

**Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation
SCVR**

January 23, 2023

Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting

Physical Location: Frankfort, KY – Kentucky Transportation Cabinet Conference Center
Zoom Platform

Members Present:

SCVR Chairperson Joe Cowan, Vice Chairperson David Allgood, Cora McNabb (Susie Edwards), Todd Stephens, Tyler Levy, Amy Luttrell, Christopher White, Jeff Edwards, Kellie Smith, Kelly Bass, Kelly Knoop, Matt Davis, Necholyia Wright, Brianna Sweat (Theresa Thomas), Danielle Burton, Susan Farra.

Members Absent:

Lynn Florence, Terrie Terlau.

Staff Present:

Jennifer Withrow, Lametta Isaacs, Brooke McDaniel, Susie Edwards, Whitney Marcum, Holly Hendricks, Kristen Beach, Jonathan White, Alan Gullett, Chad Hunt, Chris Sheeting, Kellie Scott, Helga Gilbert, Corey Marcum, Brent Sturgill, Nanci Howard.

Guests were present.

SCVR Chairperson Joe Cowan welcomed everyone to the meeting. The public did not offer questions or comments. A roll call was taken by Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Administrator, Lametta Isaacs. A quorum was established.

Executive Directors Report

The Executive Directors Report was given by Susie Edwards on behalf of Cora McNabb. Susie shared with the Council the reason for Cora's absence, citing a sudden health concern that she has been navigating. Susie reported that OVR will be returning \$573K that was not matched. OVR is still spending and moving on with projects, as scheduled such as the new Case Management System (CMS). For 2023, OVR has roughly \$67M+ in the federal award, with just over \$18M needed to match those incoming funds. Susie reported current legislation for a 6% raise amongst state employees, as well as

legislation to adopt a forty-hour work week which would also increase payroll. Fiscal has assured OVR that with either scenario our funding will be secure. If the Council has interest in someone from Fiscal attending future meetings that could be arranged through Cora. An update on the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) was provided. Susie reported the ongoing process with this plan and the next federal update is to be held at the end of January. One finding regarding Fiscal has already been resolved. All other findings are partially resolved, with the exception of one relating to internal controls/policies and procedures. Susie explained this finding is being diligently handled, working closely with Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance/Quality Management in order to resolve the CAP completely. The Program Policy and Support Branch is working to streamline policies and procedures, as well as the rate setting process. Training on the new CMS will take place in August, with an anticipated roll-out for the program taking place in November. Susie gave a brief update regarding RETAIN. RETAIN is a federally funded program implemented by the University of Kentucky. They are expanding services to help thousands of newly injured and ill employees across the Commonwealth stay in the workforce. RETAIN's goal is to serve more than three thousand employees across Kentucky. The program is free and open to employees eighteen and older who have non-occupational injuries or illnesses. As of January 13, 2023, there have been one thousand three hundred and eighty referrals and of those referrals four hundred and thirty consumers were enrolled and helped by RETAIN. Susie very briefly mentioned the newly formed Employment 1st Council, stating a guest speaker will be going into more detail later in the meeting regarding this topic. Susie moved on to legislation that will have an impact on OVR. HB7 relating to job placement will involve collaboration with the Cabinet for Healthy and Family Services, ensuring consumers are aware they have assistance within OVR for job placement. This will likely end up being tracked by OVR to be reported out on. Susie gave a brief Personnel report, citing as of January 1st there are four hundred and six merit and non-merit employees with fifty vacancies, stating that the recent salary increases has helped in the retention of employees. Susie informed the Council that the Annual Report has been completed, submitted, and accepted by RSA. Lastly, Susie mentioned the Everyone Counts Initiative stating there is now someone established to oversee that program who reports directly to the Deputy Secretary of the Cabinet, Beth Brinley, as the Cabinet does not currently have a commissioner. The counties being reached out to at this time are Jefferson, Fayette, Franklin, and Scott Counties. Once more, information on this program is available and will be provided to the Council. She concluded her report.

Division Director's Reports

The Division of Blind Services

Division of Blind Services Director Helga Gilbert provided the report. She announced the dorm restoration project at the McDowell Center will be complete in a matter of days. While the center has still been operational while this project was underway, Helga reports the center is looking forward to being a full-functioning center. Having students back in the dorms is anticipated for March. Helga invited the Council to an open house event on April 11th to celebrate and tour the new dormitories. More information on this will be sent to the Council electronically once it is finalized. In the last quarter, the McDowell Center served forty-three students from point of referral to the conclusion of services. Thirty-five of these individuals were VR consumers with an employment goal, and eight were Independent Living/Older Blind individuals. Helga reports these individuals spanned over twenty-one different counties. Eleven students are waiting to begin training. Six individuals have been waiting for the dorm renovation project to finish and the Center looks forward to finally accepting them in. The Bioptic Driving Program licensed fourteen new Bioptic drivers. Around twenty individuals were evaluated in the program and the program has a wait list that places students about four to six months out. Helga provided an update on the Independent Living/Older Blind Program. This program was receiving technical assistance from the OIB-TAC and a two-day onsite meeting was held at the McDowell Center. Staff and other individuals from the OIB Branch attended this meeting. Strategic planning was the focus of this meeting, with three main goals set in place for the future: updating all policy and procedure, incentivizing credentialing for current and future staff, and implementing a plan for expanding services, including outreach. Stats for the OIB Program report fifty to seventy caseloads per counselor, with the program having nine counselors in total. There are some exceptions where caseloads can reach around one hundred per counselor. Counselors are receiving three to six new referrals per month. Since November, there were a total of three hundred and fifty-five total cases in CMS, with one hundred and forty new cases since October 2022. Helga provided staffing updates for the McDowell Center. The center remains fully staffed (with an extra counselor in Louisville). A couple Administrative Assistants were added to the Division, a Receptionist for the McDowell Center, a Program Administrator, and two instructional staff. Other positions to be filled are still being funneled through the hiring process, with waiting qualified applicants or recommendations already submitted. Helga reported the biggest priority is to complete staffing for the renovated dorms, stating that most positions will be filled using the Adecco temp service, alongside one merit position. Helga concluded her report.

Vice-Chairperson David Allgood posed a question regarding the Bioptic Driving Program and how that process works. Discussion was had.

Member Christopher White posed a question regarding caseloads per counselor. Helga provided insight for those caseload numbers in terms of OIB Counselors vs. VR Counselors. She explained that OIB Counselors provide services that may allow cases to close faster than VR Counselors, such as short-term training and assistive equipment.

Division of Field Services

Division of Field Services Director Holly Hendricks provided her report. In calendar year 2022, OVR assisted 3,641 individuals with obtaining or maintaining employment. This was an increase of 761 individuals from 2021. Holly mentioned this number of positive outcomes had not been reached since 2019. A total of 40,854 cases were served in 2022. 18,735 of those cases were Potentially Eligible. 8,998 new cases were reported. Average days to eligible status were reported at 31, and average days to plan status were reported at 134 (with extensions). Holly commented the average days to plan status continues to be an area of emphasis for her division. 1,273 credentials were recorded in 2022, along with 1,763 measurable skills gained. Vice-Chairperson David Allgood requested clarification on “credentials”. Holly responded that credentials are something that can be earned by consumers, such as a nursing certification, CPR/First Aid certifications – all industry related and recognized. Holly reported the average hourly wage for the competitive integrated employment outcomes reached \$23.05, with an average of 34 hours worked per week. The new CMS is major undertaking across divisions, with many employees across OVR dedicating their time to this project. The implementation of this system has increased focus on scanning and archiving paper cases. There are roughly three thousand cases still needing to be scanned, and staff is being provided with necessary resources to ensure the scanning is completed. Data entry compliance with existing cases is being monitored closely to be implemented correctly into the new CMS. An assistants training is being planned for April 2023. The focus of this training will be centered around increased engagement activities, customer service, support for the new CMS amongst other topics. Holly reported Field Services is coordinating with VRTAC QM to provide a virtual statewide Common Measures training, which will be revisited during listening tours throughout 2023. This will fulfill part of the Corrective Action Plan. There were no formal appeals in 2022 – all conflicts were resolved informally or through informal administrative review, which is not reported. Social Security reimbursements in December 2022 reached 70 paid claims, totaling \$777,519.03. This brings the 2023 fiscal year total to \$1.6M. Holly reported there are currently 264 staff in her division, with eleven counselor vacancies. Lastly, Field Services

finally received approval for four Establishment Projects for the evidence-based model of supported employment (IPS). These IPS Establishment Projects will be awarded to Communicare, Lifeskills, Voices of Hope, and Build Inclusion. Holly concluded her report.

Chairperson Joe Cowan asked Holly to elaborate more on Social Security reimbursement. Holly explained when OVR assists individuals who are receiving social security benefits for reason of disability, with the end goal of employment and to stop receiving those benefits, OVR can submit a claim to Social Security for expenses in providing services to that individual.

Vice Chairperson David Allgood commended the staff of OVR for their hard work in assisting individuals with disabilities, citing the tremendous increase in numbers reported from 2022.

The Kentucky Business Enterprises (KBE) Division

Kentucky Business Enterprises Division Director Corey Marcum provided his report. KBE is seeking to hire a merit position repair tech, as the contract position has recently become vacant. This position has not been merited in the past, and KBE is hopeful this will help with retention. KBE is continuing to work with the Department of Corrections for vending sites, announcing that new equipment is currently being installed at a facility in Western, KY for a blind vendor. Corey reported there were no bids in the last quarter. KBE will be conducting a site visit to the Bluegrass Army Depot to assess the type of equipment package needed to meet the needs of this location. The RSA-15 report for KBE in 2022 showed gross sales of \$6,971,000. \$1.9M worth of product was purchased. Payroll totaled at \$3.3M. Income from unassigned vending was \$259,000.00, with a levied set aside of \$60,000.00. KBE were directly responsible for 130 staff across the state (not including blind vendors, just their staff only). The Army has issued an RFP for Cadet Summer Training, and the agency, along with Southern Foods, are working on a response that is due February 3rd. Corey reported his staff will be attending a virtual national training in February. Corey concluded his report.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) Division

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center Division Director Alan Gullett provided his report. The Perkins Center started the new year with 97 consumers returning to the center. Currently there are 121 consumers enrolled, with that number increasing each week. Alan is hopeful to reach an average of 150 to 160 consumers by March. There are currently 73 consumers on the waiting list. The consumers who returned in January represented 51 of the 120 counties across Kentucky. The Assisted Living Branch

(permit/driving classes, physical therapy, occupational therapy, life skills, speech therapy, medical/psychological services) reported throughout the last quarter there were three driver's licenses taken and obtained, fifteen permit tests taken and obtained, and twenty driving evaluations completed. The physical therapy unit continues to average ten to twelve outpatients per month, with Wellness around twenty per month. The Life Skills Enhancement Program (LEP) completed eight consumers in December, and nine were enrolled in January. Occupational Therapy services average twelve per month in house and eight new evaluations per month. Speech Therapy averages thirty-one per month in house, and seven evaluations per month. An average of 83 consumers have been enrolled in Psychological Services. The Vocational Services Branch (including Job Readiness Training, Vocational Evaluation, Skills Training, ALPHA, Job Placement Staff) has had good enrollment, producing over 14,000 hours of training. In 2022, there were 89 program completions and 21 credentials issued. The Student Services Branch reported a total of twelve consumers on the wait list for the Prestonsburg District, the Ashland District had ten consumers on the waitlist, the Elizabethtown District had nine consumers on the waitlist. For 2022, the hourly wage averaged at \$12.78 for consumers who obtained Competitive Integrated Employment, and average hours worked was 27.25 hours per week. The total counties served by CDPVTC reached 71 between October and December 2022. In terms of referrals for 2022, the Prestonsburg District (the local district) lead with 47 referrals. East Jefferson District had 28 referrals, Florence District had 24 referrals, and Elizabethtown, Danville, and Owensboro Districts all had 21 referrals. Alan reported changes with the Job Readiness Training (JRT) Program, separating the program into a six-to-nine-week class to work on soft skills and enroll in training once completed. Up to thirty consumers will be enrolled in these classes. CDPVTC has implemented a Training Enrollment Employment Meeting (TEEM) that will be held at the beginning of each consumers enrollment into a training program. The consumer will meet with a Case Manager, Instructor, and Administrator in Job Placement Staff to discuss goals, completion dates, accommodations, and employment opportunities. Lastly, Alan reported the ALPHA Program has focused on Post-Secondary Opportunities and are now seeking consumers to obtain certification in Nurses Aid, Welding, CDL, and Hospitality Management. These certifications have been added to the ALPHA Program and information has been distributed to Field Staff for discussion with consumers. Alan concluded his report.

Employment First Council

Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator Nanci Howard gave a brief presentation regarding the newly established Employment First Council. Please refer to the accompanying document titled "Employment First Council" for further detail.

Arthur Campbell, Jr. Advocacy Award Presentation

Chairperson Joe Cowan presented the Arthur Campbell, Jr. Advocacy Award to Rhonda Logsdon. Rhonda was nominated by Amber Hamm. Joe read the nomination letter written to the Council by Amber Hamm. Rhonda was present for the meeting via video teleconference and accepted the award. Council Member Todd Stephens and Vice Chair David Allgood spoke briefly, congratulating and thanking Rhonda for her service to individuals with disabilities.

— The Council broke for lunch and committee meetings —

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 Joe Cowan called the meeting to order for business. He also reminded members per the Open Meetings Act that those attending via video-teleconference who wish to have their attendance counted must have their cameras on and be visible through the duration of the meeting. Council members reviewed the minutes from the October quarterly meeting. Council Member Todd Stephens made a motion to accept the minutes, with an adjustment to a second made by a council member who did not have their camera on at the time motions were made. Todd suggested the wording “a second was made”, rather than citing a specific member. Chairperson Joe Cowan, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee:

Chairperson Joe Cowan provided the report. A member refresher training has been scheduled for February 23rd. The standing committees will meet between the full council meetings for a more efficient process and effective committee meetings, which will reduce the timeframe of each quarterly meeting. Joe requested a motion from the council regarding this new schedule. Council Member Necholyia Wright offered a motion. Kelly Knoop, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Todd Stephens suggested that members introduce themselves to one another at some point in the future. Some discussion was had amongst the Council on how to best achieve the introductions.

Chairperson Joe Cowan reported that the quarterly meeting dates had been established for the remainder of the year. Full council meetings will take place on April 24th, July 24th, and October 23rd.

Public Awareness and Legislative (PAL) Committee:

Chair Tyler Levy provided the report. The minutes from the previous meeting were reviewed and accepted. SCVR Chairperson David Allgood provided legislative updates. The ongoing Subminimum Wage Bill efforts have been diminished as sponsorship issues have made it difficult to move forward during the short session period. Discussion was had amongst the committee regarding the 2022 Annual Report and its success. Nanci Howard attended the PAL Committee meeting to answer any questions about the Employment First Council that the PAL members may have about the council. Tyler informed the committee that he will be stepping down as Chair since his term with SCVR will be ending soon. Brent Sturgill is planning to attend the annual Kentucky Chamber Day Dinner and will report back to PAL with any legislative updates. The committee adjourned.

Blind Services Committee:

Chair Danielle Burton provided the report. Helga Gilbert gave an update on the dorm renovations at the McDowell Center and are anticipating students by March. Discussion was had on how to initiate more feedback from consumers attending the McDowell Center and how to streamline this process. Chad Hunt plans to start a video series highlighting the McDowell Center. There will be a new counselor starting at the McDowell Center for consumers to transition to while attending and can transfer back to their original counselor when they return home. The committee adjourned.

Policy and Planning Committee:

Chair Necholyia Wright provided the report. The committee discussed the application process for OVR services. The old application is not compatible in CMS as it is currently formatted, so alterations to update the form will be made. Legal has voiced concerns regarding utilizing a consumers social security number. Discussion is being had to create a specific identification for consumers in the program without using the SSN to reduce any potential breach of information. The committee adjourned.

Nominating and Bylaws Committee:

Chair Christopher White provided the report. There are five upcoming vacancies within the Council that will need to be filled. Recruitment for the State Educational Agency Representative and the Workforce Development Board Representative is being discussed

by Cora McNabb and Lametta Isaacs, with assistance from Amy Luttrell. Applications and resumes for other upcoming vacancies have been submitted and are being processed. Chris reported changes to the Bylaws language that were discussed among the committee, which can be viewed in the accompanying documents titled “Exhibit A” and “Exhibit B”. These changes will be discussed further with the Council during New Business. The committee adjourned.

Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee:

Chair Matthew Davis provided the report. Minutes from the two previous quarterly meetings were approved. The committee discussed changes to the Consumer Satisfaction Survey question list and was sent to the Human Development Institute (HDI) for approval. Regarding the survey, a random listing of consumers who did not complete the online survey have been contacted via telephone to follow-up. Matt provided a Work Incentive Program update to the council. Data for the 2022 Federal/Fiscal Year has been analyzed and found that roughly 80% of beneficiaries with an IPE had officially received benefits counseling, either provided by staff or through an approved vendor. A report on the Client Assistance Program (CAP) was provided to the committee by Beth Metzger. Information and referral services for 2022 were provided to twenty-six individuals, with twenty-one being specific to OVR. Thirteen cases reported where the greatest issue listed was communication. Ten of these cases were resolved, and three remaining carried over to the 2023 fiscal year. Lastly, discussions for the next meeting agenda items were had. The committee adjourned.

Old Business

Council by Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator Kellie Scott. Kellie reported there were no applicants for the posted RFP, resulting in a repost to begin on Sunday, January 29th.

Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator Lametta Isaacs discussed with the Council members a date for the Council Member Refresher Training. The date and time for this training was set for February 23rd at 10:00am. Member Christopher White requested this training be recorded.

New Business

Member Christopher White presented changes to the Bylaws in further detail. The proposed changes were read aloud to the Council. Please refer to the accompanying document titled “Exhibit B” for further detail of this revision. Council Member Susan Farra raised a question regarding the citation for the particular “Kentucky Open Meetings Act” in the second sentence. Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator Lametta Isaacs will

review the second sentence. Chairperson Joe Cowan requested a motion to accept the changes to the Bylaws. Vice Chair David Allgood provided a motion. Kellie Smith, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Open Forum

Chairperson Joe Cowan began the open forum asking if there were any members of the public in attendance that would like to speak. There were no comments or questions.

Motion to Adjourn:

Chairperson Joe Cowan requested a motion to adjourn the council meeting. Member Todd Stephens provided a motion. Christopher White, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting Date: April 24, 2023.