Who Are Blind population. Helga reports there are currently 19 active students at the McDowell Center, 68 total students reported on the census ranging from acceptance through to graduation. All program areas have seen growth; 83 consumers served in 2023 versus 61 consumers in 2022. Consumers from 24 counties have been served so far in 2023 versus 20 counties in 2022. Helga reports staff will be traveling to an upcoming National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) conference. A brief update on the Bioptic Driving program was provided. In 2022 this program served 32 consumers, with 36 so far in 2023. 30 individuals were evaluated; 13 received behind-the-wheel training and 12 completed a road skills test. The Bioptic Driving promotional video was shared by the Education and Labor Cabinet's Facebook page and will be added to the OVR website in the coming weeks. Helga reports more videos from the McDowell Center are to come. Gay Pannell provided an update with Independent Living/ Older Individuals Who are Blind (IL/OIB) Services. Data for this program is collected on a federal fiscal year as opposed to quarterly, wrapping up the data collection year on September 30th. For FY23, IL/OIB recorded 708 cases in CMS. The two largest caseloads were in Western Kentucky. Of the total cases, 84% were for individuals who are 55 years or older, and of that number 50% were 75 years or older. Of the total cases, 67% are female. There were 591 cases for individuals 55 or older. Of that number, 277 were severely visually impaired, 270 reported as legally blind, and 44 individuals reported as being totally blind. Gay reports that a majority of the individuals served reported losing their vision due to macular degeneration. Of the 591 cases, 524 individuals are living in a private residence. The 708 total cases is up from 2022; Gay refers to FY23 as the "rebound year" since the pandemic. Of the 708 cases, IL/OIB served 112 Kentucky counties, compared to 92 served in FY22. Gay reports that Eastern Kentucky is in need of services, and OVR has been focusing strong outreach services in this area for the IL/OIB program. To conclude her report, Gay mentions that with the help of VR Staff Chad Hunt they have been successfully promoting a national campaign called "Time To Be Bold". This program provides public service announcements throughout the country and can provide local contacts for

individuals interested in the IL/OIB program. Gay and Helga concluded their reports.

Division of Field Services

Division of Field Services Director Holly Hendricks provided the report. Holly reports individuals being served by OVR has increased 30% in comparison to 2022. Over 41K cases have been served through the end of September; over 18K potentially eligible students have been served; almost 13K new referrals; almost 9K new applications. The average days to eligibility currently sits at 27 days. The average days to plan currently sits at 33. There are currently over 4,500 cases in training status. Over 1,300 credentials have been captured and almost 2K measurable skill gains. There have been 2,500 unsuccessful exits reported. 3,454 competitive integrated employment outcomes have been reached. Of those outcomes, Holly reports the hourly wage averaged \$21.71, with an average of 34 hours worked. The goal for competitive integrated outcomes in 2023 is 3,644; Holly reports having already achieved 95% of this goal in September.

Holly reports there are currently 285 positions in Field Services: 76 assistants (three vacant positions) and 134 counselors (six vacant positions). Listening Tours will conclude in early November for the Field Services Division. Holly reports common concerns being office space, building/facility issues, service provider issues, and an overall process questions. One complete Skill Enhancement Training (SET) has been conducted in 2023, with another group to finish by the end of the year. Holly reports the importance of not letting new staff go longer than three months without training. The new Case Management System (CMS) still has an implementation date of July 01, 2024. A team of counselors and assistants are currently testing the new system and main focuses are on data migration and system integration. Holly reports that Regional Program Manager Jason Cole attended the National Rehabilitation Leadership Institute and hope to have another Regional Program Manager attend in 2024. The Kentucky Rehabilitation Association (KRA) Conference will be held in November with many OVR staff planning to attend. Holly concluded her report.

The Kentucky Business Enterprises (KBE) Division

Kentucky Business Enterprises Division Director Corey Marcum provided the report. The five-year extension for the Troop Dining at Ft. Campbell was awarded to KBE. Corey reports continued negotiation with the Army for the same services at Ft. Knox. Multiple bids have been awarded this quarter: the Eastern Kentucky route was awarded to Todd Stephens, the Dosker Manor facility awarded to Shaun Dorsey, the Woodford County rest area awarded to Buster Mayne, the Simpsonville rest area awarded to Chris Miller, and the First City Complex in Frankfort awarded to Darrell Keithly. Corey reports that a majority of vendors are seeing success after streamlining of operations and are back to profitability. A second Assistant Director position was created to focus on Food Services and Troop Dining; Corey reports Jason Wathen has been promoted to this position. This will leave an open Food Services Coordinator position, which is currently posted. A new micro market at American Printing House (APH) has been installed and is seeing success. Corey also reports the installation of a micro market at Stover Building in partnership with Jefferson County Public Schools. The KBE General Assembly will be held the coming weekend in Louisville. Assistant Director Jennifer Wright will be attending National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) Fall conference. Corey reports three KBE staff and two vendors recently attended BLAST a training provided by the National Association of Blind Merchants. Two possible vendors completed Lighthouse Training to become new vendors with KBE. Corey concluded his report.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) Division

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center Division Director Alan Gullett provided the report. Current enrollment for CDPVTC totals at 122, with 16 additional evaluations and 9 more consumers to add in the coming weeks. Alan reports the 50th Anniversary Celebration held in September was a great success. Representatives from other state operated vocational training centers were in attendance: Virginia, Georgia, Maryland, Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Tennessee. Work experience opportunities are being expanded at CDPVTC; Alan reports up to 9 businesses in the community are currently partnered with the Center. VRTAC Staff are currently on-site at

CDPVTC conducting performance measurement with Center staff. Alan reports ongoing capital projects such as the Assisted Living Unit restroom renovation, A/C unit replacement in each dorm, and the gym flooring. The Commonwealth Office of Technology (COT) will be on-site in early November to provide assistance in upgrading the Center's Wi-Fi network. Alan reports the Center is in the process of hiring a barista for the recently added Barista Training program; he is hoping to launch the program in January 2024. A videographer from the Education and Labor Cabinet (ELC) will be on-site to be working on updated CDPVTC videos aid in outreach efforts. A State Plan Forum was held at the Center recently and guests were in attendance. Alan reports the forum was successful.

Since January 1st, CDPVTC has served 389 consumers. These consumers come from 85 out of the 120 counties across Kentucky. 61 referrals have been received from the local Prestonsburg District, 42 referrals from the East Jefferson District, 35 referrals from the Bluegrass District, 25 referrals from the Danville District, 17 referrals from the Owensboro District, and 21 referrals from the Florence District. Alan concluded his report.

Program Reports

VisionServe Alliance Report:

Dr. John Crews presents the Kentucky Big Data discussion: a standalone Kentucky report estimating the prevalence of blindness and low vision at the commonwealth and county level among people aged less than/equal to 65 years. Dr. Crews also provides data describing the social, economic, health, and quality of life factors among people who are blind and have low vision aged less than or equal to 65 years compared to older people without blindness and low vision in Kentucky.

Social Security Disability Benefits:

Social Security Administration Vocational Rehabilitation Coordinator Donna Osburn provided an overview of Social Security Disability Benefits. Donna discussed the fear being a major barrier in individuals with disabilities seeking work. After looking through the Work Incentives Planning and

Assistance (WIPA) Manual, Donna found that “terminations from the disability programs due to employment are almost non-existent”. Donna reports that Ticket to Work participation is low. Each month, Social Security releases a Summary and Assignment Report that shows how many tickets are being used. As of September 2023, total eligible beneficiaries equaled 12,204,860, and total tickets being used equaled 304,243; that’s roughly 2.5%. In Kentucky specifically, this usage percentage is even lower. Total eligible beneficiaries equaled 278,755, with total tickets being used equaling to 3,221; only 1.2% of Kentuckians are benefiting from the Ticket to Work Program. Donna again mentions the overall fear of losing benefits being a major factor in individuals with disabilities not seeking employment. Three biggest myths reported by the SSA are as follows: 1) If I try to go to work, I will automatically lose my benefits, 2) If I use my Ticket to go to work, Social Security will conduct a medical review of my case, and I will lose my benefits, 3) If my checks stop because I go to work and then I have to stop working because of my disability, I will have to reapply for benefits all over again. It took me forever to be approved for benefits and I cannot afford to wait that long again. As a result, I should not try to work. Donna notes that SS does try to address these issues and provide safety nets for beneficiaries. Incentives such as continuation of Medicare coverage, Medicaid While Working (Section 1619(b)), Medical Review Protection (Ticket to Work Program), Expedited Reinstatement, Trial Work Period/Extended Period of Eligibility (EPE), Unsuccessful Work Attempt, and Student Income Inclusion. Benefits Counseling can be a tool for beneficiaries to use if they are in fear of losing their benefits. Social Security funds Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) programs to provide benefits counseling for beneficiaries. They also support the WIPA National Training and Data Center at Virginia Commonwealth University to train WIPA staff and Community Partner Work Incentives Counselors (CPWICS). Disability Benefits 101 (DB 101) provides information about work and benefits specific to Kentucky individuals. Donna concluded her presentation.

Member Terrie Terlau posed questions about the ABLE Program. Originally, Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator Sarah Richardson was to present on this program during the meeting but was unexpectedly unable to attend. Executive Director Cora McNabb noted that this program and the questions posed will be addressed during the next meeting. Terrie then asked if there

was a resource that could be provided in the meantime regarding the ABLE Program. Vocational Rehabilitation Program Administrator Kellie Scott provided the resource – StableKentucky.com.

The Council broke for lunch.

Business Meeting

The council reconvened, and a roll call was taken by Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Administrator Lametta Isaacs. A quorum was established. SCVR Chairperson called the meeting to order for business. Council members reviewed the Minutes from the July quarterly meeting. Vice-Chairperson Joe Cowan made a motion to accept the minutes. Member Briana Sweatt, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee:

Chairperson David Allgood provided the report. Discussion surrounding strategic planning retreat issues arose. David reported another survey will be sent to the Council and encouraged members to participate. A CSNA focus group will be held after the meeting and members are again encouraged to attend and participate. 2024 meeting dates were established and announced: January 22nd, April 22nd, July 22nd and October 21st. Future topics for meetings were discussed; Assistive Technology, Rehab Tech, and mock consumer cases to showcase to members how each case progresses through OVR processes and systems. The committee adjourned. David concluded his report.

Public Awareness and Legislative (PAL) Committee:

Regional Program Manager Brent Sturgill, OVR staff support for the PAL Committee, provided the report. Legislative updates were provided to the committee by David Allgood; though there was not much to report, David

did share positive feedback surrounding the Custodial Rights Bill and reported discussion regarding Transportation issues across the State. There was an Annual Report update and brief discussion among the committee members about the bio sketches to be included in the report. Committee members discussed the Arthur Campbell Jr. Advocacy Award and the Employer Recognition Award. There were currently no nominees for the Arthur Campbell Jr. Award and only one nominee for the Employer Recognition Award. The committee requested OVR's assistance in seeking nominations for these awards. The committee will review the nominations at a later date. The committee adjourned. Brent concluded his report.

Blind Services Committee:

Chair Danielle Burton provided the report. An update for the Blind Services Division was provided to the Committee by staff support Chad Hunt. The committee briefly discussed the Bioptic Driving program and instructor staff. The committee adjourned. Danielle concluded her report.

Policy and Planning Committee:

Chair Nicky Wright provided the report. The meeting was brief, and discussion was had regarding the Strategic Plan and the upcoming State Plan Forums. The committee adjourned. Nicky concluded her report.

Nominating and Bylaws Committee:

Vice-Chairperson Joe Cowan provided the report. The committee discussed vacancies within the Council; still awaiting approval for the applications and resumes sent earlier in the year. The committee discussed a recruitment process and membership pipeline. There was some discussion around the "Joining SCVR" document and updating this document to be a single page. Letters that were previously sent to members with upcoming expiring terms were asked to nominate any interested individuals they may know into that area. Letters sent in the future will include the "Joining SCVR" document to aid in the recruitment process. The bio sketch information for the Annual Report was again discussed and asked of the Council to participate in the survey. The committee also discussed the Strategic Plan and new members training. Topics for the next committee meeting will include continuing the

membership pipeline discussion. The committee adjourned. Joe concluded his report.

Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee:

Chair Briana Sweatt provided the report. Consumer Satisfaction Survey updates were provided by staff support Kellie Scott and discussed amongst the committee. The committee reviewed the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) and discussed the focus group to be held after the Council meeting. Briana was nominated as the Chair of the Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee, and she accepted. Kellie Scot gave an overview of the revised Case Review process. The committee adjourned. Briana concluded her report.

Old Business

There were no old business matters to discuss.

New Business

There were no new business matters to discuss.

Motion to Adjourn:

Member Todd Stephens made a motion to adjourn. Nicky Wright, second. The Council adjourned.

Next Meeting Date: January 22, 2024