

# H-2 | Meeting Minutes – 4<sup>th</sup> Quarterly Meeting

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## Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation SCVR

July 24, 2023

### Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting

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

#### Members Present:

Chairperson David Allgood, Vice-Chairperson Joe Cowan, OVR Executive Director Cora McNabb (Susie Edwards), Member-At-Large Todd Stephens, Christopher White, Kelly Knop, Terrie Terlau, Danielle Burton, Bri Sweatt (Theresa Thomas), Necholyia Wright, Jeffrey Edwards (Beth Metzger).

#### Members Absent:

Kelly Bass, Benjamin Henderson

#### Staff Present:

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

## Executive Directors Report

The Executive Director's Report was presented by OVR Assistant Executive Director Susie Edwards. An update on the OVR personnel situation was provided. The agency has seen continuous financial stability and entered FY23 with around \$67M for the budget. In October, OVR will receive its award for FY24. Staff will be attending a Leadership Retreat/Executive Advance in September to discuss the expenditure of funds and goals and priorities for the upcoming year.

Susie reported that all four categories will be open during this Leadership Retreat/Executive Advance, while cautionary will continue to be suspended. Prior approval will also be discussed. The Corrective Action Plan Quarterly Report is currently being developed and is due at the end of the week. Susie reports great progress with the Corrective Action Plan, stating that out of identified areas from the released report in March 2022, OVR has accomplished half.

There is still some work with case management and policy and procedures to be done in the near future. Susie is hopeful the new Case Management System (CMS) will help assist with these reporting's once it's implemented. CMS continues to be a major focus across OVR, with staff reviewing and testing different areas of the system, ensuring federal reporting requirements are met and having an overall robust system to support OVR's plan to conduct more data-driven decision making.

Policy and procedure development continues to be a major focus as well. Rate setting is currently in progress and is a continued topic of conversation. A company has been contracted to do a year-long study of rates to help maintain a sustainable process. OVR is currently reviewing and updating the Vendor Manual and process and will continue to be a project throughout the year. The overall goal of both the rate setting and vendor projects is to maintain and satisfy current vendors and attract new vendors.

Internal controls are a continued project as well. Susie briefly mentioned the Open House event at the McDowell Center. Chairperson David Allgood mentioned the slow reimbursement rate of Community Rehabilitation Program's (CRP's). He asks if there are continued updates to the process to ensure timely payment from OVR. Susie confirms this is a continued work in progress and is aware this has been an ongoing issue.

Susie states OVR is bound in some areas but is looking to see where improvements can be made. David suggested meeting with those CRP's to address their issues and concerns. Susie made note of the suggestion. She concluded her report.

## Division Director's Reports

### *The Division of Blind Services*

The Division of Blind Services Director Helga Gilbert provided the report.

The Independent Living/Older Individuals Who Are Blind (IL/OIB) Program has served 591 cases. Staff have been encouraged to participate in more outreach activities which Helga contributes to the higher case numbers so far in 2023. The IL/OIB Program currently has nine staff members and have served 100 out of 120 counties across the state.

A new Assistant has been hired for the Louisville office, and Gay Pannell (IL/OIB Branch Manager) is in the process of hiring an Assistant for the Bowling Green office. Gay is hoping to add additional counseling positions with IL/OIB into 2024. Gay Pannell and VR Program Administrator Chat Hunt are working together to bring a national outreach program titled "Time to Be Bold" to Kentucky.

Helga reports that IL/OIB has made great strides to merge with the new Case Management System (CMS).

The Charles W. McDowell Center for the Blind has been busy preparing for the upcoming Open House event. The McDowell Center currently has 23 active students; 10 onsite as day students, additional 5 staying in the hotel, and 12 virtual. Evaluations are currently scheduled through mid-August and are receiving on average one to two new referrals each week. An anticipated timeline for the full reopening of dorms is expected late August or early September.

Orientation and Mobility has an Instructor position vacancy in Western Kentucky. Steps to refill the position have already been taken with personnel.

VR Program Administrator Chad Hunt recently completed a video project promoting the Bioptic Driving Program. The video was previewed to the Council.

Three transition camps were given to high school age consumers served by the McDowell Center: the PATH Project held at the University of Kentucky, the Expanded Core Curriculum (ECC) Week with the Kentucky Deafblind Project held in Bowling Green, and INSIGHT (West Kentucky Insight), a new pilot program, held at Morehead University.

The following positions are posted for hire: a Deafblind Coordinator/VR Specialist I, an Administrative Assistant for Student Services, a VR Specialist I to assist with residential services at the McDowell Center dorm, a VR Counselor/Case Manager for the McDowell Center, and a Food Operations Manager.

Helga concluded her report.

### *Division of Field Services*

The Division of Field Services Director Holly Hendricks provided the report. Holly informed the Council she would be giving a summary of metrics for Field Services in program year 2022 in comparison with years 2019, 2020, and 2021.

In 2019, OVR had a little over 6,800 applications whereas in 2022 there were 10,400; denoting a 3,600 applicant increase over those four years. Between 2021 and 2022 the total applicants increased from just over 8,000 to over 10,000. This has been a significant impact on staff who spend time processing these applications and determining eligibility. This upward trend can also be seen in other data points such as eligibility determination.

In 2021 there were 7,451 in comparison to 2022's eligibility determination totaling 9,751. There were 8,253 implemented IPE's in program year 2022. From 2019 to 2022, 362 more consumers have been put into Training status and have decreased the number of cases in Job Ready status by 521.

Holly explains that the decrease is caused by OVR staff taking a proactive approach to monitoring cases through all statuses and closing when the consumer has completed services with OVR. Even though the number of applicants has significantly increased, the average caseload size is the same as four years ago.

An area Holly would like to see continued improvement is credentials attained by consumers, with only 266 additional obtained between 2019 and 2022. She is confident credentials are being obtained by the consumer, but staff are not always entering that information into the system.

The number of Unsuccessful Closures has decreased by 600 in comparison to the 2019 data. There were 4,015 Unsuccessful Closures in 2019 and 3,415 in 2022. For Competitive Integrated Employment Outcomes, in 2019 there were 3,480 and 4,382 in 2022. For calendar year 2023, the goal for Competitive Integrated Employment is 3,644. OVR has achieved 62% of this goal already for 2023.

The average hourly wage has increased by over \$6.00 since 2019, totaling at \$21.51. Average hours worked has increased to 33.91. Holly reports a process to monitor staffing levels and case distribution has been implemented and has been successful in ensuring continuous case engagement, case balance and staff retention. There are currently 282 positions in Field Services: 76 Assistants and 133 Counselors.

Holly reports the Listening Tours are continuing through 2023. During these tours each district has an opportunity to meet with the Field Services Division Director and Assistant

Directors to discuss any needs or issues in a smaller group setting. These tours have also incorporated WIOA Common Measures Training to ensure each group can receive beneficial training in a smaller setting. This WIOA Common Measures Training was identified in the Corrective Action Plan.

Skill Enhancement Training (SET) was conducted for staff during the Spring with another training scheduled in the Fall. An addition to the otherwise regular SET has been incorporating “reSETers”, or staff that have been with the agency for some time that have taken the opportunity to refresh their skills and share knowledge with new incoming staff. Statewide Assistants Training was conducted in April.

The Case Management System (CMS) implementation date has been moved to July 1, 2024. Holly reports the new system is a “moving target”, and that a team of counselors and assistants are testing the system functionality as things are continuing to be implemented into the program. Current major focuses are data migration and system integration.

Member Joe Cowan asked that Holly elaborate on the data regarding credential reporting. Holly answered that she feels the credentials are being obtained, but the system requirement to report the credentials can be an issue for staff. Member Christopher White asked Holly to provide examples of measurements taken to keep case engagement up compared to in the past. Holly responded this project started several years ago when a close-up look at 60-day and 90-day eligibility plan determination was observed and the process streamlined. A report was also developed to summarize the number of consumers who have not received an authorization or staff provided service in five months. This is helpful information for each counselor to know which consumers cases may need additional attention and to engage with the consumer.

Field Services Assistant Director Kristen Beach informed the Council that a training for mentors has been incorporated regarding engagement between consumers and staff. Some minor discussion regarding Supported Employment and rate issues were had, and Holly noted she is aware that the Supported Employment services need special attention, and she plans to tackle this issue next. Holly concluded her report.

### *The Kentucky Business Enterprise (KBE) Division*

The Kentucky Business Enterprise Division Director Corey Marcum provided the report. A rebid for the CHR building was awarded to Cramer Schneider. As part of the contract and partnership between KBE and Coca-Cola, OVR is awarded \$20K to select scholarship recipients.

Four \$5K scholarships were awarded to blind consumers this quarter. Corey reported the hiring of a second Food Services Coordinator. Growth opportunity for food service vendors led to this hiring decision to help provide additional support in this area. Cramer Schneider has been selected by the National Federation of Blind Merchants to enroll in their Emerging Leaders Program.

Cramer will attend a training for this group in the Fall in Murfreesboro, TN. KBE staff has attended multiple trainings over the last quarter: a federal training in Washington, D.C. with RSA, the National Automated Merchants Association (NAMA) in Atlanta where staff received training on vending machines, the National Restaurant Association training in Chicago, and vending machine training with the National Federation of Blind Merchants in Iowa.

Upcoming trainings with the National Federation of the Blind Merchants and the Kentucky Blind Enterprise Program are scheduled for October and September. KBE hosted a Green Light training for vendors as a refresher and update on new software available with that program. Corey gave a brief explanation that Green Light is comparable to a Case Management System (CMS) for vending machines.

Micromarkets were installed at Luther Lockett Correctional Facility, Eddieville, and the DEA in Louisville. Corey reported KBE continues to attend SET to give a program overview to new OVR employees. The Sundry Shop located in the Mayo-Underwood Building has been transitioned to a micromarket and has been well received by staff.

KBE attended INSIGHT at Morehead University and presented to 27 students, none of which were of the KBE program. KBE hosted a food training with G and J Marketing on new products for vendors. Corey reported KBE has responded to two RFPs with the Army in Fort Knox and Fort Campbell but has not received response.

KBE did not respond to the RFP for vending at the University of Louisville. Corey reported this decision was made based on the amount of assets it would take and the low reported past sales. KBE was not selected for the UK Laundry RFP, which was a disappointment to the vendors.

The American Printing House for the Blind (APH) Market installation will begin August 2nd with an anticipated launch date of August 7th. Plans to develop the General Assembly to be held in October are currently underway. Corey concluded his report.

## *Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) Division*

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center Division Director Alan Gullet provided the report. CDPVTC completed graduation in June with around 130 graduates, 80 of which attended in-person at the Center. There were roughly 500 people in attendance overall.

Since January 1st CDPVTC has received 202 referrals. The local Prestonsburg District leads referrals with a total of 37, East Jefferson totaling at 29, Florence 18, and Danville 17. The CDPVTC has served 225 consumers since January 1st and have reached 74 out of 120 counties in the state in the first six months of the year. Alan is hopeful to serve more counties across the state by the end of the year.

77 credentials have been issued at the CDPVTC so far this year. Six drivers licenses and 33 permits have been issued. Alan reported an instructor at CDPVTC is currently working toward certification to begin a Bioptic Driving Program like the one offered at the McDowell Center.

CDPVTC has conducted 72 facility tours with a total of 634 participants. Alan reports there have been 230 program completions so far in 2023. Several capital projects are in the works at the CDPVTC, mainly the renovation of the assisted living unit and obtaining updated air conditioning units for the dorms. Also included with these projects is the replacement of the facility's gym floor. A forklift training facility and updating of the drainage ditches around the property are also an ongoing capital project.

The CDPVTC is entertaining the idea of adding Barista Training to the Food Service Program and is still looking over certifications and additional costs before a final decision is made.

Alan provided a staffing update. One staff member was moved into a Job Placement role as a VR Specialist and CDPVTC has hired another Job Placement Specialist. Alan is hopeful with two specialists that placement numbers will increase.

The Student Services Branch at CDPVTC had reached 37 staff members and it was determined this number was too high for one person to manage. A plan was devised to create a Case Management Services Branch. This branch will include Admissions, Case Managers and Job Placement staff. Todd Ward, the former Student Services Branch Manager has been moved to serve as the Case Management Services Branch Manager, and a job posting for the Student Services Branch Manager has been made public. There were 8 applicants for that position.

Alan reported the 50th Anniversary Celebration will take place on September 14th at 1:00 pm. Member Chris White asked Alan what drives the decision to add programs at CDPVTC? Alan responded these decisions are made mostly from current market trends

and by comparing what other training centers like CDPVTC offer. Alan concluded his report.

## Program Reports

### *Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)*

Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator Kellie Scott introduced the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) update. Every three years OVR is required to provide this assessment. The contract to perform this assessment has been awarded to University of Kentucky Human Development Institute (UK-HDI) and several staff from UK-HDI were present via video-teleconference.

Kellie introduced Dr. Mykal Leslie, Director of Evaluations with UK-HDI, to give an in-depth presentation about the assessment plans. Dr. Leslie gave a brief introduction of himself and his staff.

Moving into the CSNA project plan and timeline, Dr. Leslie reports the planning and preparation of the assessment began to take place in July and will last through September. This has and will include continuous meetings with the OVR Liaison Team to define and establish goals and develop an Information and Dissemination Plan.

Data gathering will take place in October through March. UK-HDI will perform demographic analysis of consumers served by OVR, survey key stakeholders, conduct interviews and focus groups, research literature reviews, collaborate with other agencies and organizations, and develop and deliver a snapshot report.

In the months of March through June, UK-HDI will perform data analysis and report that information. This will include: qualitative and quantitative data analysis from data gathered to identify patterns, trends, and data gaps, identify areas of focus, assess barriers and challenges accessing OVR services and achieving employment outcomes, evaluate the adequacy and availability of existing OVR programs, services, and resources, and perform service gap analysis on these findings, develop conclusions that establish priority areas, goals, and action strategies for improving OVR outcomes, and develop recommendations for the State Plan, goals, priorities, and strategies.

Finally, in months May through June, UK-HDI will submit the full CSNA report to OVR and present the report findings. Dr. Leslie provided CSNA examples of other states with similar demographics and analyzed their methods, report structure, visualizations, readability, and other criteria to potentially model the CSNA report from.



Dr. Leslie goes on to discuss scheduled meetings and a vision canvas draft that was created from the OVR Liaison Team and the UK-HDI staff to organize the start of this process. Graphics standards were reviewed to ensure the report is as accessible and universally designed as possible. The information dissemination plan was provided to the council and next steps were discussed.

Council member Terrie Terlau suggested UK-HDI to consider individuals with color blindness in their reporting as well as those with low-vision. Dr. Leslie assured the accommodations will be made. This concluded the CSNA update.

### *Client Assistance Program:*

Beth Metzger provided an update on the Client Assistance Program (CAP). Since the last quarterly meeting in April, CAP has opened and closed five calls requesting information and referral. Three calls included information on OVR services, one on CAP services, and one remained unreachable.

There were three additional calls for information and referrals that are still being assisted and have been opened for less than 30 days. Three successful case closures, two that were opened in 2022, that had the main issue of a breakdown in communication. An additional case that was opened prior to the previous council meeting remains open to further assist with communication. A new case for assistance with communications has been opened as well.

Systemic advocacy such as attending HB144 meetings, employment committee meetings, INTAC, etc., has been a focus of CAP. Beth reports she has provided a new CAP and basics of PNA training for the Florence, Paducah, and Lexington Career Centers as well as Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) coordinators. A recording of the training is in the works for VR counselors to be able to access at any time.

CAP exhibit booths were present at both the Kentucky Assistive Technology Services Network (KATS) event and Association of People Supporting Employment First (APSE) event. Beth reported a news interview and a podcast interview with the Demand and Disrupt Podcast on Sheltered Workshops. Several educational events were attended.

Beth reports plans to attend the McDowell Center Open House with staff. There will also be an exhibit booth at the Kentucky Chamber of Commerce Workforce Summit. Beth concluded her update.

*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 April quarterly meeting. Council Member Todd Stephens made a motion to accept the minutes. Member Chris White, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

## Committee Reports

### *Executive Committee:*

Chairperson David Allgood provided the report. The committee discussed the Strategic Plan and upcoming SCVR retreat to be held in Louisville in 2024. A survey will be sent to the members to gather feedback on who may want to serve on the ad hoc committee for this retreat. There are currently five pending appointments/reappointments to the council that will hopefully be received by the Governor's Office soon. David provided the dates for the next block of committee meetings set to be held before the 4th quarterly full council meeting. The Executive Committee discussed potential guest speakers for future meetings, suggesting staff with Rehabilitation Technology would be beneficial to meet and present to the council. The committee adjourned.

### *Public Awareness and Legislative (PAL) Committee:*

Chris White provided the report. Chairperson David Allgood provided legislative updates. Employment First and the lack of sufficient and accessible transportation services throughout the state were discussed amongst the committee. The committee made progress on the Annual Report and the theme "Building on a Solid Foundation" was established. The need for more marketing of vocational rehabilitation services was also discussed. The committee adjourned.

### *Blind Services Committee:*

Chair Danielle Burton provided the report. Helga Gilbert provided an update for the McDowell Center and Blind Services. The committee discussed the upcoming Open House event to be held at the McDowell Center on July 26th. Helga anticipates the dorms to fully reopen during August or September. Gay Pannell also provided an update to the committee. Chad Hunt discussed the recent project completion of the Bioptic Driving video. There was no old business to discuss. The committee adjourned.

### *Policy and Planning Committee:*

Chair Nicky Wright provided the report. Members reviewed the committee description and goals. The committee discussed Employment First and its definitions. Chris Sheeting provided information on the upcoming State Forum to be held virtually on September 19th. The committee discussed potential topics and recommendations for the next meeting. The committee adjourned.

### *Nominating and Bylaws Committee:*

Chair Chris White provided the report. There are currently five expired terms that are awaiting appointment. The Bylaws for committee memberships state at least three members are needed in order to establish a committee. The Policy and Planning Committee currently has two active members and one vacancy. Five terms are set to expire in 2024. It is the hope of the committee to establish a pipeline of applicants built from exiting members. Members can provide the council with two to three applicants upon their term expiration. Chris noted the document "Joining SCVR" created by Lametta Isaacs and its usefulness to potential new members. The committee adjourned.

Guest Theresa Thomas asked which seats will become vacant in 2024. Lametta Isaacs responded with the following: Committee of Blind Vendors, current or former applicants for, or recipients of, vocational rehabilitation services, State Educational Agency, representative of individuals with disabilities, and State Workforce Innovation Board.

## Old Business

There were no old business matters to discuss.

## New Business

Chairperson David Allgood entertained a motion to create an Ad Hoc Committee to plan the 2024 SCVR Retreat. Chris White made a motion. Joe Cowan, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Information on the upcoming State Plan Forum was provided. On September 19th two virtual sessions will be held, one from 10:00am to 11:00am and the other 6:30pm to 7:30pm. The second forum will be held October 17th at the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center, virtually and in-person, from 6:30pm to 7:30pm. A final forum will be held on October 24th at the Charles W. McDowell Center for the Blind, virtually and in-person, from 10:00am to 11:00am, as well as 6:30pm to 7:30pm.

Chairperson David Allgood opened the floor to any additional questions or comments from the council or public attendees. Member-At-Large, Todd Stephens, suggested to

add discussion of the Able Account for a future meeting. Todd also mentioned the NFB-Newsline, a national program he is involved with that assists individuals with disabilities receive important news updates. He invited members and others to subscribe if they are interested.

Chairperson David Allgood made a final comment to the council about their satisfaction with the Division Directors reports before entertaining a motion to adjourn. David asked if the members felt the information reported was concise or too elaborate. Member Christopher White commented he enjoys the reports in the length they are given. Member-At-Large Todd Stephen agreed.

### **Motion to Adjourn:**

A motion to adjourn was requested by Chairperson David Allgood. Motion made by Todd Stephens. Joe Cowan, second. The Council adjourned.

***Next Meeting Date: October 23, 2023***