

E | Meeting Minutes – 3rd Quarterly Meeting

Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation

SCVR

July 22, 2024

-Approved -

Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting

Physical Location: 500 Mero Street, Rm. 136CE, Frankfort, KY 40601

Zoom Platform

Members Present:

Nicky Wright, Chair; David Allgood, Vice-Chair; Todd Stephens, Member-at-Large; Cora McNabb, Executive Director; Chris White; Danielle Burton; Kellie Smith; Allison Johnson; Terrie Terlau; Johnny Collett; and Jade Finley.

Members Absent:

Briana Sweatt and Benjamin Henderson.

Staff Present:

Susie Edwards; Holly Hendricks; Alan Gullett; Corey Marcum; Heidi Kesterson; Kelly Bass; Kristen Beach; Jonathan White; Carol Weber, Kellie Scott, Chad Hunt; Chris Sheeting; Lametta Isaacs; Jennifer Withrow; Lisa McKinney; Brooke McDaniel, Kathryn Spears and Betty Whitaker.

Guests Present:

Mykal Leslie, UKHDI; Beth Metzger, CAP; and other guests were present.

Meeting:

SCVR Chairperson, Nicky Wright, gave the welcome and provided a summary of her professional background. A roll call was taken by Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Administrator, Lametta Isaacs. A quorum was established.

Executive Directors Report

Cora McNabb, Executive Director of OVR, provided an overview of the agency's current business. The State Plan was submitted and approved. The Case Management System with GEO Solutions is a continued work with staff on design and development. The main focus for staff is clearing out tickets in the system design. GEO's target goal to complete design is this week; however, we will likely need to regroup with them on the timeframe. The two-session Statewide Conference was held in May. There was a general session and tract session for staff that included Counselors, Assistants, Residential Center Staff and Leadership. All OVR staff are participating in Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) training. OVR Leadership Advance was held on Tuesday, June 18th, which included a presentation by Human Resources and Ready for Industry, which was purchased by Department of Workforce Development (DWD) for statewide use. OVR is researching different card companies hoping to find a solution for consumer purchases for a timelier way to make purchases as opposed to a tedious paper authorization process. OVR has a dedicated outreach person that focuses on the development of a more streamlined process, by tracking all staff presentations and events. OVR has purchased and distributed to field staff table covers, banners and other material for outreach events. Effective July 1, the Program Policy and Support Branch (PPS) underwent a simple reorganization that splits the branch into two separate branches. During upcoming weeks, we will be working on personnel actions to fill newly created positions in PPS. OVR continues to work on the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) from 2021 RSA monitoring. We continue to meet with Quality VR Technical Assistance Center (VRTAC) on resolving issues surrounding internal controls. Six of the ten findings have been resolved and completed; the remaining four are partially resolved. In June, OVR was notified that the area of Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) would be placed on a CAP. OVR developed and submitted a corrective action plan to RSA, which was approved. OVR can make a presentation regarding both CAPs at the next quarterly meeting. Supported Employment (SE) rate increases have been a huge undertaking as discussed at the previous quarterly meeting by Ron O'Hair. OVR has received technical assistance from the NEON Project at ODEP/DOL and VRTAC. Other service fee memorandums with increases released were Pre-ETS and Community Work Transition and Tuition Rates. OVR recently released a Request for Proposal for service fees and rate settings. The contract was awarded to Public Consulting Group, which has experience with VR in several states. Cora represents the Cabinet on the Judicial Commission for Mental Health, and several staff represent on various Olmstead Committees such as Employment, Housing and Transportation. Both Cora and Susie serve on DWD committees for local regional planning and infrastructure and MOA agreements such as National Governor's Association Disability and Employment, House Bill 144 on Employment, House Bill 7 and SIAC. Additionally, OVR oversees Employment First.

Johnny, councilmember, inquired about DEI training for staff. Cora explained the training is mandatory for state employees. David, Vice-Chair, inquired about CRP's and the completion date for the manual. Cora explained that rewriting the manual is intense work and once it is completed, staff will have to rewrite the curriculum for CRP's. The approx. completion date may be October 1. Cora concluded her report.

Division Director's Reports

The Division of Blind Services

Heidi Kesterson, Facility Administrator, provided the report for Division Director, Helga Gilbert. Heidi reported student statistics at the McDowell Center and the average monthly hours of service for FY2024, which include the Work Readiness and Progressive Employment Program. PE Specialist work with 13 partner organizations to develop ongoing work exposure and career exploration opportunities and hosted mock interviews for student with Humana, LG&E, and the American Red Cross. Weekly group training in Peer Support, Community Resources, Group Health, and Advocacy started as well as weekly daytime community instructional outings to places such as Louisville Zoo and Churchill Downs. Several vacancies were filled, and the dormitory is fully staffed. Additional Staff was added due to increased census and referrals. The cafeteria was certified and opened in April. Currently, the dormitory is near capacity and a consistent rotation of students train in the Independent Living Apartment. Planning for building renovations is complete and working within the approval process. Heidi provided student data for the Bioptic Driving Program. A new driving instructor has been hired and has a start date in mid-August. The new instructor is an Occupational Therapist and will be quickly working towards earning the certified driver rehab specialist credential. She will provide coverage to individuals in the western part of the state. The Statewide Deaf Blind Services Coordinator position is still vacant. The position has been approved for reclassification to a Program Administrator II and is currently posted. The Independent Living Branch (IL) has 601 cases statewide of which 80% are Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB), consistent with yearly averages. Staff for IL was discussed. Consideration for adding additional counselors is underway with an interest in providing services for West KY as the case loads are large. Outreach efforts include summits, conferences, school and resource fairs, collaborations and university presentations. In addition, new videos about Orientation and Mobility were created and available. In the last quarter, staff participated in outreach events across 16 counties. Staff also attended the statewide Optometrist Conference and the Vanderbilt Low Vision Clinic in Nashville due to the number of Kentucky patients they serve in the Nashville area.

Chris, councilmember, asked about employer feedback from mock interviews. Heidi explained that while they met with staff and students and had good feedback, they did not

get feedback from employers. Chris inquired about the cafeteria and whether it was student led, a training area or operated by staff only. Heidi answered they only serve students and is operated by staff. She explained the primary focus is on students. Terrie, councilmember, asked to repeat the list of positions filled. Heidi provided the following list: Section Supervisor, Dorm Staff (a few), Assistive Technology Instructor, Independent Living Instructor and Education Instructor. Terrie asked for an update on O&M positions and Heidi provided information on the instructors and the use of vendors on certain days of the week. Nicky, Chair, inquired about driving instructors and how long they must be on the job for certification. Heidi will find out and get this information back to the Council. Heidi concluded her report.

Division of Field Services

Holly Hendricks, Director of Field Services, provided the report. For calendar year 1-1-24 through 6-30-24, data was provided for the number of cases served, potentially eligible, active cases, average caseload, referrals, new applications and average days to eligibility, credentials, measurable skills gains and closures (successful and unsuccessful). They were compared with the same period of the previous year with a notable increase in cases served, a 12% increase in referrals and increase in new applications, among other comparisons. The division has added 12 new positions since the last report. Currently, they have 16 counselor vacancies across the following areas: Lexington, Danville, Ashland, Hazard, Prestonsburg, Bowling Green, Etown and Paducah. There are 9 Assistant position vacancies in Bowling Green, Louisville, Etown, Owensboro and Paducah, and there are 3 Job Placement Specialist vacancies in Bowling Green, Louisville, and Etown. The division continues to focus on ways to manage the increase in referrals and minimizing wait time. They are working through logistics of some pilot programs for taking applications. As the result of some organizational restructuring, two section supervisor positions will be added to the Assistive Technology and three section supervisors to the Employer Service Branch. The Division is also nearing implementation of changes to the Supported Employment fee schedules and structures as well and evaluating long-term Pre-Employment Transition Services delivery plans. We are in the planning stages of a Kentucky Transition Summit, with a target audience of school district superintendents, and board members. The Division is also in the beginning stages of planning an Employer Recognition Luncheon. The Assistive Technology Conference was held in June, with agency staff and partners attending, and we had 31 staff, both new and existing, attend Skill Enhancement Training at CDPVTC in June. We continue to work with KDE on the implementation of the RSA DIF Grant and continue to provide administrative staff support to the Employment First Council and SCVR. Regional Program Manager, Jenny Lampton recently attended National Federation of the Blind Conference in Orlando, and we have staff in the transition services branch who

attended the National JAG conference in Las Vegas, and staff who will attend the Project Search National Conference in Albuquerque next week. We are continuing with Field Services District listening tour meetings and we continue to get positive feedback from staff. The Division Director remains heavily involved in the design of the new case management system.

Nicky, Chair, inquired about ways to spend funds for pre-ETS, such as retention bonuses, utilizing the funds for training purposes or even scholarships. Holly answered that these were great questions. However, OVR cannot offer bonuses or scholarships as the spending of funds are heavily regulated. Jonathan noted that training is currently being performed. Holly emphasized that they are looking into the dynamics of getting into the schools and additional staff to assist along with different ways of spending funds. Cora added another factor is having to work within constraints in the personnel system and other areas. Holly informed the council that we are in the same boat as a lot of other state VR programs. The work that has been done will take time to tell. Todd, councilmember, brought attention to other states having this issue and the challenges faced on this topic. Chris, councilmember, commented on the increase of consumers and hopes support is gained to assist. Holly explained that between the time period of eligibility and the plan, they lose 15-20% of people; but once they come in, staff keeps them engaged. Allison agreed with Chris and wanted to understand the trend. Holly explained a brief analysis was done to determine the causes but there were no findings in that brief analyzation. Holly concluded her report.

The Kentucky Blind Enterprises (KBE) Division

Corey Marcum, Division Director of KBE, provided the report. One Bid for Ft. Knox: Buster Mayne, Lynn Florence, Angela Stevens, and Chris Miller. Planning for the transitions of these locations will start once the grievance period is over. Discussions will happen directly with those vendors exiting their locations. National Trainings were with the National Restaurant Association in Chicago, National Automated Merchandising Association in Dallas and the National Council for State Agencies for the Blind in DC. Some take aways were training on newly released technical assistance from RSA, Messazure Up, a proposed new program for site visits and new product ideas for vendors and equipment needs. KBE has awarded four (4) \$5,000 scholarships, Todd Stephens is part of this selection panel. For new vendor trainings, we completed two Lighthouse trainings, and a new on-the-job training guide is underway. Currently, we have a two new staff members, Madeleine Ancona, Administrative Specialist Sr. and Michael Wellman, District Food Operations Evaluator. We are establishing a new Program Coordinator that will do Outreach with schools to identify new vendors. This will be partially funded by pre-ETS. They will also be working with the RCBs to help produce more future vendors. However, Outreach has started in Jefferson County Schools and Fayette County Schools.

We are continuing to look for opportunities to identify new locations for Outreach for certain new locations, but these locations have an incumbent in place. We continue to provide continuing education such as food shows with Performance Food Service, Hackney Onsite Presentation, Invision and vendors and weekly opportunities online.

Nicky, Chair, inquired about how students are identified through blind vendors and if vendor tables set up for outreach. Corey explained that they do not have the necessary relationship with the schools yet but hopes to grow it from here. Currently, they are educating and waiting for that progress and understand that this may take time. Chris, councilmember, asked about meeting with JCPS and its entrepreneurial program. Cory has recently begun conversations with the program administrator, providing the contact name and is awaiting follow-up. Chris commended this effort. Corey concluded his report.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) Division

Alan Gullet, Division Director of CDPVTC, provided the report. The enrollment at the Center is 128 and projected to be 148 by the end of July. The Barista Training Program started on April 1st and serves as an option within our Food Service Training. The Center went through accreditation April 11th and 12th and received a 3-year certificate this month running through May 2027. We are working on the following two recommendations: 1) Succession planning; and 2) After action report form analyzing tests/drills of emergency procedures. We are moving forward with our Materials Management training area and planning to change the name to Logistics on September 2nd. We are now providing trainings for a Certified Production Tech, Certified Logistics Tech and Certified Logistics Associate. Training unit has formed a workgroup to look at ways we can offer more online or distance learning opportunities for consumers, specifically looking into CVS and Office Tech. Graduation was moved indoors due to high temperatures and all went well. We had 129 eligible to walk with about 80 participating. For the building, Alan reported that contractors have removed all of the restroom flooring, showers, sinks, toilets and fixtures, and they are in the process of determining the next steps to repairs that need to be made prior to installing new material. The original completion date has been pushed back 62 days, from August 22nd to October 24. Flooring has been replaced in the main entry, waiting areas, dorm lobby, cafeteria, honors room and OT classroom in June 2024. They hoped to have had an approval for a Center Video, but they are still waiting. A Satisfaction Survey for the first six months of the year are being recorded.

Nicky, Chair, inquired about the age limit for those enrolled in assisted living. Alan explained that the minimum age is 18 but can be any age as long as they have a goal. Terrie, councilmember, wanted to understand more about how students are served in the assisted living for types of care provided, such as feeding and those with spinal cord injuries, for example. Alan explained that most of those dynamics would be taking into

consideration prior to attending; however the Center will follow up, but most is done prior. Alan concluded his report.

Program Reports

Assistive Technology

Carol Weber, Vocational Rehabilitation Manager, provided a PowerPoint presentation on the importance of accessible word documents and websites for individuals who are visually impaired, low vision or blind. The discussion included how to set up documents with proper tags such as headings and using proper ordering to ensure understanding in addition to being accessible. Creating context behind table design was discussed and a live demonstration was made. Several councilmembers commented on useability vs accessibility as it relates to persons who are deafblind, utilizing user groups to ensure document usability and the four principles for website accessibility—POUR, meaning Perceivable, Operable, Understandable and Robust. Carol concluded her report.

Client Assistance Program:

Beth Metzger, CAP Coordinator, provided the report for the time period between April 15 and July 21st of the current year. CAP had the following: 23 information and referrals with 12 closed; 6 case representations with 3 closed; and participated in over 6 systemic advocacy activities. The CAP 2023 Annual Report that showcases its work and highlights consumers served was discussed. A hard copy of the CAP Annual Report was distributed to in-person attendees, and an accessible electronic copy was also made available to the Council. Beth concluded her report.

The Council broke for lunch.

Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment (CSNA)

Dr. Mykal Leslie, University of Kentucky Human Development Institute (UKDHI), provided a PowerPoint presentation of the 2024 OVR CSNA. An overview of the report was given which included the methodology, an environmental scan of the state and consumer data highlights. In addition, Dr. Leslie discussed concerns which included high satisfaction areas, potential growth areas and priority improvement areas of the state. The primary focus areas of the state plan, including individuals with the most significant disabilities, were reviewed with the Council. As a result, Dr. Leslie identified priority needs and made strategic recommendations for OVR. The next CSNA will start sooner for an even more thorough approach and will need the Council's feedback. Nicky, Chair, commended the UKDHI team for the excellent and thorough report while observing the work ahead in

underserved areas as well. Todd, councilmember, expressed concern among the high blind population that is unemployed. Further discussion occurred regarding this concern to try and understand more specifically how this might be changed. Terri, councilmember, offered some potential reasons, such as the severity of the disability, fear by employers, internalized fear and other factors. An accessible copy of the presentation was made available to the Council, and the final CSNA report will be made available on the OVR website.

Business Meeting

The Council reconvened, and a roll call was taken by OVR Administrator, Lametta Isaacs. A quorum was established. SCVR Chairperson, Nicky Wright, called the meeting to order for business. Council members reviewed the January Minutes. Johnny Collett made a motion to approve the minutes, and David Allgood seconded. The minutes were approved.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee:

Chairperson, Nicky Wright, provided the report. The committee accepted the April minutes. The strategic planning activities are complete as of June 20th, which was with the Executive Committee. Recommendations for four areas have been passed along for possible appointment. The committee schedules were presented to occur before the next October quarterly meeting. Committee needs were also discussed in terms of membership and leadership. Allison Johnson was recognized as the new chair for the Policy and Planning committee. The dates of the quarterly meetings in 2025 were given. A topic that will be discussed later is CRC. Nicky concluded her report.

Public Awareness and Legislative (PAL) Committee:

Kellie Smith, Committee Chair, provided the report. The committee met on June 27th and a quorum was established. The committee accepted the March minutes. The committee discussed the two awards that should be sought each year and requested the full Council to assist. An establishment was mentioned regarding the Employer Award. The committee is interested in OVR's outreach efforts and has invited staff to share information at the next committee meeting. The committee passed a motion to recommend the theme "Strategizing for Our Future" for the 2024 Annual Report to the full council. Kellie concluded her report.

Blind Services Committee:

Danielle Burton, Committee Chair, provided the report. The committee met on June 27th and a quorum was established. The committee accepted minutes from March. The committee heard reports from staff on the McDowell Center and Independent Living Branch. The committee discussed wanting to learn more about community involvement and any activities they are involved at the Center, which will be discussed at the next meeting. Danielle concluded her report.

Policy and Planning Committee:

Nicky Wright provided the report. The committee met on June 28th and a quorum was established. The committee discussed recommendation #5 on CRP reimbursement solution in the state plan and was provided information from the Grants Management Branch. Nicky concluded her report.

Nominating and Bylaws Committee:

Chris White, Committee Chair, provided the report. The committee met on June 27th and a quorum was established. The minutes from the previous meeting in March were accepted. The committee made a motion to recommend that reports given during the quarterly meetings include the full name of the acronym when first introduced to allow for Council members and the public to clearly understand the items being discussed. A discussion of current vacancies and pending appointments and building a pipeline was had. Joe Cowan was present for this last meeting and was thanked for his service. Chris concluded his report.

Old Business

No old business.

New Business

The Annual Report theme “Strategizing for Our Future” was chosen by the PAL committee and brought to the floor for a vote. The Chair asked for a motion to accept the theme for the FFY24 Annual Report. David Allgood made a motion to accept “Strategizing for Our Future” as the 2024 Annual Report theme, and Chris White seconded. No oppositions or abstentions were made. The motion passed unanimously. The Council voted to accept the 2024 Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment. Terrie Terlau made a motion to accept, and Todd Stephens seconded. There were no oppositions or abstentions. The motion passed unanimously. The use of acronyms to be limited in the reporting during the quarterly meetings was brought by the NBC committee. The committee requested a vote from the full council that OVR provide the full name of the

acronym first before using the acronym for the members and the public to better understand the discussion. Chris, councilmember, made a motion to accept stating the acronym meaning before using the acronym during any quarterly meeting report discussion. Todd seconded. Johnny Collett commended staff for providing the acronyms in the meeting booklet in advance. Terrie, councilmember, agrees, but would still like the acronym meaning be stated during the meeting. There were no opposition or abstentions, and the motion passed unanimously. A discussion regarding motivation in pay for hiring certified counselors was brought forth. It was recognized that there is a pay delineation for certified and non-certified.

Motion to Adjourn:

Nicky entertained a motion to adjourn. Terrie made a motion to adjourn the meeting, and Todd seconded. The meeting was adjourned.

Next Meeting Date: October 21, 2024