

Minutes | 1st Quarterly SCVR Meeting

January 26, 2026

Hybrid Meeting

Physical Location: Frankfort, KY – Kentucky Transportation Cabinet,
Room C118

Zoom Option Provided

Members Present:

Danielle Burton, Chairperson, Allison Johnson, Vice Chairperson; Johnny Collett; Cora McNabb; Theresa Thomas; Kelly Bass; Kellie Smith; Terrie Terlau; Veronica Willis-Oldham; Michael Fein; Stephen Noble; Jaye Forsythe-Seward; Jade Finley.

Members Absent:

Jeffrey Edwards; Veronica Willis-Oldham; April Thrasher.

Staff Present:

Susie Edwards; Holly Hendricks; Alan Gullett; Corey Marcum; Heidi Kesterson; Jonathan White; Kristen Beach; Tiffanie Caristo; Kathryn Spears; Anthony Sturgill; Rachel Prestenbach; Jennifer Withrow; Nanci Howard; Betty Whitaker; and Brooke McDaniel.

Guests Present:

Guests were present.

Welcome & Introductions

SCVR Chairperson Danielle Burton, gave the welcome and called the meeting to order. A roll call was taken by Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Administrative Specialist Senior, Brooke McDaniel. A quorum was established.

Executive Directors Report

Cora McNabb, Executive Director, and Susie Edwards, Deputy Executive Director, provided the report. OVR received a “continuing resolution”, or a Partial Grant, for the budget, beginning October 1, 2025, through January 31, 2026, for almost \$25M, of which 15% was set aside for Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS). Pre-ETS has plenty of funding at this time, around \$3,467,398 left over from the 2024 Pre-ETS award that will need to be expended by September 30, 2026. Cora reported that OVR is estimated to receive an amount of \$73M for funding in 2026, and another 15% of that will be set aside for Pre-ETS. Cost saving measures will continue to be monitored as OVR remains in Order of Selection (OOS) with all categories closed. Cora reports that vacancies that have occurred due to attrition are not being filled at this time unless identified as critical. One position recently posted to fill has been for a Regional Program Manager that has been covered by Holly Hendricks, Director of Field Services. This position oversees a multi-county region, 25 (twenty-five) counties in total.

Cora reports there are currently no changes to the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). The amended regulations have been filed, including the updated Priority Category definitions, as both ordinary and emergency regulations. There will be a public hearing on February 26th at 1pm. This information can be found in the notice of the Regulation. The Public Comment period ends on February 28th, and the public hearing on the Emergency Regulations is to be held March 24th at 11am, and the Public Comment period ends March 31st. Cora provided an update on OOS. There are currently 4,566 individuals on the waitlist and the review process to release from the waitlist has begun. There is a lot of work going on behind the scenes to ensure fiscal responsibility to begin serving from the waitlist; data reports, meetings, discussions, etc. The fiscal forecast takes into consideration things like tuition assistance, how many individuals will be in that service status for how many more years, authorizations paid, authorizations cancelled, and the attrition rate for those. Individuals will come off the waitlist based on the date of application, including those that were identified Priority Category 1 and 2 before the regulations were filed will be considered. Once

categories are opened, OVR is required to serve all individuals in a particular category prior to opening that category and moving to the next category.

Despite being under OOS, OVR has continued to serve individuals that had existing plans, and throughout 2025 the agency increased its competitive integrated outcomes by 728 over the previous year.

Cora provided an update on the new Case Management System (CMS). The implementation of the new system is in progress, with plans to launch mid-2026. There is a public-facing side to the new system, as well as a vendor component, but these areas may not be quite ready to launch in mid-2026 but work will continue until they can be implemented.

The State Plan modification is due on March 4th. This is a small modification that states can choose to participate in or not. There are some areas where OVR is required to update and once completed the report will be shared with SCVR. The goals and priorities in the current plan will not change under the modification. Cora reported that the next State Plan is due in 2027, and this report will require changes to the current goals and priorities. Over the course of 2026, the results of the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA) will be reviewed and input from the Council will be highly important. Cora identified some of the edits to the current State Plan that fall under the modification period. Those areas include edits to the state rehabilitation council attachment, progress on current goals and priorities for both vocational rehabilitation and supported employment, an attachment on OOS, and an update to personnel numbers on the comprehensive system of personnel development.

Cabinet Leadership notified OVR that it will be working closely with the agency to develop a State Plan of Operations and the recommendation from SCVR to provide a business model has been accepted.

Cora informed the Council of a contract with the National Helen Keller Center on training. One part of the training is for VR staff in the area of increasing skills in the provision of services to individuals who are deafblind. The second part of the training is for providers for the support services program.

Member Terrie Terlau posed the question “how will consumers be taken off of the waitlist?”. Cora responded that once all fiscal forecasting data has been reviewed individuals will be served based on their date of application. Terrie followed up with a question on a rough-estimated date when this reporting would be

completed. Cora did not give an estimate, noting that reviewing the data for fiscal forecasting is a lengthy process.

Member Michael Fein asked “for Order of Selection, is it an issue between demand for service and the capacity? If so, are those measurements that OVR is overall trying to do? How do you measure capacity? “. Cora responded “it’s kind of both. The current State Plan details most of this. In the summer of 2024, OVR saw a large uptick within a period of six months. We had roughly over 9,000 applications. This meant an increase in services and authorized services and payments, so that was the first initial tip that we would need to review things. Is it a strain on fiscal operations? Certainly. Is it a strain on staffing levels? Yes, but this decision is completely fiscal.” Other discussion around this question and process was had between Cora and Michael, but no additional questions were asked.

This concluded the report.

Division Director’s Reports

The Division of Blind Services

Deputy Executive Director Susie Edwards provided a report on Bioptic and Orientation and Mobility (O&M) services. Bioptic Quarter 2 numbers reflect three referrals, two evaluations, and four individuals licensed. Overall in 2025, the program saw 25 referrals and 26 evaluations, with five additional sunshield evaluations. Orientation and Mobility Quarter 2 numbers reflect eight new referrals, four of which were Independent Living/Older Individuals Who are Blind (IL/OIB), and 18 already in progress.

Heidi Kesterson, Facility Administrator of the Charles W. McDowell Rehabilitation Center (McDowell), provided a report. October through December 2025 McDowell served 39 individuals. 19 of those were IL/OIB and 20 were Vocational Rehabilitation. 20 of these individuals were day students and 19 stayed in the dorms. Individuals from 13 different counties were served. Heidi detailed various projects, partnerships and events that McDowell and staff and/or students participated in throughout the last quarter and the events to come during 2026.

Member Terrie Terlau posed the question “we have the O&M instructor at the McDowell Center, plus one for the entire state?”, and Heidi answered, “that is

correct.” Terrie followed up with asking “would it be possible for us to find out how many vendors are currently on the vendor list for O&M in the state?”. Cora McNabb responded “yes, we can do that.”

Gay Pannell, IL/OIB Branch Manager, provided a report on the IL/OIB program. Gay reminded the Council that IL/OIB has a different federal year than the other field services programs, running from October 1st through September 30th. IL/OIB is not currently within the restrictions of OOS (due to different funding) and have remained quite busy. The federal report that IL/OIB is responsible for, the 70B, is due in January, and Gay reports that it has been submitted, and the deadline was beat considerably. Staff are continuing to stay busy with various trainings and referrals, especially since home visits during this time of year are down, citing the impact of winter weather.

Member Terrie Terlau posed the question “what is the best way to make a referral?”. Gay responded “if the individual is able to make the referral themselves that is always helpful, but we can accept a referral from anyone. We will take any referral and then get it to the appropriate place.”

This conclude the report.

Division of Field Services

Kristen Beach, Assistant Director of Field Services, provided the report. Below are data from the metrics report reflecting calendar year January 01, 2025, through December 31, 2025.

Measure	2025	2024
Total Cases Served	44,695	48,116
Potentially Eligible Cases Served	17,598	17,511
Active Cases (*incl. Potentially Eligible)	27,418	29,915
Average Case by Caseload	288	303
Referrals	11,106	19,197
New Applications	8,300	12,528

Measure	2025	2024
Average Days from App. to Eligible	36	31
Average Days from Eligible to IPE	32	33
Credentials Earned	1,215	1,640
Measurable Skills Gains	2,943	2,582
Unsuccessful Closures	3,319	3,442
Successful Closures	5,233	4,963

Kristen provided a Personnel Overview for the Division. There are currently 297 positions with 37 vacancies. In January 2025, there were 300 positions with 24 vacancies. There are 136 Counselor positions (144 January 2025), 88 Administrative Specialists, 21 Managers, 15 Employer Services Job Placement Specialists, and 5 Regional Program Managers. The current vacancies area as follows:

- 7 Administrative Specialists
- 6 Counselors (Ashland, Bowling Green, Elizabethtown, Florence, East Jefferson, Covington)
- 1 Adaptive Equipment Specialist
- 1 Administrator (Assistive Technology)
- 1 Interpreter
- 1 Regional Program Manager (East Central Region)

Kristen provided an update on Order of Selection (OOS). On January 06, 2026, OVR Staff were provided training on the Emergency Regulations, which included the new Priority Category definitions, updates to the Eligibility Worksheet, and the Financial Participation (formerly known as Cost Sharing) Worksheet. The updated OOS Waitlist metrics are below.

Order of Selection Waitlist	Total
Priority Category 1	4,455
Priority Category 2	42
Priority Category 3	139
Priority Category 4	6

Kristen also provided data on current open cases compared to the data presented at the October Quarterly Meeting:

Status	January 2026	October 2025
Application	423	538
Trial Work	3	3
IPE Implemented	2,663	2,843
Training	3,902	4,249
Job Ready	1,208	1,452
Employed	951	1,688
Total Active Cases	9,150	10,773

Member Michael Fein posed the question “do you do a root cause analysis of comparing success to the non-successes for case closures?”, and Kristen responded “sure, we do look at reasons for closure, we do have RSA data that addresses these reasons and we do look at historical and current data to see if there are correlations.” Jennifer Withrow, Program Policy and Quality Assurance (PPQA) Branch Manager, also provided insight “the PPQA team tracks a lot of what Kristen is referring to as well, along with other metrics such as the individual has passed away, they have moved out of state, things like that that could lead to a case being closed unsuccessful”.

Michael reiterated that he is also interested in the successful closures side as well, not just the unsuccessful. Kristen responded “RSA, our federal oversight, started tracking credentials and measurable skills gains because they not only want to see that we’re assisting individuals in getting employment, but are we helping them to advance in employment, too?”.

Michael asked how much of this data includes Supported Employment. Ron O’Hair, the Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Branch Manager, provided the response “as far as closures in Supported Employment for 2025, there were 357. In 2024 there were 489. I do not have the data readily available for successful closures, but would be glad to get that together for you”.

This concluded the report.

The Kentucky Business Enterprises (KBE) Division

Corey Marcum, Division Director of KBE, provided the report. KBE closed Federal Fiscal Year 2025 in good standing, with a 13% increase in total sales. This increase can be mostly contributed to non-military installations. Total gross sales closed at \$22.6M, which is a \$2.6M increase from 2024. Across the state, total gross sales purchases (meaning vendors purchasing power), totaled a little over \$3M worth of materials, showing a \$400,000 increase over 2025, which means the economic impact was higher. KBE had total payrolls of \$13M, about a \$600,000 increase and employed a total number of 352 vendors. There were at total of 25 blind vendors in 2025; this is a 9% increase from 2024. Corey reported KBE generated \$83,000 worth of set-aside to the program. He explained the set-aside is the 7% that the blind vendors pay back to the state for their net income. A total of \$126,000 flowing from unassigned vending locations across the state. KBE hosted its first Blind Youth Summit, a 3-day event held in Louisville, and was funded by OVR’s Pre-ETS Program. The event will be held again in 2026. Kentucky has gained a lot of national exposure due to the many students that expressed interest in the blind vending program.

Corey reported on December 23, 2025, the Secretary of Education granted the Army’s request for waiver to the Randolph Shepherd Act. This means blind vendors will no longer have the priority in operating food service on Army locations. This could potentially affect three locations in Kentucky and six blind vendors. This will also affect the state program that these vendors pay a large portion of the set-aside that comes into the state, and these funds will no longer

be available for match. On the national level, Corey reported this will be devastating to 37 blind vendors across multiple states.

This concluded the report.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) Division

Alan Gullett, Division Director of CDPVTC, provided the report. Enrollment currently sits at 101, and there are 5 Comprehensive Vocational Evaluations (CVE) scheduled through February. CDPVTC served 350 individuals in total in 2025 and received 253 referrals. 81 out of Kentucky's 120 counties were served and the completion rate for 2025 was 86%. Alan reported 96 credentials were earned by individuals at CDPVTC. There were 12 driver's licenses obtained, and 59 driver permits. There were 116 tours in 2025; 98 in-person with 532 participants, and 18 virtual with 188 participants for a total of 720. CDPVTC is still working on building a structure to train in year-round for the Forklift Training Program. Alan reported nearly 25% of the successful employment outcomes in 2025 came from manufacturing and logistics, noting the significance and popularity of the program. The design for the building is complete, however, the latest review of the estimated cost is nearing the \$900K mark. All MOUs for 2026 have been completed and Alan reports CDPVTC plans to work on more opportunities within the community. The Cosmetology Program has new regulations from the State Board of Cosmetology requiring CDPVTC to publicly post pass-fail numbers to the website. This new regulation will be discussed with any interested individuals for the program, and will be required to sign a form acknowledging receipt of that information upon enrollment. Alan reported that 56 individuals attained employment with an hourly average wage in 2026, which is an increase from the last several years.

This concluded the report.

Division of Program Policy and Support

Jennifer Withrow, Program Policy and Quality Assurance (PPQA) Branch Manager, provided a report. The largest focus and project for the PPQA Branch has been adherence to guidelines set forth by CFR §35.200 Requirement for Web and Mobile Accessibility with a deadline of April 24, 2026 for OVR's webpages. All content is being streamlined and documents/forms are being updated to ensure accessibility. The Case Quality Assurance staff reviewed 1,417 initial review cases, and had an additional 654 reviews for any cases that had questions or

concerns, totaling 2,701 evaluations across three staff. Jennifer reports an increase in cases from 2024, up from 1,380. The highest rate of compliance amongst counselors was financial accountability and eligibility. Throughout 2025, the Kentucky Assistive Technology Loan Corporation (KATLC) in partnership with the Appalachian Assistive Technology Loan Fund (AATLF) received 159 applications and approved 114. 109 out of those 114 total loans were for hearing aids, with the remainder being for various medical equipment like a scooter, home modification, smart home devices, etc. The PPQA Branch conducted its annual Mentor Training in November, covering topics such as self-care and dealing with trauma, ethics, and helping individuals attain social skills needed to be successful. Planning for the 2026 training is already underway. Jennifer reported during 2025 the PPQA Branch processed language translation requests for forms/documents for Spanish, Japanese, Farsi, French, and Arabic. The Self-Employment Program is being revised to have a better understanding of the overall needs and outcomes of the program, but throughout 2025, there were 25 self-employment cases. Lastly, Jennifer reported 387 wage requests completed through the PPQA Branch. This number is down from 899 in 2024, likely due to Order of Selection (OOS). This concluded the report.

Edward Monheimer, Grants Management and Systems Support Branch Manager, provided a report. There are currently 53 vendor contracts under review for renewal as the state fiscal year-end approaches in June. Progress continues on building the new CMS, and Ed reports staff are working diligently to ensure its completion. Staff are running monthly reports to assess OVR's fiscal situation and forecast for the next couple of years. This concluded the report.

Ron O'Hare, Community Rehabilitation Program (CRP) Branch Manager, provided a report. In 2025, there were 3,450 individuals that received Supported Employment services, with 357 successful closures. There are currently 112 CRP's throughout the State, of which 93 provide Supported Employment. Ron reports that changes made to the payment structure for CRP's over the last couple years has increased outcomes and provider capacity. Kentucky has partnered with Columbia University, Department of Behavioral Health, and the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute (UK-HDI) for a study on Individual Placement and Support (IPS) for individuals with autism. IPS is currently utilized in 78 counties out of 120 in the State, with 21 providers statewide. Ron reported that since applying for and receiving the National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) grant has helped to

create their own training modules for customized employment. Three pilot sites have been created, two in Louisville and one in Northern Kentucky, with hopes of the pilot program being complete by summer and then implemented Statewide. This completed the report.

Program or Other Reports

OVR/KDE Grant Collaboration

Jonathan White provided an update on this collaboration. The Pathways to Partnership Grant award helped to develop the Transition 360 initiative and to fill vacant KDE positions, which in turn increased capacity to have designated staff collaborating between KDE/OVR. Ample work has been completed to create systems between both agencies rather than individual relationships, as those can create gaps if position turnover occurs. Each month, OVR, KDE and representatives from Centers of Independent Living meet to discuss available services and how to increase outreach on those services. Jonathan reports that receiving the SPARK Grant will help feedback on local collaboration guidance that many have worked on between OVR and KDE to increase those outreach efforts, and will eventually move from a pilot program to being utilized throughout the State. Jonathan reports that OVR has enlisted help from KDE to evaluate Pre-ETS curricula, noting that OVR does not have the skillset to review what makes curricula successful and KDE's assistance with this project is incredibly vital.

This concluded the report.

The Council took a brief intermission.

Business Meeting

Chairperson Danielle Burton called the meeting to order for business. OVR Administrative Specialist Senior, Brooke McDaniel, provided the roll call, and a quorum was established. Council members reviewed the minutes from the October 2025 quarterly meeting. Terrie Terlau made a motion to accept the minutes. Michael Fein seconded. No opposition or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

OVR Administrative Specialist Brooke McDaniel provided Annual Training to SCVR Council members as well as OVR Staff (refer Exhibit A for details).

Committee Reports

Executive Committee

SCVR Chairperson Danille Burton provided the report. The committee met at 9:00am before the Full Council meeting and a quorum was established. Committee members discussed the Annual Training to be provided during the Business Meeting and the appointment of committee members. This concluded the report.

Blind Services Committee

There were no reports to provide as they did not meet this quarter due to scheduling conflicts.

Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee

There were no reports to provide as they did not meet this quarter due to scheduling conflicts.

Nominating and Bylaws Committee

There were no reports to be provided as this committee does not currently have members.

Policy and Planning Committee

SCVR Vice Chairperson and Committee Chair Allison Johnson provided the report. The committee discussed again the service delivery model and the request for a presentation on this from OVR at the 2025 4th Quarterly Meeting in October. They discussed the ongoing budget and funding uncertainties surrounding OVR and updates to the regulations. Lastly, the committee discussed the membership expiration of Michael Fein and received clarification on how his position would be replaced once his term with the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) has expired. This concluded the report.

Public Awareness and Legislative Committee

There were no reports to be provided as they did not meet this quarter due to scheduling conflicts.

Old Business

Committee Appointments

Chairperson Danielle Burton and OVR Administrative Specialist Senior Brooke McDaniel discussed committee appointments with the Council. The floor was open for council members to nominate themselves or other members to serve on a committee, with the request being that each member serve on at least one committee, as written in the Bylaws. Appointments are as follows:

- Steve Noble – Public Awareness and Legislative Committee
- Theresa Thomas – Blind Services Committee
- Heidi Kesterson – OVR Support Staff for Blind Services Committee
- Terrie Terlau – Nominating and Bylaws Committee
- Allison Johnson – Nominating and Bylaws Committee
- Brad Holland – Nominating and Bylaws Committee
- Jaye Forsythe-Seward – Nominating and Bylaws Committee, Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee
- Jennifer Withrow – OVR Support Staff for Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee

New Business

Bylaws Update

Suggestions to update the bylaws were presented to the Council by OVR Administrative Specialist Senior Brooke McDaniel (refer to Exhibit B for details).

A motion to table a vote for the bylaw changes until the 2nd Quarterly Meeting was made by Theresa Thomas. Terrie Terlau provided a second. No opposition or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

2nd Quarterly Meeting Date

Chairperson Danielle Burton proposed the 2nd Quarterly Meeting date be held on April 20, 2026. There were no oppositions, so the date was established.

Guest Discussion

Discussion was had among several members surrounding Guest attendance, introductions and addressing the Council. Therea Thomas suggested that guest speakers be given the opportunity to identify themselves, although this is not required in the Open Meetings Act. Michal Fein suggested guests submit an intent to comment/address the Council before the meeting, along with still having an open forum. Chairperson Danille Burton suggested the Council make introductions if there are many guests present during the meeting.

Open Forum

At this time the floor was opened for guests present to make public comment. No comments or discussions took place.

Motion to Adjourn:

SCVR Chairperson Daniell Burton opened the floor for a motion to adjourn. Theresa Thomas made a motion. Kellie Smith seconded. No opposition or abstentions. Motion to adjourn carried unanimously.

Next Meeting Date: April 20, 2026