

Meeting Minutes | 1st Quarterly Meeting - Approved

Kentucky Statewide Council for Vocational Rehabilitation SCVR

January 22, 2024

Hybrid Meeting

Physical Location: Frankfort, KY – Kentucky Transportation Conference Center
Zoom Platform

Members Present:

Chairperson David Allgood, Vice-Chairperson Joe Cowan, OVR Executive Director Cora McNabb, Member-At-Large Todd Stephens, Kelly Knoop, Danielle Burton, Kelly Bass, Christopher White, Necholyia Wright and Jeffrey Edwards.

Members Absent:

Benjamin Henderson, Briana Sweatt, and Terrie Terlau

Staff Present:

Kristen Beach, Susie Edwards, Helga Gilbert, Alan Gullet, Holly Hendricks, Chad Hunt, Lametta Isaacs, Lisa McKinney, Whitney Marcum, Jennifer Pierson, Kelly Scott, Jonathan White and Jennifer Withrow.

Guests were present.

Welcome & Introductions

Chairperson David Allgood welcomed everyone to the meeting and read aloud the mission statement of the council. Introductions were made. A roll call was taken by Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Administrator, Lametta Isaacs. A quorum was established.

Executive Directors Report

The Office of Vocational Rehabilitation Executive Director Cora McNabb provided the report. Cora discussed the January climate of the agency. Currently, annual employee evaluations are in process and staff are preoccupied. The Case Management System is a continued process, and we are currently behind in the expected completion date of June. Lametta Isaacs has been working on the State Plan for the agency. The entire plan is in the WIOA portal, which include several programs and OVR is one. We will be making the OVR State Plan available to SCVR, and it will be posted on the OVR website. OVR applied for an Equitable Transition Grant, but no funds have not been awarded yet. We are continuing to work on capital projects at the state facilities—McDowell and Perkins Centers. We are also continuing to work on the Corrective Action Plan from a previous monitoring visit from RSA. We had 10 findings—5 was resolved and 5 are currently open. Most deal with internal controls and written policies surrounding case review process. She recommends Jennifer Withrow report to the Council on Case Review Process. Currently, we have a Request for Proposal (RFP) going out to analyze and make recommendations to the agency for rate-setting. A Service Fee Rate Setting document displaying the agency’s current process was shared. Cora explained all elements and steps of the current rate-setting process. An application for another National Expansion of Employment Opportunities Network (NEON) grant through Department of Labor with Employment First was completed for technical assistance on Provider Capacity, which is a huge need. Ron O’Hair, SE Branch Manager, has also presented a large proposal for rates. NEON staff is reviewing the current structure, but we have not submitted a new structure. A question was posed about whether other states have been asked about their policies and procedures on recruitment for service providers. Cora responded that they are hoping to do this with NEON project and its subject matter experts (SME). She explained that in the past, they had Best Practice Day with Employment First, and they brought in SME. One of the SME in provider capacity will be working with OVR in this area moving forward. Cora concluded the report. (*See Exhibit A: Service Fee Rate Setting.*)

Division Director’s Reports

The Division of Blind Services

Division of Blind Services Director Helga Gilbert provided the report. Helga reports Phase Two of the construction project at McDowell Center is under way. This phase will bring renewed spaces for training kitchens and flooring and

paint throughout the building. More office space in the upstairs part of the building is being created for field staff. Currently, updates will be made to the computer system that controls the humidity levels. Also, the three dorm rooms with walk in or wheel in showers will be remodeled. A report was given on dorm statistics and virtual services since the last meeting. A member asked about the length of time students stay in the dorms. Helga answered that stays in the dorm vary but is typically 3-4 months per student, depending on student goals. A breakdown of direct service hours or time in the classroom was given in October. This quarter saw over 2,000 direct service hours, from just ten instructors. The Center received new equipment for the kitchen but is not yet open due to not having been inspected. Two positions have been filled; Jennifer Pierson for VR counselor and as a co-case manager with the referring counselor. The other position is Health Educator, and it was filled by Melanie Peskoe. One more Orientation and Mobility instructor is desired. UK is sending an intern for the Summer to help. Staff went to the Perkins Center over this last quarter to help cross-train in working with consumers with visual impairments. They also discussed the focus on progressive employment with the Institute for Community Inclusion. Cora added, the capital projects have a phase III, and once completed the total investment would be around \$4Million OVR is investing due to long spans of not having ongoing upkeep or regular maintenance. This is being corrected. Cora mentions that after the merge of the two agencies, she had a strong commitment to the Center. She discussed the growth of the agency and continued commitment. Helga points out that new video links about the services at McDowell can be viewed, which are on OVR website.

The Independent Living Program added 91 new cases in the final quarter of 2023. Of the 91 cases, 79 of those cases were consumers over 55 years of age. The program is currently in the process of hiring a new Administrative Specialist. One of the Independent Living Councilors resigned. A new position will be added in the Owensboro area because the Western part of the state has the highest number of cases, especially with the older blind referrals. Dec 6th, 2023, the Independent Living Branch met in Louisville and was able to discuss future admission and goals of the program as a group. The program will continue to do outreach over the past quarter, and they are focusing particular attention on the Eastern KY counties, which are the most underserved. They are continuing to work on outreach materials and in the new year, the strategic planning includes an event for older individuals. The Time to Be Bold was discussed at the last meeting and is a PSA initiative targeted to certain counties in the state. This campaign brought in additional referrals.

The Bioptic Driving Program is using the Perkins Center and their rehab driving instructors for the program. In 2023, there were 14 new licensed drivers due to this program and nine of those are currently working or looking for work. Currently 16 students need training in the West. Nine of the 16 are scheduled to start in March 2024. The East has a wait list of 20 people for the Bioptic Driving Program, and eight are scheduled to start in March 2024. The Deaf Blind position has been closed. Helga reported there is a job listed for an Occupational Therapist and that different routes are being used to find different instructors. A member posed a question regarding the role Perkins plays in Bioptic Driving. Helga responded that they have instructors at the center. Helga concluded her report.

Division of Field Services

Division of Field Services Director Holly Hendricks provided the report. The following stats overview and comparison of cases between 22-23 were given: 45,277 cases were served in year 2023, which was 4,000 more than in year 2022; 18,642 potentially eligible cases were served in 2023, which is 92 less than in year 2022; and over 1,300 were potential new eligible cases. This was 246 more than in calendar year 2022. In calendar year 2023, there were 28,599 active cases. How these numbers are recorded changed in 2023, so there are no 2022 cases to report. An average case load served in 2023 was 304, which is 35 more than the average case load of 2022. This is an indication that more counselors need to be hired. Holly reported that there were 16,735 referrals received in 2023, which was 3,283 more than in year 2022, 11,521 new applications were received in calendar year 2023, which was 2,523 more than calendar year 2022. Average days, from application to eligibility, was 28 days. This was three days faster than in year 2022. Average days from eligibility to IPE was 33 days. Which is 101 days faster than in 2022. Credential obtained were 1,594, which is 321 more than in year 2022. There were 2,464 measurable skill gains in 2023, which is 700 more than calendar year 2022. There were 3,209 unsuccessful closures, which was 381 more than year 2022. There were 4,626 successful closures. This was 981 more successful closures than in 2022. It was a busy year. At the end of the year, field services division had 292 positions, with 144 of those being counselor positions. OVR has 22 branches in field services and had listening tours with each branch in 2022 and in 2023. A request was made for statewide training, which is scheduled for May 2024. Holly recognized the concern for quality services needed from CRPs in certain areas. Time has been spent in meetings with the new CMS. A member asked about how they look at the quality of CRPs and whether they have looked at accreditation to outcome. Holly answered that not all areas have this concern; but the issue may be multiple reasons. Quality may be assessed through

surveying CRPs, looking at data and audits. Holly responded that looking at the accreditation to outcome data is a good idea. Holly concluded her report.

The Kentucky Business Enterprises (KBE) Division

Lametta Isaacs provided the report for Division Director Corey Marcum. There are no bids for this quarter. The division had two openings. First, the Food Service Coordinator was filled by Kelly Nolen, who starts February 1, 2024. This opening was due to Jason Wathen receiving a promotion. The next opening is for an Administrative Assistant, and this opening was due to the retirement of Janice Jackson which will be posted. KBE was awarded the new five-year contract for Fort Knox dining. Non-branded drink machines were rolled out. This allows for more flexibility of what can go in the machines and ease of repairing the machines because they are not relying on Coke or Pepsi. KBE is currently working with Louisville Metro Government to update the electric and current storage space at the Hall of Justice. A new storage room will be added with more electric and the current space will get a new security door. A general assembly and supplier show was successfully held in October 2023 and a new one will be held in October 18-19, 2024, in downtown Louisville. KBE is updating the menu boards at the Department of Transportation to new digital boards. Phase one of the upgrade to the electrical has been completed. Phase two will be installing the menu boards. KBE and vendors continue to work together to meet with suppliers about new products. The Oldham County Rest areas, on interstate 71 North of Louisville, were vandalized on both sides. The rest areas were closed due to repairs during the vandalization, so little impact was made to the vendor. There are no reopening dates set as of yet. Rest area break-ins are common during the holiday seasons. Vending machine cages were ordered for the rest areas in response to the vandalization. They will add another layer of protection to the vending machine. There is no ETA for installation. KBE and Southern Foods are currently exploring an RFP from Department for Correction for Food Service. The current RFP due date is February 23, 2024. Conversations have begun with Norton Healthcare for vending at the new Louisville Westend Hospital and possibly other locations. Lametta concluded the report.

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC) Division

Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center Division Director Alan Gullett provided the report. The following stats overview and comparison of cases between 22-23 were given: 378 referrals were received in 2023, the largest number of referrals since 2013. Referrals were from all over the state. Consumers gained 124

credentials in calendar year 2023. 11 driver's licenses were earned in 2023 and 54 drivers permits were earned in 2023. The Center served 91 of the 120 KY counties in year 2023. 80 of the 120 counties were served in 2022. 122 tours of the Center happened in 2023, with 878 people participating in the tours. In 2022, the employment rate of consumers, when they were leaving the Center, was 25%-26%. In 2023, this rate was 37%. One Job Placement staff was added in 2023 and added it to the performance evaluation to year 2023. Enrollment today is 120-125. A large group is coming in today and next week. Next week's enrollment should increase to about 140. Enrollment averaged 123 in calendar year 2023. Numbers are expected to increase in 2024 to about 140-150. Perkins Center has several Capital projects going one. One of the projects is the Assistance Living Unit area restrooms that need repair and updates for accommodation purposes. PTAC Units and gym floor also are Capital projects in the works. Another project is the Fort Truck Training area. This area needs replaced or rebuilt. The HVAC controls project is 75-80% complete. They are working on smaller projects such as flooring and a new steam kettle in the kitchen. Now, we will be offering a Barista training program in March 2024. Alan concluded his report.

Program Reports

Stable Account:

Sara Richardson presented detailed information about the Kentucky's Stable Account to the Council. The Stable Account was created as a savings and investment opportunity for individuals with disabilities. The parameters around the program were explained and who might qualify for the program based on various factors. The benefits of the program were discussed. *(See Exhibit B)*

Assistive Technology Branch:

Assistive Technology Branch Manager, Carol Weber presented information regarding the Assistive Technology Branch. Assistive Technology, from the Tech Act of 1998, was defined and explained in detail. The branch's mission statement was shared, and an overview of the branch was given. The purpose, types of Assistive Technology and the process for requesting Assistive Technology in VR services was explained.

KY Client Assistance Program (CAP)

Jeff Edwards introduced Beth Metzger to give a presentation on CAP. Beth is responsible for implementing the CAP program. A report was given for FFY 23.

Service categories, the number of Information and Referral and case representations were discussed. The client demographics were presented by age and disability type. An overview of the reasons for case openings and closings were presented and explained. A breakdown of work performed for systemic advocacy: outreach, media, and participating in committees and groups was given, which included extensive trainings and the dissemination of guidance materials for counselors.

The Council broke for lunch.

Business Meeting

The council reconvened, and a roll call was taken by OVR Administrator Lametta Isaacs. A quorum was established. SCVR Chairperson called the meeting to order for business. Council members reviewed the Minutes from the December 2023 quarterly meeting. Member, Todd Stephens, made a motion to accept the minutes. Member Nicky Wright, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Committee Reports

Executive Committee:

Chairperson David Allgood provided the report. The committee met this morning. The upcoming retreat/strategic planning was discussed. The retreat will be held in Louisville on June 10, 2024, and will most likely be at the Holiday Inn East. There will be an election of Officers at the next meeting. The Executive Committee has received no new appointments from the Governor's office. Cora McNabb stated she followed up on this last week, and the Governor's office is actively working on the appointees. The committee adjourned. David concluded his report.

Public Awareness and Legislative (PAL) Committee:

Regional Program Manager Brent Sturgill, OVR staff support for the PAL Committee, provided the report. The PAL committee met on December 07, 2023. The minutes, from the 10/12/23 meeting, were reviewed and approved. Some legislative updates were discussed. The annual report, which was not ready yet, was discussed. Tropical Smoothie, in Owensboro, was rewarded with an employer of the year award for 2023. No one was nominated for The Arthur

Campbell advocacy award this year. It was recommended that that committee members come up with some nominees for this award in 2024. The next PAL meeting is scheduled for March 28, 2024, at 1:00pm. Brent concluded his report, and the committee adjourned.

Blind Services Committee:

Chair Danielle Burton provided the report. Blind Services met on December 8, 2023. The October 2023 meeting minutes were approved. The committee heard reports on the McDowell Center and its student population, Older Blind Adult program and Bioptic Driving program. No additional new business. Danielle concluded her report, and the committee adjourned.

Policy and Planning Committee:

Chair Nicky Wright provided the report. The Policy and Planning Committee met on 12/06/23. The meeting minutes from 10/04/23 were approved. The committee discussed the upcoming retreat and looked at the updated OVR strategic plan. The proposed Ad Hoc committee for the retreat was discussed. Nicky concluded her report, and the committee adjourned.

Nominating and Bylaws Committee:

Chris White provided the report. The committee met on 12/7/23. Few responses were received from a survey sent out in May and June 2023 to establish the ad hoc committee for the planning of the retreat. However, the retreat will move forward. OVR will be looking for an outside agency to facilitate the strategic planning. The committee is still waiting to hear from the governor's office for new appointments. Changes to the bylaws were discussed regarding the open forum period of comment. The new addition would set a maximum time limit, so everyone can be heard. Currently, the original language, in the bylaws, does not state a limitation on open forum. This will be added to Article VI, meetings Section 6, on public comment. It is proposed to add "Members of the public have the right to observe public meetings. During the open forum and at the end of the SCVR meetings, the public may have the opportunity to provide comment related to topics on the agenda. Members of the public are given no longer than three minutes to provide comment, as to not disrupt the facilitation of the meeting." Adding in language to allow for more than three minutes, for those with communication issues was considered. Chris concluded his report, and the committee adjourned.

Old Business

There were no old business matters to discuss.

New Business

Chris White made a motion to adopt the new three-minute time limit, proposed by the Nominating and Bylaws Committee. A question was proposed about allowing for more time for those with communication issues. It was suggested that the SCRV chair will advise of the three minutes limit and will add the following language at the end of the originally proposed statement: "Prior to public comment, the SCVR Chair will advise the public that the time limit is 3 minutes unless there is a request for reasonable accommodations due to disability prior to the time for public comment." Todd Stephens seconded the motion, and the motion carried through.

Motion to Adjourn:

Member Kelly Bass made a motion to adjourn. Todd Stephens, second. The meeting adjourned.

Next Meeting Date: April 22, 2024 @ 9:00am EST
In-Person and Video Teleconference