

Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation

Meeting Minutes – Zoom

October 25, 2021

Call to Order – David Allgood

Chair called to order this quarterly meeting of the Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation at 9:00 am on October 25, 2021, Zoom Meeting platform.

Welcome/Roll Call – Samantha Cook

Members Present: David Allgood (Chairperson), Joe Cowan, Cora McNabb, Kelly Knoop, Chris White, Cathy Jackson, Susan Farra, Matt Davis, Theresa Thomas, Phil Donahue, Tyler Levy, Nicky Wright, Lynn Florence, Jeff Edwards

Members Absent: Todd Stephens, Carla Ruschival

Guests Present: Robert Finlayson, Dondra Meredith, Adrian Jacob

Staff Present: Samantha Cook, Alan Gullett, Corey Marcum, Chris Sheeting, Kristen Beach, Kellie Scott, Helga Gilbert, Heidi Kesterson, Holly Hendricks, Jennifer Withrow, Brent Sturgill, Jonathan White, Melissa Peel, Kelly Bass

Interns: Bethany Hukle, Alex Castlen, Paula Smith, Tami Narehood, Holly Mollenkopf, Jerry Wagner

It was determined that a quorum was present.

Executive Director's Report – Cora McNabb

Cora reported that the RSA found three

Division Directors' Report

Becky Cabe – Executive Directors Report

The RSA Monitoring exit interview went over the findings and recommendations. Two performance findings were discussed. One finding was on internal controls for submitting timely accurate reports. Specifically pertaining to the 911 Data Reports that OVR is required to submit in which extensions have been requested and errors were included. The new proposal for purchasing a new case management system should help with this matter as well as staff making sure data is entered into the system correctly.

The other performance finding was on engagement. OVR needs to ensure the consumer is engaged from the beginning of the process until the end. Data shows that there are a lot of individuals that exit services before completion. RSA talked about the high caseloads and how the consumer could be engaged better. Also, we need to ensure that if a consumer is referred to a community rehab provider that the provider stays engaged with them as well. A corrective plan of action for those two findings will be forthcoming.

There were also three fiscal findings. One area was insufficient internal controls meaning that written policy and procedures are needed for all fiscal operations. The fiscal staff are working on these to include all the reporting requirements and adhering to the period of performance in the fiscal year.

There were discussions about the prior approval process. Basically, OVR will need to include more detailed information in the State Plan and Statewide Needs Assessment regarding repairs and ongoing maintenance for the Carl D. Perkins Rehabilitation Center and the McDowell House. Moving forward these details will be clearly stated in the Capital Plan which is part of the State Plan and Statewide Needs Assessment.

The last fiscal finding was financial inconsistencies related to the State Program income and the Social Security Administration's match. To explain, federal law requires OVR to use all program income before utilizing the match contribution. It was found that in some instances this had not been done. Measures have been put in place to ensure this doesn't happen again. Some of the program income has been moved to Older Individuals Who are Blind and Supported Employment to make these obligated and help with compliance. It is suspected that there will be more findings in this area but these will not be known until the full report is complete.

The RSA gave OVR a list of recommendations as well. These are typically not responded to since they are not considered findings but suggestions to look at more closely. One of these was looking into the Order of Selection versus staffing levels. So, Holly Hendricks is working with staff to do a thorough study of staffing versus Order of Selection. OVR is also looking into the criteria for credential attainment, service delivery and analyzing costs related to both centers.

Cora explained that she felt very good about the meetings and monitoring report and RSA recognized that the Kentucky OVR is doing fairly well considering it being a newly merged agency that has went through reorganizations.

The Strategic Plan was reviewed and Cora explained the goals. (see attached)

Helga Gilbert – Blind Services Division

The Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program was not reviewed during our monitoring this summer, but this certainly could happen in the future and work continues on updating policies while working closely with the cabinet fiscal staff.

Independent Living (IL) and OIB Highlights

- Fiscal Year 2021 had 523 total cases.
 - 98 individuals younger than age 55 and 425 individuals age 55 and older.
 - 348 females and 175 males.
 - For the cases in the IL program, 8 individuals under age 20. In the OIB program, 59 cases are for people age 90 or older including one was over 100 years old.
 - Macular Degeneration was the most common reported cause of vision loss.
 - Individuals served lived in 93 Kentucky counties.
- Moving into FY2022:
 - Offering assessments and skills training virtually, through in-person services, and a combination of the two.
 - Anticipate upward trend in referrals in the next quarter. And staff are actively working on outreach to old and new referral sources.
 - Several consumers continue to refuse in-home visits or want to limit the number of in-person sessions needed to complete planned services.
- Personnel Actions:
 - New IL/OIB Counselor, Amy Heath, began in Somerset on September 16, 2021.
 - IL/OIB counselor in Paducah, Nancy Harper, is retiring at the end of October. Nancy leaves with 10 years in the IL/OIB program and over 40 years of direct service experience. She has consistently carried one of the largest caseloads, and her vast knowledge and experience will be difficult to replace.

McDowell Center

Still not approved for residential services but working with legal. Since the positivity rate is decreasing it's looking hopeful.

Working on dorm renovations with the cabinet facilities staff. Developing plans for electrical, mechanical and plumbing. Looking at overall function and needs of McDowell to take us through the next 30 years.

A new facility sign is being worked on for the front with some minor landscaping. And some trees have been provided by a non-profit called Tree Louisville.

There has been a new orientation app called GoodMaps Explore installed. This was developed by APH and replaces the old beacon system. It's not only used for Orientation and Mobility and can be used through your mobile phone. It also provides improved safety and security for the facility.

The Center continues to look at options to serve individuals from across the state in case the dorm is not ready when restrictions are lifted.

There are two Assistive Technology positions needing to be filled. Interviews for one of these positions are scheduled for this week. The Orientation and Mobility position opening has been posted. The Personal Adjustment position was posted again because the individual who accepted the position in September declined on the scheduled start date. Have also posted the Recreation Therapy position and the Admin Specialist III position for the Student Services division. The posting for the Nurse position is being held off because the center has been using the Perkins Center nurse for consultation on cases and cannot get candidates due to the nursing shortage.

Engagement Opportunities to start again. Virtual training continues and there has been about 5-8 in person students per week.

The vocational prep unit has provided 800 direct service hours to consumers (doesn't count lesson prep, report writing and coordination) this quarter. Service hours have climbed each month this quarter.

3rd Quarter Student Data (July 1, 2021 thru September 30, 2021)

- 69 individuals served (includes 7 Path students).
- 28 counties served.
- 4 individuals have become employed.

- One of these individuals went through all the training areas virtually and had never been employed before.
- Another individual learned all the braille code virtually in less than a year.
- 27 individuals discontinued services (includes 7 Path Students).
 - 21 individuals completed training versus discontinuation of services for other reasons.

The Outreach and Communication is trying to do a lot of internal and external training around improving services to blind/visually impaired individuals.

McDowell staff will be presenting two of the 29 presentations during the annual National Stout Vocational Rehabilitation Institute Innovation Inspiration Expo in January.

One presentation will be about the work that instructors did in pivoting from in-person to virtual services for individuals. How our student services and instructional staff adapted. Skills they learned or enhanced, and the results.

The other presentation will be a part of a panel discussion about implementing the new progressive employment model at McDowell. Panel discussion will be with the Institute for Community Inclusion and a few other states.

The Orientation and Mobility Program is working with the Department of Transportation to do an additional three intersection evaluations in Louisville and one on University of Kentucky's campus.

Also doing presentations for the Community Rehab Providers and one of the McDowell instructors did a talk at the APH.

There is some upcoming training where the Division staff and Field staff are working on together to provide training to CRPs and to members of the Coalition for Workforce Diversity. A meeting this week will look at what training would be beneficial and if combining the two training requests into one training (which could hopefully be used ongoing for other individuals). The four main areas covered would be etiquette, assistive technology, orientation and mobility and employment.

A "White Cane Day" Event was held where Information about the White Cane law was put on a postcard and distributed throughout the community. This was an outreach to employers such as CEOs of Humana, TX Roadhouse, Norton Healthcare, YUM Brands, Kindred Healthcare and legislators, senators. Senators McConnell, Paul, and representatives Comer, Yarmouth, Guthrie, Massie, Rogers and Barr all received the

postcards. Small bundles were sent to VIPS, the Library system, Kentucky's White Cane Society and of course to field office staff. McDowell staff distributed cards at Kroger, to Lyft and Uber drivers, shopping centers, groceries, pharmacies, churches, and on online forums such as Facebook and Nextdoor which had accessible versions available.

Tonia Gatton is the new DeafBlind Coordinator reaching out to DeafBlind individuals and their families identified by VR and IL counselors as needing additional support, guidance and encouragement. She has been completing "I Can Connect" applications for several individuals to help them obtain technology for distance communication. She has been routinely meeting with other partners in the state including the UK Deaf Blind Project and the Deaf and Hard of Hearing Commission. She work closely with Marilyn Trader and other Helen Keller National Center (HKNC) staff to prepare approximately 25-30 DeafBlind individuals to attend virtual HKNC classes until their Center reopens for in person training.

The Bioptic Driving program has four individuals actively participating in behind the wheel training. One became license during this quarter. Working on updating visual exam forms used by eye professionals to do annual exams, initial bioptic exams, and re-exams.

Field Services Division – Holly Hendricks

The vast majority of Field Staff continue to provide services while working a hybrid telecommuting schedule. All of the offices are open 8am – 4:30pm, Monday thru Friday unless there is an issue. Staff are enjoying the flexibility and consumers have indicated that they like the virtual service delivery options.

Training on SARA was started this week and field services continues to implement Docusign. SARA provides timely communications, ease of engagement and flexibility in response for the virtual process.

Skills enhancement training will be conducted in early December. This helps new staff but can be utilized by anyone in the agency.

Also, trainings are being developed by Jonathan White and Kristen Beach for Branch Managers. A Branch Manager meeting is going to take place this week to talk about a few topics and provide training.

Holly explained the different start times for matrix data collection. The Federal Fiscal Year starts October 1st. The Performance Year starts July 1st and the Staff Performance Year starts on January 1st. The metrics data is reviewed quite frequently from the Staff Performance Year just to see where the staff is on meeting goals and to establish appropriate goals. The information below is from January 1, 2021 thru September 30,

2021. We were just short of the positive employment outcome goal that was set. Considering the pandemic and trying new methods of providing services the staff's efforts are appreciated.

There were 34,995 individuals served. About half of those, 17,273 are potentially eligible cases. The average caseload is 236 but this is inflated because it includes potentially eligible cases. It's suspected that the caseload is more like 120. There were 8,640 new referrals and over 5,000 new applications have been taken. The average days to determine eligibility was 29 days with a 37 day average to implement an Individualized Employment Plan. There are 1,515 cases in "job ready" status. There were 616 credentials attained and 1,102 measurable skills gained. These are thought to be low due to staff needing to finish entering all the data. There were 2,032 successfully placed individuals. The average hourly wage was \$17.90 with an average of 34 hours worked per week.

Carl D Perkins Rehabilitation Training Center – Alan Gullett

During the Program Year of October 1, 2020 thru September 30, 2021 CDPRTC served consumers in 67 of the 120 Kentucky counties consisting of almost 56% of the counties. This is down significantly from the previous years. We provided about 6,000 hours of training units. Over 2,400 hours of this was in one of the main training programs, the forklift program. Over 1,000 hours were completed in the Alpha program. The Cosmetology program had over 800 hours. A lot of the services are still being provided just on a smaller scale.

Over 20 industry credentials were completed which included OSHA-10, industrial truck operation licenses and pallet jack operator licenses.

There were 35 vocational evaluations. Eighteen were done in person and 17 were the vocational profiles done virtually.

The online portions were continued with about 208 hours of job readiness training.

CDPRTC continues to see consumers with physical, speech and occupational therapies. Seventeen to eighteen consumers come in each week for these services.

There are 226 consumers on the waiting list with 63 of these being evaluation students/consumers. The facility is waiting for approval to bring in consumers to provide these services.

Staff is 100% onsite and have been since June 14, 2021. There are 72 18A staff and 26 contract staff. Operation continues 24 hours/7 days per week. There are 12 consumers in

the dorms. Seven are Alpha College consumers and five are doing drivers training. Five or six local consumers participate daily with training programs.

There's a plan to move away from paper copies of records and move towards utilizing the CMS system for documentation. November 1, 2021 is the start date.

A new position has been requested to either hire an instructor or train someone currently at the center to provide Bi-Optic driver training from the CDPRTC. There is a need in the Eastern Kentucky area for this training but this process may take a while.

Kentucky Business Enterprises – Corey Marcum

There have been three vendor resignations which causes a domino affect of different awards and businesses opening with opportunities. There were five bids this quarter, the Louisville Bid route which was mostly post office locations was awarded to Beverly Dickerson. The L&N building was awarded to George Bouquet. The Gene Schnieder building was awarded to Justin Pervis and the Hall of Justice was awarded to Angela Stevens. There was a bid for the Ashland prison but no bids were received. An emergency vendor or third party may need to be found to cover that building due to federal visitation restrictions making this site unattractive for vendors. There is currently one bid open for the Federal Medical Center which may also be hard to attract vendors to due to the same visitation restrictions affecting profitability.

A new teaming partner was added to the National Guard Wendell Ford Training facility in Muhlenberg County. Hopefully the vendor and partner can learn from each other and the vendor will be able to take this site on independently when the contract is renegotiated.

Agency staff have participated in two trainings this quarter. Both trainings were with the Randolph Shepherd Vendors of America and Miniblast.

The agency distributed \$370,000 thru the FERPA funds allowed thru the Federal Government's last Cares Act.

The L&N Center has re-opened. The Finance Cabinet did a complete remodel and moved the site from the end to the middle. Once it's fully staffed again it will be a positive experience for the vendor and the customers being served.

An equipment order will be delivered within the next few weeks. This equipment is slated for the Frankfort May-Underwood building, Carter Round Rest Areas, TVA Steam Plant, the Wilmore Veterans Center and the Federal Court building in Lexington.

A few statistics that help shed some light on the price increases and how they affect the vendors; deep fryer oil a year ago was \$21 today is \$45; a case of chicken wings was \$45 is now \$175 today; a case of take out boxes was \$25 is now \$95 and that's if you can find them. The agency is trying to help in any way possible, but vendors are still facing complications due to COVID.

State Plan

The State Plan is due to be updated this year. The process of editing the state plan has started and staff are participating in meetings to talk about the partnerships across the workforce areas.

There was discussion about the best dates/times to hold the public hearings. It was decided that the meetings would be held Tuesday, November 30, 2021 at 11:00am – 1:00pm EST and Thursday, December 2, 2021 at 6:30pm – 8:30pm EST. This will allow for as much participation as possible. The meetings will be held virtually again this year.

Author J. Campbell Advocacy Award

There were two nominees for the Author J. Campbell Advocacy Award. The nominations were read by Samantha Cook and the council voted to give the award to Cameron Lewis.

Business Meeting

Approval of Minutes

Phil Donahue made a motion to approve the July 26, 2021 Meeting Minutes. Kelly Knoop second the motion. The motion carried.

Mission Statement

Theresa Thomas made a motion for the Policy and Planning Committee take a look at other state council mission statements and take the lead on proposing a mission statement for review at the next quarterly meeting. Chris White second the motion; motion carried.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee Report – David Allgood

Members Present: Cora McNabb, David Allgood, Joe Cowan, Nicky Wright, Matt Davis

Members Absent: Todd Stephens, Carla Ruschival

Staff Present: Samantha Cook, Melissa Peel

The Rehabilitation Service Administration gave the exit interview of the monitoring process. There were two performance findings and three fiscal findings reviewed during the process. It is felt that this is good when considering all that OVR has accomplished.

The State Plan hearing was discussed. These hearings are an opportunity for all groups impacted by OVR Services directly and indirectly to voice their pleasures and/or misgivings.

There is a new cabinet Secretary and there will be a meeting in the future for the Council to convey the services OVR provides to the disability community throughout Kentucky.

Ad-Hoc Bylaws Committee Report

The committee did not hold a meeting because the quorum was not met. Theresa Thomas made a motion to table the changes to the Quorum statement until the next meeting. Chris White second the motion. Motion carried.

Blind Services Committee Report – Theresa Thomas in absence of Cathy Jackson

Members Present: Cathy Jackson, Theresa Thomas

Members Absent: Carla Ruschival

Staff present: Helga Gilbert, Heidi Kesterson

The Blind Services Committee description was approved and it read as follows:

The Blind Services Committee discusses topics related service to consumers who are blind and visually impaired. After the 2018 merger of the two agencies, OVR and the Office of the Blind, this committee was formed to ensure that the expertise of those staff serving individuals who are blind and visually impaired is insured and maintained.

Discussed the status of Division of Blind Services vacancies.

Discussed the McDowell Center with an update from Heidi Kesterson.

Helga Gilbert gave some statistics on Rehabilitation Counselors for the Blind positions.

Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee Report – Matt Davis

Members Present: Matt Davis, Cathy Jackson, David Allgood, Phil Donahue

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Kellie Scott

July minutes were approved.

There were discussions on the Work Incentive Program updates. Analysis of the staff provided the paid benefits counseling services has been completed. There was an increase experienced from 52% up to 55% of the SSI and SSDI consumers received benefits summary and analysis.

Quality improvement and training continues to be pursued by the team which includes service providers.

The Consumer Satisfaction Survey is overseen by the Human Development Institute at UK and they are looking at contracting an outside survey team to conduct the survey to reach more consumers and get more feedback. The research center that previously conducted the phone surveys is no longer in existence and HDI attempted to do the phone surveys themselves but did not have great success.

To improve access for consumers training is being conducted for staff to capture consumer emails and obtaining permissions to utilize emails for correspondence.

The committee description was approved and reads as follows:

The Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee works to monitor the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's effectiveness in assisting people with disabilities to maximize independence and economic security in their communities. Among other tasks the committee oversees the Council's Consumer Satisfaction Survey and Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment.

There was some discussion on how to evaluation Pre-ETS services. Kellie Scott is going to look into obtaining information for evaluating these services based on how many consumers pursued post secondary education versus employment.

Policy and Planning Committee – Kelly Knoop in the absence of Nicky Wright

Members Present: Kelly Knoop, Suzan Farra, Chris White, Theresa Thomas, Lynn Florence

Members Absent: Nicky Wright

Staff Present: Chris Sheeting

Theresa Thomas made a motion to approve the July meeting minutes. Susan Farra second the motion. Motion carried.

There was discussion on the VR Application and Referral Application. It was decided that pull-downs and checkboxes would be a good alternative to make accessible from multiple devices.

The Policy and Planning Committee description was approved and reads as follows:

The Policy and Planning Committee reviews, analyzes and makes recommendations on relevant policies of Vocational Rehabilitation. The committee works on the strategic plan, the state plan, and amendments to the plans, eligibility and other components of the program.

Public Awareness and Legislative Review Committee – Tyler Levy

Members Present: David Allgood, Chris White, Tyler Levy

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: Brent Sturgill, Samantha Cook

Interns: Alexander Castlen, Tammi Narehood, Heidi Mollenkoff

Old business: No Old Business Discussed

New Business:

1. Discussion regarding OVR Website

All positive feedback received about the OVR website. It was stated that the website was positive, nice, succinct, seems accessible, links were clear, etc. The reason for soliciting feedback was that Melissa Peel is working on website updates and wanted feedback from this group. Brent Sturgill will make sure Melissa receives this feedback.

2. Discussion regarding a committee description

The Public Awareness and Advocacy Committee discusses issues on advocacy, education and communication in advancement of the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation's mission. This committee is also responsible for the Council's Annual Report. This committee also gives out two awards annually.

The committee reviewed the above committee description and recommended some small edits to Samantha Cook, but there was consensus that this was a positive addition and that the committee descriptions should be sent to the bylaws committee. The main edits were recorded by Samantha during the committee meeting and they mostly included some edits to the wording and adding the specific award titles.

The committee discussed two different books that contain information about SRC (State Rehabilitation Council) processes. They could be helpful to our council, but there have been some questions about accessibility and for that reason they have not been ordered yet.

3. Update regarding Annual Report

a) Annual report draft is mostly complete. The FFY ended on September 30, which means all data entered into CMS has to be checked for data quality. Once data quality is sufficient, final information will be entered into the annual report and it will be sent to the communications department for editing.

b) Final due date to RSA is Dec. 31st

Samantha reported that the annual report was mostly complete. Kellie Scott and the OVR Division Directors have supplied lots of information and it is appreciated. It is currently getting

passed up the chain of command through Cora McNabb and then on to the Communication Department at the Cabinet and should be published soon.

4. Legislative Updates

- a) David Allgood reports that not a lot is going on.
- b) He continues to meet with the Labor Task Force.
- c) The sub-minimum wage bill may not happen this year, but it will probably be done by the federal government making the state actions a moot point.
- d) David is working with several parental advocacy groups on the issue of the termination of parental rights based on disability.
- e) Discussed trying to make parking in a striped area in an accessible parking spot a towable, ticketed offense. Currently it is only against the law in Lexington and Louisville.
- f) David discussed that the 2010 ADA amendments may need to be ratified by the state legislature or we would revert to the 1999 rules.

5. Meeting adjourned.

There was no Old Business discussed.

There was no New Business discussed.

There were no Public Announcements.

Tyler Levy made a motion for the meeting to adjourn at 1:52pm. Theresa Thomas second the motion. Motion carried

The next meeting will be held Monday, January 24, 2022. It will be determined later if the January meeting will be in person as a hybrid meeting.

Minutes submitted by: Melissa Peel

Approved: