

Vocational Rehabilitation Advisory Council

Due to Governor Carney's State of Emergency this meeting was held by teleconference.

May 11, 2020 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m.

The meeting was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

Members Present: William McCafferty, Chair; Suzanne Howell, Vice Chair; Kevin McAllister, Member; Sonya Lawrence, Member; Blake Roberts, Member; Dale Matusevich, Member; Jaqueline Poquette, Member.

Division for the Visually Impaired (DVI): Sandra Miller, Director; Debbie Talley, Deputy Director (Acting); Jill Morrison, Constituent Relations; Jamie Towns, Sr. Social Services Administrator; Patricia Burrell, District Administrator; Lisa Edmondson, Administrative Specialist I.

Public: Lloyd Schmitz.

Old Business:

Approval of January 13, 2020, March 9, 2020 and April 13, 2020 minutes.

January 2020 minutes tabled. Lisa Edmondson and Suzanne Howell will listen to the meeting recording and determine if the minutes accurately reflected the meeting proceedings.

Revised March 9, 2020 minutes were approved.

April 13, 2020 minutes were approved.

Workplan and by-laws were forwarded to the Chair for review.

Council members requested to receive the Director's report from DVI prior to the meetings. The Chair prefers to receive a brief outline of talking points versus a full report. The Director's report will be appended to minutes. DVI asked the Council to provide specific information to include in DVI reports. Chair will provide the workplan to DVI. Sonya Lawrence will share the outline and workplan with Sandi Miller. The Chair will schedule a phone call with Sandi Miller to review.

The Chair has information for a conference call with RSA to be scheduled. According to the by-laws the VRAC can explore things in VR such as plans, number of people back to work, trends and statuses.

The Council believes there should be ongoing interaction between the VRAC, DVI and RSA.

Update on Rita Landgraf: It is not financially realistic to work with Rita Landgraf currently. Sandi Miller hopes that DVI and the VRAC can resolve issues without mediation. The Council feels that a mediator is necessary. Sonya Lawrence will investigate and try to find someone who will donate their time to act as mediator.

Preparing for RSA Review: WINTAC training; and identifying objectives of the Council to move forward. Workplan will be beneficial.

Lloyd Schmitz, public, commented that the state has a training office through OMB with Tracy Connolly as well as Larry Trunfio who facilitated a meeting to develop a path forward for a different council. He doesn't believe there is a cost associated with this service.

Sandi Miller stated that there are a lot of resources out there and she would like to make sure that the person has a complete understanding of the RSA expectations as well as our general council and the VR unit. She suggests bringing someone in from WINTAC and has already contacted them.

The council wants to be involved in the entire process rather than DVI making all the decisions as to who will be present at meetings. It was agreed on to begin with WINTAC to define roles and then move forward towards collaboration between DVI and the VRAC.

The Council created an Ad-hoc sub-committee to coordinate with WINTAC. Kevin McAllister, Blake Roberts and two DVI representatives will evaluate whether WINTAC is the right path to take. The next call to WINTAC will be a conference call with all members of the sub-committee.

Action item follow up: Kevin McAllister brought up several action items from previous meetings.

- Grant identification with DVI Grant Writer.
- DVI contact for customer service satisfaction survey.

- Recap of Debbie Talley presentation of data.

The Chair asked Jamie Towns about the statistics the council wants to receive from VR. Such as, how many waiting to be employed, how many ready to work, successful and unsuccessful closures. Reply was that DVI will be presenting those statistics at the next meeting. At a previous meeting status codes and information requested that DVI was unable to pull was presented. Suggestions as to what data could be pulled and reported were offered.

WINTAC example worksheet will be modified to be used at VRAC meetings.

The Chair asked about DVI locations and accessibility. DVI is working on getting new space, but this project is on hold due to Covid-19 pandemic. The department has moved forward with updating sidewalks on Herman Holloway campus. The department is working with DelDot to get fixed route buses to the Stockley building.

DVI is in the planning stage of possibly holding meetings at the public libraries in the state. DVI is looking at options to make all sites more accessible.

Tech Centers/Training: DVI is investigating public libraries for Kent and Sussex County training. This is also on hold due to Covid-19 pandemic. When libraries are open again DVI is hoping to have trainers meet with clients at these accessible locations. Lloyd Schmitz expressed the concern that all trainer/educators are working out of New Castle. There is an open position for a trainer in Kent and Sussex counties that will be posted.

By-Laws: The By-Laws state that there is a budget to be set up between DVI and the Council. For example, reimbursement for travel. The By-Laws require a budget for the calendar year. A budget needs to be established and should be driven by the workplan depending on activities planned. Members are encouraged to go to the NCSRC portion of the conference to look at the workplan and see what has a budget requirement. The council wants to get a budget in place in order to hold the town halls and retreat for 2020. The Chair and DVI Director will have a preliminary discussion about the budget at a meeting to be scheduled.

Council Membership: There are several vacancies on the Council. There are members who do not attend the meetings. Council needs to recruit members. For members who don't attend it is possible to have them removed from the Council

through the Governor's office. Jill Morrison is notifying the Governor's office regarding the members who are not attending. Makeup of the Council can be found in the statute. Jill Morrison will investigate and clarify whether political party affiliation is part of the makeup of the council.

Director's Report:

BEP: VR is working with BEP operators to get through this disaster event. DVI is working nationally with other programs to look at how other states are handling the situation. The matter of how long the shutdown lasts will continue to affect the BEP program. DVI is trying to put supports in place to make sure they can make it through this time period.

VR: The VR department is focused on staff working from home and continuing to provide virtual/phone appointments with consumers. If a consumer should require in-person services, the agency is prepared to handle that. The caseload has been contacted to make sure they are doing okay and to provide resources when needed.

Webinars: There have been a variety of webinars that have been provided. WINTAC has been doing quite a few webinars and have been providing resources, not just for Covid-19, but for how to provide services virtually.

VR District Administrator: Patricia Burrell was introduced as the new VR District Administrator.

Recruiting: DVI is recruiting a Sr. VR Counselor and a VR Counselor II. The Counselor II position just closed so the agency will be reviewing those applications and scheduling interviews.

Transition: The transition staff presented at the Cadre last month and were able to discuss a few things that students have been able to participate in the last few weeks. The counselors are coordinating services with one of our providers to present virtual workplace experiences. Students met one on one with employers, spoke with a paraprofessional and a variety of other experiences.

Envision/Level Up for middle school students has been changed to a virtual platform. Students will attend events from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. The program for the high school students is still in development.

A DVI consumer attended the UD Classics Program. This is a two-year program to assist individuals not in higher education to have a college experience. The program is generally geared toward those with intellectual or developmental disabilities but is open to those with other disabilities as well.

UD Classics Program is having a virtual open house on May 13, 2020. Candy Greenleaf is the contact for the UD Classics program. Email address for Candy Greenleaf is candygreenleaf@UD.del

DVI has created a team for the Transition Coalition Project. Education, O&M and VR Units developed a team comprised of VR counselors, Business Consultants, Education staff and O&M instructors. It was developed as a pilot geared toward the VR program toward meaningful improvement in secondary education. The program is six weeks of team and individual learning then six weeks of implementation of the action plan developed.

VR Statistics:

Current VR caseload: 184

Ready to work: 33

Transition aged 14-21: 56

Education/Training: 44

Successfully closed: 15 (achieved 90 days of employment)

Sonya Lawrence asked about transition programming and what DVI is doing with virtual programming.

DVI is looking at changing summer programs to virtual programming.

PPP operators are not eligible for unemployment.

Successful closures for fiscal year 2019 was 36 (goal was 39).

DVI was asked to provide the number of successful closures for 2020.

Kevin McAllister asked for the contact information for the DVI grant writer. DVI replied that it is Andy Kloepfer. Debbie Talley asked Kevin McAllister to send the grants he has found to Andy Kloepfer and Debbie Talley so they can review these grants.

DVI is continuing to operate as usual with the VR department. Covid-19 situation may affect outcomes.

Pat Burrell's promotion to District Administrator left only one counselor for the entire adult caseload. DVI responded that they have transition counselors assisting with the adult caseload.

There is no date yet for RSA monitoring.

The Chair will contact RSA and schedule a conference call.

Sonya Lawrence again requested to have the Director's report to the beginning of the meeting. Director's report will be the first thing on the agenda for future meetings.

Suzanne Howell made the motion to adjourn.

Blake Roberts seconded the motion.

Meeting adjourned at 12:07 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa Edmondson

Administrative Specialist I