

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

January 24, 2022  
Meeting Minutes  
Zoom

Members Present: SCVR Chairperson, David Allgood, Joe Cowan, Kellie Smith, Jeff Edwards, Matt Davis, Nicky Wright, Todd Stephens, Kelly Knoop, Tyler Levy, Susan Farra, Amy Luttrell, Teresa Thomas, Kathy Jackson, Carla Ruschival, Kelly Bass, and Cora McNabb

Members Absent: Chris White, Phil Donahue, and Lynn Florence

Staff Present: Cora McNabb, Samantha Cook, Holly Hendricks, Jonathan White, Nanci Howard, Kellie Scott, Jennifer Withrow, Brent Sturgill, and Chris Sheeting

Guests Present: Esther Ratejeski, Bethany Huckle and Cameron Levis

SCVR Chairperson, David Allgood welcomed everyone to the meeting. A roll call was taken. A quorum was made.

Executive Director's Report: The Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Executive Director, Cora McNabb, provided the report. Covid guidance was discussed. She announced the Governor agreed to continue the hybrid scheduling with keeping all offices open at this time in conjunction with staff telecommuting two days per week. She stated a lot of staff are testing positive and their families. This has been an adjustment for the agency. The guidance given is to be very flexible with staff during this time. She stated the two residential centers are conducting business as usual and started to begin bringing consumers back to the residential facilities. She then stated the agency received the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Monitoring Report. She said there looks to be two performance findings and two fiscal findings in the report. She assured the council that the agency is already working on those findings. She went into more detail regarding the findings. Mrs. McNabb stated the agency is in the process of reviewing requests for proposals (RFPs) for the new case management system. She said she hopes to resolve some of the data reporting issues listed in the RSA monitoring report. Another programmatic finding has to do with the memorandum of agreement between the agency and the Department of Education. This has to do with transitions services and pre-employment transition. She stated she would send the report out to SCVR members for their review. She continued to report that the agency is now going through a state audit and that she is not sure when that will wrap up. She continued to say the agency will be updating contracts and completing performance evaluations. Finally, she stated that her biggest concern for the agency is recruitment and retention. She stated the agency is losing new and veteran staff. Mrs. McNabb continued to say a plan for salary increases was submitted on December 1, 2021. It has gone through to the Personnel Cabinet and is now at the State Office of Budget waiting for clarifications. She is hopeful it will go through. She

concluded her report by opening the floor for questions. Council member, Amy Luttrell, asked about level of referrals and if the agency can assist all of them. Mrs. McNabb stated that all categories are still open. More detail will be discussed in the Director of Program Services, Holly Hendricks' report.

Division Director's Reports: Deputy Director, Becky Cabe, provide her report. She began by stating the agency is seeing some states that were able to receive raises, are improving. She said that some staff within the agency are leaving for the private sector. She said statewide and nationally in southern region there has been progress due to the change in pay however, the change has not been implemented long enough to see any significant number of changes yet. She continued to report on the RETAIN Grant. It is a Department of Labor Grant that OVR receives from the Cabinet to help consumers to return to work and state working. She said the group are finding that OVR applicants can be referred to RETAIN. She concluded her report by opening the floor for questions. No questions.

Division Director, Helga Gilbert, provided her report. She shared her report to the group. She provided statistics taken from the RSA Monitoring Report and shared those with the group. She began by discussing the Older Individuals who are Blind (OIB) program and the federal grant award received and program income funds. She stated she has six full time staff and one part-time. She went through her report, providing data from the National Census Bureau. She talked a little bit about the type of categories served. Macular Degeneration was the highest percentage. She discussed the type of residence which the highest percentage was in their own private residence. Source of referral, self-referral was the highest. In terms of services received, the OIB program serves orientation and mobility the most along with a short list of other services provided. Ninety-seven percent received assistive technology services. Cora McNabb stated the program would have served 700-750 consumers and the numbers are down in this area. Helga agreed and said that some individuals do not want them to come to their home at this time. Staff are using a hybrid schedule now; using virtual services and some in home provided services. She continued to tell the group about some of the personnel actions affecting the OIB and McDowell Center. She stated they are hiring for Louisville, Somerset, and Paducah. She also stated that the Paducah position is closed and doing second interviews. Hiring a recreational therapist. Looking for an administrative specialist III for the Consumer Services Branch. Orientation and Mobility is a revolving position. There are positions posted for a Voc. Rehab. Instructor and assistive technologist. She provided some pictures. She said the group could find more about the McDowell Center and OIB services on the website. She explained what the signature guide is, safety related postures, etc. She then proceeded to discuss there are 42 active cases with the McDowell Center from October to December, since the last SCVR meeting. She explained the individuals come from 19 different counties. Four former students obtained employment and three individuals have received part-time work while receiving services at the Center. She briefly talked about the Progressive Employment Program. She concluded her report discussing the reorganization of the Center and staff. She said this would be able to utilize the extra space in the building to its potential.

Director of Field Services, Holly Hendricks, provided her report. She began to report on the metrics. She said there was information from the previous calendar year. She said there were a little over 38,000 cases served. These numbers will be sent to the council. Eighteen thousand of those cases were potentially eligible. Almost 12,000 new referrals turned into over 7,000 new cases. There is still a significant decrease in new referrals and new cases. She stated this could be due to the fact of being short staffed. She did say it is an indication of this. She announced that staff are doing well will implementing plans with 2% needing extensions. She commended staff for their efforts. Over 4,000 individuals in training status. There are 770 credentials and 1300 measurable skill gains. This was higher than the previous year. Amy Luttrell asked if Holly could show the Council trends from year to year to gain comparison information. Holly agreed with her suggestion. She said that she will look at the last two years and compare and send that information to the Council. Cora McNabb said that the number of positive employment outcome is down. She suggested Program Evaluator, Kellie Scott, to work with Holly to obtain that data. Holly continued to report on was virtual service delivery and order of selection. She said that some categories may have to close to have the number of categories because not have enough staff to cover those cases. In terms of virtual services, she explained, a lot of consumers are requesting virtual services. Working on developing a process of fair distribution and monitoring of referral processes. Might develop a pilot project where cases in different part of the states are distributed to other parts of the state. Looking into ways to maximize the resources the agency has as well as making it fair for counselors and staff. She concluded her report to say that she continues to work on the RSA Monitoring Report and the state audit.

SCVR Chairperson, David Allgood, urged members to talk to legislators so the agency would not have to close categories due to staffing issues.

Council member, Susan Farra, expressed concern over staff stress load and keeping staff. Holly Hendricks agreed.

Council member, Kathy Jackson asked if there is any timeline to bring residents to the McDowell Center. Cora McNabb said they are starting to let consumers come back to the Center to stay but this depends on the renovation of the Center. Kathy Jackson asked if the agency plans to have consumers stay in a hotel for the time being. Division Director, Helga Gilbert, stated she is optimistic that the renovation would be complete in the summer of 2022.

Cora McNabb mentioned the agency is going to hold a statewide conference in February. Two sessions include emotional well-being for staff. Susie Edwards will send the registration link to the council. Holly Hendricks stated the Leadership Awards Ceremony will be held on March 23<sup>rd</sup>. She then mentioned the KYOVR newsletter and will be sent to the council.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) Division Director, Alan Gullett, stated since January 3<sup>rd</sup> the Center is working on opening it to consumers for residential services. Currently, the Center has 20 consumers in dorms and three evaluations in this date. There are 20 students in each training program. All training programs have consumers that have returned. The Center has evaluations scheduled all through April at this point. Mr. Gullett stated staff will work through these as quickly as they can. The Center has 81 consumers enrolled located at the CDPVTC and virtually. There are 170 on the waiting list for programs and 19 consumers who are participating through outpatient services. He continued to report that the Center is participating in the virtual permit training class. The OT driving instructors have been working with the school districts of Madison County and Lawrence County. This program is to develop and start an online training program. He reported there are 10 students from Madison County and 4 or 5 from Lawrence County. The permit classes will be taught during school days. Assessments were done on all the students. Mr. Gullett stated he hopes to see the program grow as there have been interest expressed through emails and phone calls. He stated that CDPVTC has submitted several projects pertaining to the State Plan to keep the facility up to date and moving the way he would like it to. Mr. Gullett said the Perkins Center completed the Commission for Accreditation of Rehabilitation Facilities (CARF) survey. He stated the Center is still waiting on the report and anticipates there will be eight recommendations and three consultations discussed in the exit interviews. Those seem to be easy fixes and will get those done in a timely manner. He continued to talk a little bit about the CVS training program. He said the program is still going well despite virtual training. He said he would like to develop onsite training program. He said he met with the CVS representative to discuss how to expand the program virtually. CVS is now requiring their employees to be vaccinated. This will have to be discussed with consumers who want to participate in the program. He then discussed how contract with personal services, such as, doctors, psychologists, etc. were going. Updating the work experience contracts with local schools, hotels, vet clinics, golf courses, etc. Lastly, he discussed the Perkins First Initiative with the council. He stated the fiscal team have been working on efficiency issues such as heating and cooling. They worked on this in December. The Independence Team have been working on things such as program completion, licenses, etc. Since October 944 individuals, business, anyone in the community and completed six outreach activities per month. This is being done by the reaching team. Staff team is doing 'staff of the month'. Tracking team is tracking completion rate and the first two months of 2022, there is an 81% completion rate. Consumer satisfaction surveys were rated well. The Perkins First team are working on the RSA Monitoring as well. He concluded his report by announcing they Center is looking to hire another driving instructor. The interviews were now complete. His hope is the individual can get certified to do Bioptic Driving. He opened the floor for questions. No questions.

Cora McNabb provided the Kentucky Blind Enterprise (KBE) report in Division Director, Corey Marcum's absence. She said that vendors continue to struggle as a direct result of the pandemic. She stated that one of items that KBE staff have been working on is to update all the vendor agreements. These agreements were distributed out to the blind vendors for signature and returned to KBE.

Kathy Jackson asked about the status of the computer system so that vendors can file their reports online, etc. Cora McNabb explained that the procurement process was holding it up. She further explained that KBE had to wait on a new scope of work from the company and it took a while to get that back. She believes it went through. David Allgood asked the council for any questions. No further questions.

A presentation was given by Esther Ratajeski regarding the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC). Council member, Joe Cowan provided a brief introduction of the SILC coordinator. It was well received. Helga Gilbert asked Mrs. Ratajeski for flyers with SILC information included. She stated she would get those to her. She asked to be invited to future SCVR meetings.

Cora McNabb provided a more detailed explanation of the State Plan. She stated the agency is working on all sections that need updating. She said that she is completed the section regarding the council. She said she would distribute that part of the State Plan to the council for their review. Mrs. McNabb stated that the Community Rehabilitation Program/Supported Employment section has been completed by Ron O'Hair who is manager of the CRP branch. She stated that Susie Edwards has re-written the Personnel section and that herself is working on the Comprehensive Statewide Needs Assessment on the McDowell Center and CDPVTC. The Order of Selection (OOS) section will not have projected numbers included in the draft as of right now. She stated the goal to have this submitted is the first week of February. She continued to report there were two State Plan public forums held with valuable input from the public. These forums were conducted via Zoom. She opened the floor for questions. No questions or comments.

The Arthur Campbell, Jr. Advocacy award was presented to advocated, Cameron Levis. He stated he was very appreciative and honored of the award. Council member, Matt Davis shared his thoughts and sentiments.

The council broke for lunch and committee meetings. The council reconvened and SCVR Chairperson, David Allgood called the meeting to order. SCVR members reviewed the minutes and a motion was entertained. Teresa Thomas made a motion to accept the previous minutes. Tyler Levy, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Mr. Allgood briefly discussed the development of the mission statement. SCVR staff liaison, Samantha Cook stated the Policy and Planning committee developed a mission statement and would announce the proposed mission statement during their report.

Bylaws Committee: Committee chair, Carla Ruschival provided the report. She began by stating the committee is prepared to approve the bylaws as circulated. She also stated the committee met on November 8, 2021 to put the final touches on the bylaws, such as clarifying the quorum clause, etc. The committee feels that they are ready to approve. Carla Ruschival made a motion to accept the bylaws as presented by the

committee on the November 8, 2021 meeting. Joe Cowan, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

KYOVR Deputy Director, Becky Cabe, thanked the committee and expressed that the bylaws are in good shape. Mr. Allgood concurred.

Executive Committee: Committee chair, David Allgood provided the report. He said the committee reviewed and discussed the RSA monitoring report. He commended Cora McNabb for the information conveyed to the committee. He expressed concern over low employment and challenges spending the match. He believes that the agency is doing well despite the findings in the report.

Nominating Committee: Committee chair, Carla Ruschival provided the report. She announced there are several members rotating off the council on June 27, 2022 and encouraged those reappointments to complete an application and submit their resume to OVR staff. She encouraged the council to review the positions. SCVR liaison, Samantha Cook read allowed those positions that will be vacant after June 27, 2022. She announced there are eight positions that will need to be filled. Chris White, CRP services, Todd Stephens, Phil Donahue, Nicky Wright and David Allgood for business and industry, Carla Ruschival (Kentucky Council of the Blind), Teresa Thomas (Bluegrass Council for the Blind and Kathy Jackson (National Federation of the Blind) representatives of blind organizations. Carla continued to say there are several details to keep in mind. She encouraged those interested to submit the application and their resume because time is short. Cora said it would be fine to send her the applications and resumes by February 15, 2022. A notice needs to be sent to the entire council to let them know about the positions and what the process is. She continued to clarify the organizations for the blind have designated their representatives and that the Boards and Commissions have went along with their recommendations. She encouraged the council to keep in mind of statewide representation and other factors. She concluded her report by asking those who do not wish to serve on the council to let staff and the council know and that she hopes that council meetings will stay on a hybrid schedule going forward. Mr. Allgood agreed and recommend the council stay on a hybrid schedule. Kathy Jackson stated every organization she is involved in is on a hybrid schedule and that it will be the way of the future. Nicky Wright asked for clarification on how to complete the application. Application will be sent out to the full council by staff. Carla opened the floor for questions. No questions.

Blind Services Committee: Committee chair, Carla Ruschival provided the report. She stated that the committee primarily discussed the need for more vendors to teach assistive technology, specifically in the Louisville area. Carla stated that OVR seems to feel that they are not meeting the needs of the consumers. The lack of the positions filled at the McDowell Center has some gaps and they discussed how this issue can be resolved. She continued to report that Helga Gilbert provided a nice review on some of the areas that are being reclaimed for Blind Services. She said that this was a positive step. Mr. Allgood opened the floor for questions. No questions.

Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee: David Allgood provided the report in committee chair, Matt Davis' absence as he had another meeting to attend to. He stated that OVR Program Evaluator, Kellie Scott, provided an overview of benefits counseling and review the statistics. He also stated the committee reviewed the Consumer Satisfaction Survey and explained that the University of Kentucky's Human Development Institute has begun the phone interviews and are attempting to reach consumers by email. The committee also discussed the case reviews. Kellie explained that case reviews are being conducted to the committee and how managers are satisfied with the way the case reviews are being conducted. Staff are encouraged to put cases in electronic format. Mr. Allgood further explained the process. Discussion among the committee, surrounded consumer engagement and how to improve that. After that discussion Kristen Beach suggested that part of new counselor training with their mentor to include how to maintain engagement based on the consumers' needs and resources. Kellie Scott suggested information to be recorded in OVR's Case Management System as consumer's preferred method of communication. This might also assist the Consumer Satisfaction Survey provider. Mr. Allgood opened the floor for questions. No questions.

Policy and Planning Committee: Committee chair, Nicky Wright provided the report. She stated there was much discussion surrounding the mission statement of the council. The committee reviewed other mission statements from other councils in different states. They discussed the difference between the difference of a purpose and mission statement. Mrs. Wright read aloud the proposed mission statement and is as follows:

*"The Mission of the Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation (SCVR) for the state of Kentucky is to analyze policies, programs, and services, make recommendations, and advise/partner with the agency and its stakeholders. The goal of this endeavor is to ensure the services, policies, and programs are consumer-oriented and consumer-driven resulting in meaningful employment, self-sufficiency, and independence."*

She asked the council for suggestions. No suggestions. A motion to accept the proposed mission statement was made by Joe Cowan. Tyler Levy second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Public Awareness and Legislative Committee (PAL): Committee chair, Tyler Levy provided the report. He began by stating it was the consensus of the committee that future agendas be prepared by OVR staff support prior to the meeting date with input from the PAL committee members. Mr. Levy stated that David Allgood provided an update on the legislative session. Mr. Allgood explained to the committee that not a lot was going on now legislatively. He did state that they passed a biennial budget. Mr. Levy said the committee echoed the "woeful" pay for OVR staff and state employees in general. In the committee, it was report that David Allgood agrees that the staff salary adjustments are crucial for employee recruitment and retention. Holly Hendricks discussed the current process with the committee and how the salary plan was still

going through the approval process. David Allgood offered to provide a letter of support for the OVR salary plan from the PAL committee. Holly Hendricks thanked David Allgood for his support and stated that she would discuss this with Cora McNabb. Mr. Levy reported the committee discussed the proposed merger of the Education and Education and Workforce Development Cabinet (EDWDC) with the Labor Cabinet. Jamie Link is the Acting Secretary of the Cabinet. Once the merger happens, there will be 2,461 employees. Mr. Levy concluded his report by stating this will make the Cabinet the fourth largest in the state out of 11 cabinets in the Executive Branch. SCVR chairperson, David Allgood opened the floor for questions. No questions.

Mr. Allgood stated SCVR liaison, Samantha Cook will resign from OVR effective January 25, 2022. He thanked her for her hard work and dedication to the council.

Council member, Todd Stephens encouraged the council to spread the word about the National Federation of the Blind's Kentucky Newsline. He stated if you refer an individual to the newsline and they sign up, you could be entered into a drawing for a \$100 giftcard. The winner will be announced at the upcoming National Federation of the Blind's conference and you do not have to be present to win. Mr. Stephens said he would send the information out to OVR staff to forward to the council. Mr. Allgood thanked him for the information and asked council members to watch their email inbox for several emails from OVR staff in regards to the meeting as several topics of information will be sent to them.

Motion to Adjourn: Teresa Thomas made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Todd Stephens, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Side note: No meeting date was discussed. Staff sent out an email on January 26, 2022 to propose the date of Monday, April 25, 2022 as the next meeting date.