**Berks-Schuylkill CAC Meeting**

**February 10, 2020**

**Attendees**: Angel Torres, Judy Vaskorlis, Helen Denker, Sally Kneipp, Judy Yeasted, Yvelisse Gonzalez, Andrew Pennington and Sarita Battish (call in).

**Review and Approval of Minutes**: We started by discussing the October minutes that needed to have some wording corrected. Yvelisse stated she would get these October minutes posted on the PaRC website. A motion was made by Andrew and seconded by Judy V. to approve the December minutes.

**OVR Report**:

* Yvelisse reported that there is some good news, there has been 134 cases released from the order selection in the Reading and Schuylkill county offices about a week ago. Letters have been sent out to inform clients that they need to contact their counselors for a meeting to decide if they can be moved to the planned status. If they do not respond within 15 days, their case may be closed, counselors have been given instruction that they should not be too hasty to close these cases without trying to contact the client in any form that they have. We are expecting the clients that need help to contact their counselors. The state has implemented a Lean Program to verify that cases are active and in need of help. Sort, Set in Order, Sign, Standardize, and Sustain are the steps to figure out why cases are open for so long. If a case is over a year old, it will be tagged and sent a letter. Sally asked if a client had contact with their counselor and things have not progressed. How can they find out if they are on the waiting or released list? Yvelisse answered, they would get a letter stating that they have been released and should contact their counselor. The last release occurred in July 2019. Andrew: Are closing out clients that do not call back effecting the numbers?

Yvelisse replied there will be a high number of closures because it is a cleanup effort.

Angel: Unsuccessful closures occur when clients do not contact their counselors, and there is no response to OVR’s attempts to contact them. Andrew mentioned that the client has 30 days to appeal closure. Yvelisse: That is true, and it also depends on the situation for not responding (medical, good reason), if not they have to start over. Andrew stated that some clients have apprehension of allowing a successful closure, due to the fear of losing their job or something going wrong and having to start over. Judy Y. mentioned that once closing the case, clients should be informed about the Ticket to Work Program. There is also the Partnership Plus Program, where OVR hands-off to a Ticket to Work agency. Partnership Plus has a teleconference in about two weeks. Ticket to Work is for clients who want to work full time. Yvelisse stated that we should try to get someone from Social Security to talk to the group about the Partnership Plus Program. Judy V: One reason people are hesitant to close, is because it takes so long to reopen case. Yvelisse: We cannot just keep cases open just in case, it is not within the budget constraints to do that and is not fair to the clients on the waiting list. Helen: Some employers accept state funding to hire a person with a disability and then find ways to release them when funding runs out. Group discussion: Person should file a complaint with EOC, Government, discrimination claim, or call their state representative.

* Yvelisse reported that OVR has 6 vacancies with 1 in the process to be hired. There are plans to interview for 2 RCD positions, also OVR is in desperate need of Schuylkill County counselors. Helen: How about checking with the colleges in the area for possible candidates to fill these positions. Andrew: Colleges have job fairs. Yvelisse stated she will pass this on to Carol H. to contact Recruitment Specialist (Hattie McCardle) to verify if they do any recruitment in the Schuylkill County area. Will also email job requalification to everyone just in case they have someone in mind. Yvelisse asked if there were any other questions?
* Sally: Could Andrew give a recap of the meetings that have taken place concerning Preemployment Transition? Andrew: The Provider Work Group met and there were concerns about staffing. They are rescheduling some of these meetings, a lot is in play with Preemployment Training across the state. Bigger cities are having issues with getting school profiles. A lot of counselors/providers are having issues getting releases back to provide services, group or individual. We have the numbers for Act 26, numbers are being provided in a much different manner. OVR is providing most of the group services in the state.

Yvelisse: There were issues with schools providing group services through providers and there was a sense of losing control of the PET program OVR created. Philadelphia has many school districts and should be administered by more than one office.

**Other Business:**

* Angel: Berk-Schuylkill meeting dates are not correct on the PaRC site.

Yvelisse: I will get things corrected.

* We mentioned the idea of sending letters to our representatives to support OVR. In December we went over the CAC purpose statement to refocus and get back to the goals and mission of the CAC. Judy Y: The idea of sending letters is to support any type of legislation that effects OVR, funding issues. Andrew mentioned that written letters should be backed by solid findings. The majority of OVR funding comes from the federal government, minimal from the state, 80/20 split. Yvelisse: Letters should be encouraged by OVR clients or their parents who are not satisfied with the process or they should be calling their state representatives. Sally: If there is an issue with OVR and the state budget we should try to have a letter writing campaign. Yvelisse: Sweep up funds have been an issue also recently.
* Angel:Unable to come together with Carol to complete plans of posting flyers at colleges, etc., concerning recruitment. He has had the recruitment flyer posted on AIM’s social media. Yvelisse thinks we should have another presentation from the CAC to the OVR counselors to inform them of the CAC and encourage their help in the recruitment of new CAC members from their customers. A possible date for the half hour presentation looks like June 25th. She also expressed the idea of the CAC having a table at the next job fair. Andrew: How about building a Facebook page. Yvelisse: I will contact PaRC to find out which counties have a Facebook page and will inform.
* The idea of having a meeting in Schuylkill county maybe 2 times a year at the Career Link, Library, etc. Helen: Hamburg is an option that is closer than Schuylkill County.

Judy Y: Let us get the members first then go to Schuylkill County for meetings.

* Angel met with Laura about the group picture she took, picture is not of good quality, we should get another. Group decided to drop idea until more members come on.

Andrew: We need to develop a value proposition for anyone who is willing to join the CAC.

* Co-chair and secretary positions need to be filled.
* Follow-up is continuing with the individual who has expressed interest in joining.
* Yvelisse will send out the OVR community resource list, members should add their resource information and return to her, and OVR staff will complete compilation of listing. Judy Y: This listing might be a good way to buy in help from the counselors with new members, if we give them something that is useful to them in a different format.

**Agenda for next meeting**: Presentation to OVR counselors, Recruitment, Community Resources, Facebook page/ Social Media.

**Announcement for good**: Judy V: Braille Challenge at BCIU last Saturday, Reading Hospital has started a Cancer Support Group. Helen: Geisinger – St. Luke offering $4 meals for 50+, schedule for STS Route #80 which connects with BARTA in Hamburg.

**Adjournment:**  Amotion was made by Andrew and seconded by Sally.

**Next Meeting is April 13, 2020, at 4PM at PA Office of Vocational Rehabilitation - Berks**