

**Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation
(SCVR)**

August 29, 2022

Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting

Physical Location: Frankfort, KY – Mayo-Underwood Building
Zoom Platform

Members Present: SCVR Chairperson Joe Cowan, Vice Chairperson David Allgood, Amy Luttrell, Christopher White, Briana Sweatt, Cora McNabb, Jeff Edwards (designee Beth Metzger), Kelly Bass, Mary Terlau, Necholyia Wright, Riki Burton, Kelly Knoop, Kellie Smith, Susan Farra and Tyler Levy.

Members Absent: Lynn Florence, Matt Davis and Todd Stephens.

Staff Present: Holly Hendricks, Lametta Isaacs, Jennifer Withrow, Brooke McDaniel, Cora McNabb, Kellie Scott, Chris Sheeting, Helga Gilbert, Jennifer Wright, Susie Edwards, Allan Gullett, Kristen Beach and Jonathan White.

Guests Present: Theresa Thomas, Amanda Becerra, Linsey Megrue, Sarah Thomas, Shana Tucker, Samantha Brown, Erin Rass and Karen Heil.

SCVR Chairperson Joe Cowan welcomed everyone to the meeting. A roll call was taken by Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Administrative Specialist Brooke McDaniel. A quorum was made.

Executive Director Cora McNabb provided her report. Cora began with an update on the new Case Management System (CMS) implementation and phases for KYOVR. She stated that the process will take a projected 24 months to complete, with a go-live date of November 2023. Cora provided an additional update on staff raises that were implemented over the last several months and how it has improved work culture and recruitment. Cora informed the council that the Federal Government awarded an increase to the Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation at the National level, with Kentucky receiving an additional \$3 Million to be added to the 2023 award. Cora explained that as this was an unexpected award, a meeting with Fiscal was held to discuss the requirement of matching the increase and how that would take place. Cora discussed the guidance that KYOVR has been receiving regarding Integrated Employment on the Federal level. She reported the loss of OVR's federal liaison Andrea Hall and her instrumental guidance. She provided off-site federal monitoring. In the temporary, they have assigned us another liaison for technical assistant. Council member Amy Luttrell posed a question concerning the upcoming end of the current Federal year and wondered if KYOVR had spent or will spend the board's allocated money by the end of September. Cora informed the council that the money had been spent and allotment money was not requested, nor was it decided that any money would be given back at the end of the Federal year. Cora suggested that moving forward it may be possible to have Fiscal Staff in attendance to provide a report.

Division Director's Reports:

Division of Blind Services Director Helga Gilbert provided her report. She highlighted exciting updates to the McDowell Center Project. The contract was awarded to Marksbury Cornett (Engineering Corp. based in Louisville, KY) and they have begun the remodeling process. A meeting between all parties involved was held to discuss the details of the remodel and a substantial completion date of December 15th was set. Helga explained that a substantial completion means that the space will be useable, and the contracting company will have an additional 4-6 weeks to finalize any smaller remaining tasks on the list. Helga is optimistic that students will be able to move in at the start of 2023. Helga informed the council that while the dorm remodel is taking place, McDowell Center students have been housed at a nearby hotel in weeklong stints. She stated that 26 students in total are currently being served between day, dorm/hotel, and virtual options. Helga informed the council that the McDowell Center has hired a new Orientation and Mobility (O&M) instructor and are able to offer more intensive training. She also provided information that the McDowell Center has reorganized their internal structure, with the entirety of the first floor now being utilized for blindness skill training and staff. Upstairs at the McDowell Center now houses Field Service Staff, Community Partners, among many others. Helga believes this will greatly benefit all students moving forward, as well as instructors. Helga highlighted that the Blind Services Division would be receiving Technical Assistance with Older Individuals who are Blind Technical Assistance Center (OIB-TAC) from Mississippi State University. She explained the purpose for this assistance is to address program services: how community outreach is being conducted, best practices and provision/delivery of services, discuss program performance, data reporting and analysis, financial and management practices and administrative compliance. Helga extended an open invitation to all in attendance for a discussion group to be held on Wednesday, September 14th, lead by the technical assistance center staff, for input on services for Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB). An email invitation for the discussion group will be sent to the entire council. Helga reported that they have an increase in students referred and served at the McDowell Center. She said they have 6 residential students who completed training, 2 hotel students this week, 17 day students and 7 virtual students. She briefly discussed the progressive employment model the McDowell Center has been following to prepare students. Executive Director Cora McNabb offered praise to Helga and all staff at the McDowell Center for their hard work and dedication during the renovation process. Some discussion was held between council members on various topics presented during Helga's report. Council Member Mary Terlau posed the question "what positions are currently open for hiring at the McDowell Center?". Helga answered they are currently trying to fill the position for an Instructor of Assistive Technology, Adjustment Counselor, and a Home and Financial Management Instructor.

Division of Field Services Director Holly Hendricks provided her report. Holly provided a glimpse into the summary metrics, stating that 1,000 more individuals were served in

July 2022 than in July 2021, however Field Services is still about 3,000 people below the total served in 2019. Holly reported the average served by case load is about the same as it was pre-Covid, although the total number is not quite as high. Field Services is determining more eligibilities and writing more plans now than in the last three years. Holly reported the number of cases in job ready status has declined, contributing that to continued emphasis on efficient caseload management strategies. Holly informed the council that the number of unsuccessful closures is significantly lower than in 2019 due to increased consumer engagement and caseload management strategies. Successful positive employment outcomes are on the rise and close to the same total from 2019 – 257 for July 2022, and 294 for July 2019. Holly reported the average hourly wage has increased by \$4.62 since July 2019, and hours worked per week has decreased, but by only .69 of an hour. Holly discussed briefly the listening tours that Assistant Director Jonathon White, Assistant Director Kristen Beach and herself conducted across the state and offered positive feedback and any concerns gleaned from these visits. Holly provided they are compiling a summary of these visits to be made available to agency leadership in the coming weeks. Holly reported the five Regionals continue to represent the interest of OVR on the ten workforce boards across the state. She also gave an additional update on the implementation of the new Case Management System (CMS) and her involvement in the process. She discussed the incorporation of Field Services Staff (counselors, assistants, managers, administrators, etc.) into the new CMS implementation and the data that will provide. Holly informed the council of Skills Enhancement Training (SET) that was held in June at the Perkins Center, coordinated by Assistant Directors Jonathon White and Kristen Beach. About twenty staff members were present. Holly reported this as being the first in-person SET since 2019. She discussed a schedule being coordinated in the future so that new employees will not go any longer than three months without this training. Holly gave kudos to Vocational Rehabilitation Administrator Donna Osbourne for her efforts with Social Security reimbursements. Holly reported over \$2.4 Million in these reimbursements for the Federal Fiscal Year. Holly highlighted the Transition Services Staff having begun the Community Work Transition Program Trainings across the state with all schools who are partnered with this program in conjunction with the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute (HDI). Council Member Vice Chairperson David Allgood asked Holly what the average hourly wage is now that the \$4.62 raise had been implemented. Holly responded with "\$20.06". Council Member Chair Joe Cowan asked for clarification on the report that consumers received a raise and were also working less hours. Holly informed the council that in 2019 the average hours worked weekly were 34.17 hours, dropping to 32 hours per week in 2020, rose to 33.67 hours per week in 2021, and now resting at 33.48 hours per week in 2022. Beth Metzger (designee for Council Member Jeff Edwards) posed the question "were there any issues with counselors and programs being affected by the recent flooding?". Holly reported that a small handful of staff who were personally impacted by the flooding, but no major losses.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTTC) Division Director Alan Gullett provided his report. To follow up on the question Beth Metzger (designee for Council Member Jeff Edwards) posed, Alan informed the council that staff at CDPVTTC have

taken up donations and volunteered in other ways for flood relief to those impacted. Two families were adopted by the center, one in Perry County and the other in Breathitt County. Staff have donated as of the meeting up to \$1,255.00 in cash that was transferred into a Student Government account and has been used to pay hotel accommodations for these families. Alan continued to provide ways in which students and staff at the center have volunteered their time for flood relief over the last few weeks, and how they will continue to help in the future until the two adopted families are back on their feet. Alan reported that after the pandemic the center began a slow reimplementation of students back into the dormitories to ensure safety. He stated as of last week there were 104 students enrolled, which is where the center hoped to be. He reported there are 23 students on the waiting list for evaluation, with 18 being scheduled for their evaluation in September. Alan reported the center also plans to bring in 23 more students for training during the month of September, increasing their numbers to roughly 130-140 students. He reported there have been 168 referrals since October 1, 2021, that number having increased from 129 referrals in 2020. Alan informed the council that a Groundskeeping Instructor has been hired. That position had been vacant for seven months prior. Alan also reported a Job Readiness Training Instructor will be parting from the center and they will be working to refill that position. Alan reported the recent addition of nurses to the staff, as well as actively seeking to fill an Occupational Therapist (OT) and an Administrative Specialist position. He informed the council that CDPVTC currently has 77 18A employees and about 40 contract staff. Alan reported on a recent meeting with the centers CVS representative, stating that CDPVTC is performing well and meeting expectations. He also informed the council that during this meeting it was learned the CVS training could also be performed virtually, if needed, and could do on-site training at the consumers local CVS after completing virtually. Alan reported there are five Academic and Life Skills Program of Higher Achievement (ALPHA) College Students enrolled for the current semester, with three more enrolling in January 2023. Alan provided an update on the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreements signed with local schools and business and the programs they may be offering. Alan reported there is a new draft of the CDPVTC brochure in the works to be more accessible and are hopeful to have that distributed soon. He reported the first school tour recently took place, with 17 students in attendance. Alan reported an approval to improve the wi-fi connectivity at the center has been received and the Commonwealth Office of Technology (COT) is working diligently to complete this task. Alan's final update included review of policy with Leadership regarding students walking off campus. He explained that students always have the option to sign themselves out at the center if they have a proper pass to do so, but there has been recent discussion to forego this process due to the dangers it could impose to the students with the lack of sidewalks in the area. Vice Chair Council Member David Allgood asked Alan to elaborate further the reasoning to dispose of this practice. Alan explained the center is located roughly 1-2 miles away from the nearest gas station or store, with most of that distance not having a sidewalk for safety while walking. Alan explained students also must cross railroad tracks in this process as well. He said there are of course conflicting opinions; wanting the students to practice their independence is highly encouraged but the safety of the students must be taken into consideration as well. Staff Member Jonathan White asked for clarification that the students are offered rides into the

community to visit the store or for other activities. Alan confirmed three or four nights out of the week students are offered shuttle services to local stores. Council Member Chris White posed the question “what is the process if someone is interested in taking a tour?”. Alan stated that the individual could call the center to schedule a tour and provided the toll-free number to do so.

The Kentucky Blind Enterprises (KBE) Division Assistant Director Jennifer Wright provided her report. She began with an overview of what KBE consists of for new council members present during the meeting. She reported that KBE vendors have suffered heavily due to COVID-19 and the empty buildings have left vendors without customers. She reported inflation, food chain supply issues and labor shortages have also been affecting KBE. Jennifer provided data from the latest RSA 15 report that was due April 30, 2022. She stated gross sales for 2021 was \$9,745,428.00 versus \$21,371,019.00 in 2019. The cost of goods sold was \$1,046,331.00 in 2021 versus \$2,781,111.00 in 2019. The number of jobs (employees) that the blind vendors provided in 2021 were 360 versus 999 in 2019. Jennifer reported the payroll as \$4,022,466.00 in 2021 versus \$11,187,188.00 in 2019. She reported that the set-aside payments that each vendor pays into the program reflected 7% of their net income, which is put towards equipment repair and maintenance. In 2021 these set aside payments were \$66,377.00 versus \$116,791.00 in 2019. She reported there are currently 23 licensed blind vendors and 2 emergency vendors. KBE attended the Tennessee Business Enterprise annual meeting and established a network of resources. Jennifer reported to the council that KBE has hired a Program Coordinator and two Vending Repair Technicians. The two new emergency vendors have taken over a location in Northern Kentucky, and another at the Federal Prison in McCreary County. She reported that KBE has continued to make site visits and considers all options, large and small, to generate vendor income. Three new micromarkets have been installed: two in Covington, and one in Louisville. She reported a new statewide teaming partner has been acquired – Southern Foodservice Management, allowing KBE to use the same partner for any future opportunity. To keep up with industry trends, Jennifer reported that KBE attended Performance Food Group Show in Somerset in May and have plans to attend another upcoming food expo in Louisville. She reported KBE has been attending meetings for the remodeling plans taking place at the American Printing House for the Blind where Council Member Lynn Florence is the vendor. While the café is under construction KBE plans to install a micromarket. A new ePay system was demoed to the vendors to be implemented soon. Jennifer reported that KBE is currently seeking an 8(a) Certification through the Small Business Administration. This certification includes women-owned, minority owned, and those businesses owned by disadvantaged populations. Lastly, Jennifer informed the council of upcoming trainings planned for KBE.

The Program Policy and Support Branch Manager Jennifer Withrow provided an update for the branch. Jennifer explained the role of the Program Policy and Support (PPS) Branch and gave an introduction and overview of each staff member and their role

within the branch. A link to the PPS Branch webpage on the OVR website was provided to the council members.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) Division Director Alan Gullett provided quarterly statistics for the center. This report detailed a timeline of activities and consumers served from the start of the pandemic to present day. In March 2020 the center discontinued services to all 128 consumers, with only approval for 12 to return in July 2020 for the college and ALPHA programs. In March 2021 approval was received for consumers for On-the-Road Driver's Training to return to the center. June 2021 all center staff returned to campus full-time, as well as the day consumers. In January 2022 approval to bring in up to 25 residential consumers for training programs was received. In March 2022 approval was received for an additional ten residential consumers every two weeks until the end of May 2022, which will bring the center to around 50% capacity or approximately 90 residential consumers. Alan reported in May 2022 total enrollment reached 101 consumers. In June 2022 the center held its 49th graduation ceremony with 48 consumers completing training and participated in the ceremony, with staff in attendance. As of June 30, 2022, the center had a total enrollment of 82: 62 residential consumers and 21 day or out-patient consumers. Alan provided information about each credential and certification the center offers its consumers throughout each program. An update for the Assisted Living Branch at the center was provided. 11 drivers licenses and 22 permits had been issued as well as 52 pre-drivers evaluations completed. Alan provided a report for the Assisted Living Branch Physical Therapy Outpatient and Wellness, Occupational Therapy Services, Vocational Services and Student Services. A detailed map of the counties served by the center from October 2020 through June 2022 was provided. Alan provided an overview of upcoming outreach activities planned by the Perkins 1st Reaching Team. At the end of his update, Alan read a consumer success story to the council that was submitted by a family member of a former Perkins Center consumer.

The council broke for lunch and committee meetings. SCVR Vice Chairperson David Allgood called the meeting to order for business (Chairperson Joe Cowan was not present in the meeting during this time). SCVR members reviewed the minutes from the April meeting and a motion to approve was entertained. Nicky Wright provided a motion to accept. Chris White, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Executive Committee: Vice Chairperson David Allgood provided the report. The committee finalized a schedule for the remainder of the year as well as for 2023. The next meeting will be held October 24, 2022. The committee assignments for new members were discussed, along with the vacancies within each committee. New member orientation will be held before the next meeting.

Nominating and Bylaws Committee: SCVR Member Chris White provided the report. There were no submitted amendment proposals, but discussion for a drafted change to Article 7.2 was held. The committee will submit to the council some changes to the

language before the next meeting, with a vote for those changes to be held during the next meeting. Chris informed the council there will be five terms expiring in June 2023. A discussion was held on how to recognize exiting council members once their terms have expired and this will be discussed further during new business.

Blind Services Committee: Division of Blind Services Director Helga Gilbert provided the brief report. Conversation was held for a new committee chair to be established.

Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee: SCVR Vice Chairperson David Allgood provided the report. The Consumer Satisfaction Survey was discussed however approval from the council could not be obtained due to accessibility issues. These issues are being addressed and the survey will be provided to the council during the next meeting. Protection and Advocacy will be providing trainings about the rights of employment resources and how to help people with disabilities to find employment.

Policy and Planning Committee: SCVR Member Nicky Wright provided the report. The committee reviewed the Vocational Rehabilitation Application for Services, and a vote was passed that the application be approved by the committee along with the instructions for the application.

Public Awareness and Legislative (PAL) Committee: SCVR Member Tyler Levy provided the report. A discussion for the Annual Report was held. The committee voted for the report to be focused on Transitions. Legislation updates were provided during the meeting by SCVR Vice Chairperson David Allgood. Tyler reported there were no current nominations for the Arthur Campbell, Jr. Advocacy Award.

New Business: SCVR Member Chris White opened discussion for recognizing exiting members of the council. SCVR Vice Chairperson David Allgood suggested a plaque or certificate be presented to the exiting members. The council decided to table the discussion and revisit during the October meeting. Chris also brought up the participant survey. He posed the question if a CRP Satisfaction Survey with Support from OVR could be added as a report topic. It was requested by SCVR Vice Chairperson David Allgood to have this added to the next two meeting agendas.

Motion to Adjourn: SCVR Vice Chairperson requested a motion to adjourn. SCVR Member Chris White provided the motion. Tyler Levy, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Next Meeting Date: October 24, 2022.