

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

April 25, 2022

Meeting Minutes

Hybrid Meeting

Physical Location: Frankfort, KY – Mayo-Underwood Building
Zoom Platform

Members Present: SCVR Chairperson, David Allgood, Joe Cowan, Vice Chairperson, Kelly Bass, Phillip Donahue, Jeff Edwards, Susan Farra, Lynn Florence, Cathy Jackson, Kelly Knoop, Cora McNabb, Carla Ruschival, Kellie Smith, Todd Stephens, Teresa Thomas, Chris White, and Nicky Wright

Members Absent: Matt Davis, Tyler Levy and Amy Luttrell

Staff Present: Holly Hendricks, Nanci Howard, Brooke McDaniel, Cora McNabb, Kellie Scott, Chris Sheeting, Brent Sturgill, and Jonathan White

Guests Present: Alex Castlen and Bethany Huckle

SCVR Vice-Chairperson, Joe Cowan, welcomed everyone to the meeting. A roll call was taken by Kentucky Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (KYOVR) Executive Director, Cora McNabb. A quorum was made.

Executive Director's Report: KYOVR Executive Director, Cora McNabb, provided the report. She updated staff and the full council on the State Plan of services. She stated it is currently under federal review and was submitted on March 15, 2022. She reported there is no current feedback at this time from the Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). She stated RSA will need to approve the plan on or before June 26, 2022, so it can go into effect July 1, 2022. She assured the council that the plan addresses the comprehensive statewide needs assessment, and she believes staff has done a good job of incorporating the needs for the Charles W. McDowell Center and the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTTC) and the Kentucky Blind Enterprises (KBE). She stated she tried to cover all things that the agency needs, and she said she feels good about the plan. She was pleased to report that the staff raises were implemented finally after three years. She said staff have worked diligently to make this happen. She explained there are 383 full-time merit employees and said staff morale has increase. She reported that on July 1, 2022, the state will implement more raises with an 8% increase. Mrs. McNabb stated the agency is waiting on the contract to sign regarding the case management system. She stated there will be an 18–24-month timeframe for implementation and staff will collaborate to ensure things run smoothly. She reported that some staff including, but not limited to, are Allan Gullet of CDPVTTC and Helga Gilbert from the McDowell Center as well as Resource Management Analysts, division directors, programmers, etc. She reported that she has submitted the corrective action plan to RSA on Friday, April 22, 2022. She reminded staff and the full council that there were two performance findings and three fiscal findings. She said she

would be glad to share that with the full council. Staff have been working on correcting these findings. She then announced to the group that on April 19th – 21st, 2022, the Vocational Rehabilitation Technical Assistance Center (VR-TAC) training was held for staff at the Transportation Cabinet in Frankfort, KY. She acknowledged staff who were in attendance, Assistant Directors, Division Directors, Regional Managers, Resource Management Analysts, Grants Specialist, etc. The purpose of the 'intense' training was to provide technical assistance to staff regarding fiscal operations. She expressed the training was beneficial to staff but contained a large amount of good, fiscal information. Mrs. McNabb went on to say, the Cabinet reorganization will be effective July 1, 2022. She said she does not see any major changes to KYOVR as a direct result of the reorganization. She stated that most of the changes would occur at the Cabinet administrative level. She concluded her report.

Division Director's Reports:

Division of Blind Services Director, Helga Gilbert, provided her report. She began by reporting on the progress of allowing the McDowell Center's residential services to be reopened. She was happy to announce that a request for proposal (RFP) has been submitted for work to be done on the McDowell Center. She stated this was in the final stage. Mrs. Gilbert also reported that the Center has been working with the Office of the Secretary to complete the work. She stated that the work will commence in June or July and that it will be extensive through the end of the year. The work will consist of repairing the HVAC system and dorm remediation. She reported that the Center has collaborated with RSA on funding and that the Center will be moving forward with the RFP. Mrs. Gilbert stated, in the meantime, in order to bring students back to the Center, students who apply are currently staying in two nearby hotels as an accommodation. The consumers will stay at the Marriott Residence Inn and the Marriott Courtyard. She informed the council there is direct billing set up. The first individual will come to the Center and stay in one of the two hotels after Derby Day, May 7, 2022. She stated that transportation and provision for meals are provided to the students. Mrs. Gilbert was pleased to report that Jennifer Perry has accepted the Orientation and Mobility (O & M) position within the Center. She will be starting her new role as O & M specialist in June. She stated that the Center continues to hire a few other positions as well; assistive technologists, a vocational prep supervisor, personal adjustment position, etc. She provided an update to the council and staff on the Independent Living (IL) Older Blind program. She said there are 350 cases open or served during the fiscal year. She stated there are two caseloads where counselors are needed; one is in Paducah and the other is in Somerset. She stated a recommended candidate has been recommended for the Somerset position and that they are reopening the position in Louisville. During an exhibit opportunity, the Division made contact with optometrists. The Division provided the optometrists with ample, detailed information about the McDowell Center. Mrs. Gilbert completed her report.

SCVR Member, Chris White, asked the question about where the person working out of Paducah would be located. Mrs. Gilbert answered that the position would be based out of the Paducah OVR office. Mr. White asked if the position had been posted. She stated that it has been posted and should be up again within the current week. Mr.

White asked Mrs. Gilbert to talk more about the dorms and the hotels. Mrs. Gilbert said the McDowell Center would be able to start housing individuals after the renovations are complete. The PATH and InSight programs were also briefly discussed.

SCVR Member, Todd Stephens, posed the question of, is there anything the council could do to ensure continual raises for state employees? He stated that the agency needs to retain and recruit staff to continue to deliver services to those individuals with the most significant disabilities. He expressed concerns regarding this. He also asked if there was anything the council could do to ensure the raises are met timely and periodically. Executive Director, Cora McNabb provided an answer and explanation of what the agency did to receive the recent raise in pay across the board. She stated the agency brought everyone up to either midpoint or close to it. She explained that in July the other salary increase goes into effect which will be 8%. She assured the council that most employees will go over midpoint at that time. She stated the agency is now very competitive, especially in state government and other organizations outside of state government. She explained that it depends on what individuals will go after in the private sector and that she is ensure if it will be equally competitive. She stated there is no control over state raises given in the future. Mrs. McNabb concluded that the agency is now competitive and will be for several years to come and assured the council that current staff will remain employed by OVR at this time unless they find a new profession. No further questions.

Director of Field Services, Holly Hendricks, provided her report. She was pleased to announce that OVR will be offering Skills Enhancement Training (SET) to new staff taking place in June. This will be an in-person training held at the Carl D. Perkins Vocational Training Center (CDPVTC). June 10, 2022 is the CDPVTC graduation for students and encouraged new staff to participate in the training and graduation while there. Assistant Directors, Jonathan White and Kristen Beach, have been working diligently to restructure SET training. Ms. Hendricks stated the agency will be inviting new staff to the McDowell Center, CDPVTC and Central Office over the course of their first year of employment. She continued to state that the agency conducted the annual awards ceremony on March 23, 2022. She reported that the hybrid ceremony was well received. She stated that several program staff attended the fiscal training on April 19 – 21, 2022 with VR-TAC. She explained which staff attended, assistant directors, regional program managers, support staff, and resource management analysts. The purpose of the training was to receive extensive knowledge regarding fiscal responsibilities to share with field staff across the state. Ms. Hendricks provided a brief update on metrics of the program year. She explained that the agency served over 37,000 individuals during the year of July 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022. The average caseload size for counselors was roughly 249. She explained to the council that this number for average caseload size could be skewed due to Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) caseload numbers. She assured the council that the agency is working on more accurate reports. She said the agency wants to work to decrease the number of caseload size as much as possible by hiring more counselors. Due to the salary increase, the agency is hopeful that they can recruit more individuals to OVR and retain staff. Ms. Hendricks reported there were 5,875 new applications taken. There

were also 2,266 competitive integrated employment outcomes with the average income being \$19.20. The average number of hours worked per week was 34.15. She stated from the programmatic perspective the agency continues to work on the corrective action plan from RSA while developing internal control procedures. This will be a focus in the coming months as well as training staff on the purpose of the internal control as well as the procedures for implementing those. The agency updated policy and this is being reviewed by the cabinet attorneys at present. The agency is awaiting their feedback. Lastly, Ms. Hendricks announced that, along with Mr. White and Mrs. Beach, they will be participating in a 'listening tour' across the state. Each of them will be traveling to OVR sites to meet with staff, discuss concerns, answer questions, etc. Ms. Hendricks expressed her excitement about the tour and concluded her report.

The Kentucky Blind Enterprise (KBE) Division Director, Corey Marcum, provided the report. He stated that typically during this meeting he would have discussed the RSA 15 which is a federal report. However, it is not completed yet. He reported the deadline has been extended to the end of the month. He stated there were some questions in the RSA 15 regarding the vendor release monies. Mr. Marcum explained he would share the data with the full council once the report is completed. He continued to support vendors on rebuilding and reopening. He stated, luckily, KBE is noticing an uptrend on the number of staff in buildings. This has caused business to increase with some vendors. KBE continues to monitor a contract with state finance regarding the CO² contract with Coca Cola. He stated Coca Cola will no longer with sponsoring the contract, so KBE is now collaborating with the state to provide that service to vendors. Mr. Marcum discussed vendor openings for specific locations and those locations are Mayo-Underwood in Frankfort, the Louisville 'big route' and Owensboro. The Mayo-Underwood building was awarded to Cramer Schneider, the Louisville 'big route' was awarded to Rene' Jackson and no one from the Owensboro route. New vending equipment has been installed at the following locations: State Office Building and the Kentucky Transportation Cabinet and satellite areas. His hope is that this will leave vendors with new assets. He said vendors now can take credit card payments on sanitized equipment. There are covid lights on each keypad as well. He stated that now that individuals are now in the building, vendors home to generate more income. Mr. Marcum stated inflation continues to be a problem for vendors and provided statistics regarding this. He stated coffee and sandwiches are up 14%, salads have increased to 11% and the average costs of burgers have increased to 8%. Vendors are having to adapt to new costs structures, balance customer's expectations and to remain profitable. He reported that staff participated in Sagebrush and NAMA virtually and stated staff learned valuable information by attending. Mr. Marcum stated he received an update on the ePay system and explained to the full council what the system entails. A demo from the manufacturing will be received in two to three weeks. This is the hope of staff and vendors. Mr. Marcum concluded his report. No questions.

CDPVTC Division Assistant Director, Brian Clevenger, provided the report. He was pleased to announce that CDPVTC is now fully functioning. He reported there are 88 students: nine day students, seven in assisted living, 19 outpatients, 53 residential students. He stated the center is scheduled to bring in eight more students for

programs on this date for a total of 13, the rest are for evaluations. He was pleased to announce that all the center staff has returned and students in all the training programs offered. Mr. Clevenger stated it finally feels normal. He continued to announce that the center is working towards 50% in the residential program. The center is going to work up to 90 students and they are bringing in 10 students every two weeks. He stated it is going well and there are participants in every training program. The center is not going off campus apart from college students. No internships are being conducted now, but the center is looking at memorandum of agreements. Once those are ready, the center can possibly look at getting students out to businesses for internships. He stated as of March 31, 2022, in the driver's rehabilitation program, there were 10 driver's licenses obtained, 12 permits, and completed 22 pre-driver's evaluations. He continued to state, the center is still offering their online permit class and the in-person permit class. There are seven individuals on the road training. There was a wait list of 170 individuals for training and 58 for evaluation. As of March 31, 2022, the center has now 126 waiting for training and 32 on the wait list for vocational evaluation. Mr. Clevenger reported on the average hourly wage which was \$11.35 with \$7.25 being the lowest and \$22.55 being the highest wage. The average hours work was 30.23. He explained the Reaching Out program to the full council. He stated the center sent introduction letters to every special education directors in the state. Hoping to get students interested from every county across the state and have been mapping the progress. He stated there are 61 counties represented at the center. He went on to say there are tours scheduled up until the end of May from different high schools. The center is currently reaching out to community partners and have attended multiple transition events across the state. Mr. Clevenger concluded his report. The center graduation will be held on June 10, 2022.

SCVR Chairperson, David Allgood, stated the numbers were good and asked if the center had many problems during Covid. Mr. Clevenger responded with the center is mask free but that the center is doing conducting screenings prior to attending and as they enter the facility. This has not been an issue yet. No further questions.

A presentation was given by interns Alex Castlen and Bethany Huckle regarding the new member orientation handbook and the vocational rehabilitation process. It was well received. There were some corrections to the presentation that needed to be made. SCVR Member, Susan Farra, suggested adding that part of the membership requirements for the council is to appoint a representative of the Kentucky Department of Education. No further questions or comments.

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. Phil Donahue made a motion to accept the previous minutes. Cathy Jackson, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

Executive Committee: Vice Chair, Joe Cowan provided the report because Chair David Allgood was not present during the meeting at that time. He began by stated that Cora

McNabb reported everything discussed in her previous report. Executive Director, Cora McNabb stated there is nothing else was discussed.

Nominating and Bylaws Committee: SCVR Member, Chris White provided the report. He stated the bylaws were approved in January 2022 and an email was also sent in January 2022 calling for nominations and reappointments from the council. There were a few council members who failed to respond to the email, however, staff person, Nanci Howard, will send out a reminder email to those individuals. Todd Stephens voiced his support for his nomination he submitted. Mr. Stephens recommended Danielle Burton for the council position of the National Federation of the Blind of Kentucky. He provided background information to the council for Ms. Burton. Mr. White concluded his report. No questions.

Blind Services Committee: SCVR Member, Cathy Jackson, provided the report. She stated the committee discussed, at length, the decision to house students from the McDowell Center at local hotels while in training. She reported the committee asked specific questions such as meals. It was reported that a customary breakfast would be served at the hotel and their lunch will be served at the center. The evening meals would be prepared by the students as part of their extensive training such as, menu planning, grocery shopping, etc. Mrs. Jackson stated her support for the training because she stated this would only enhance their training experiences. She then reported that the committee shifter their focus to discuss O & M training at the center. Students will be taught O & M from the beginning and will be an ongoing teaching experience. She announced the McDowell Center would be hiring someone for second shift who will have the title of rehabilitation specialist. This individual will assist with coordinating and facilitating after hour activities, such as, entertainment, additional help with homework, etc. The center has also hired a recreational counselor who is thinking outside the box. For example, Mrs. Jackson continued, the recreational counselor is working with a student who expressed an interest in dancing. Ballroom classes for the student were then set up and it was a huge success for that individual. She stated the average caseload for counselors for the blind is around 50 in metropolitan areas and smaller numbers in rural areas. She continued to state the Kentucky Community & Technical College System (KCTCS) has withdrawn from the Pre-Employment Transition Services (Pre-ETS) program. She stated the committee was told not to worry about this due to the fact there are more schools and agencies across the state of Kentucky that are focused on making the program a success. Mrs. Jackson concluded her report. No questions.

Consumer Services and Program Evaluation Committee: A presentation was given by Katie Wolf-Whaley regarding the Consumer Satisfaction Survey. No questions. It was well received. Vice-Chair of the committee, Phillip Donahue, provided the report due to Chair, Matt Davis' absence. The committee discussed the Consumer Satisfaction Survey results. He stated the consensus of the committee regarding the survey was that it was favorable. Mr. Donahue also stated that OVR staff, Kellie Scott, informed the committee there are now two full-time KWIC's serving the state and that they have been

very busy. DB101's online platform will continue to be provided by OVR in the next fiscal year. Mr. Donahue concluded his report. No questions.

Policy and Planning Committee: Committee chair, Nicky Wright provided the report. She stated the committee had lengthy discussion regarding two proposed OVR forms. The forms were proposed to the committee by staff, Chris Sheeting. The first forms were the OVR-2 application form and the consumer referral form. Ms. Wright stated that Chris Sheeting said he would reach out to other staff to ensure accessibility of the two forms. The committee consensus was that the form was excellent. The committee did ask significant questions about the forms, Ms. Wright said. She also said Chris Sheeting will share the forms with the entire council in the future. The committee felt like it should be utilized for admission and for referrals. Ms. Wright concluded her report. No questions.

Public Awareness and Legislative (PAL) Committee: SCVR Chair, David Allgood, provided the report in committee chair, Tyler Levy's, absence. He stated there was a broad discussion with Director of Field Services, Holly Hendricks and Assistant Director, Jonathan White regarding the agency's internal public awareness team. The committee thought it would be beneficial for both groups to meet to share concerns and ideas. Mr. Allgood stated he would like to see an agenda prior to the meeting. He clarified that although it is a consumer driven committee, exclusion of members from OVR internally or by staff members. Due to internal processes with the agency, the committee feels this should be reviewed. He stated that Regional Program Manager, Anthony 'Brent' Sturgill will be reaching out to senior staff for future agenda items. He said that he reported to the committee on most recent legislative issues happening. Mr. Allgood said that Employment First legislation was passed and required and OVR will be responsible for the Employment First legislation. The committee discussed the removal of sub-minimum wage. He said he would try to meet with legislators to see what path would be best to move forward. Mr. Allgood concluded his report. No questions.

New Business:

Elections were discussed among the group. It was determined the chair can only serve one year as chair according to the SCVR bylaws. The next meeting elections will be held. Vice Chair, Joe Cowan will have the position of succeeding the current chair, David Allgood. Executive Director, Cora McNabb, stated that she doesn't believe Boards and Commissions would allow the council to stagger the terms, but Mrs. McNabb stated she would clarify this with them for the council. She provided a brief explanation. Council members whose terms are up can attend the next meeting but will not be a voting member. David Allgood made a motion to nominate Joe Cowan as chair of SCVR. Todd Stephens, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously. Mr. Allgood opened the floor for nominations. Todd Stephens nominated David Allgood for the position of Vice-Chair. Jeff Edwards nominated Kelly Knoop for the positions of Vice-Chair. Teresa Thomas made a motion to move and close the nominations. Todd Stephens, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously. A vote was taken for David Allgood. No oppositions/abstentions. A vote

Approved: 8/29/22
Submitted by: Nanci Howard

was taken for Kelly Knoop. One vote. One abstention/opposition. It was the vote of the full council that David Allgood will serve as the Vice-Chair.

A motion was made to accept the committee reports made by Teresa Thomas. Chris White, second. No oppositions or abstentions. Motion carried unanimously.

The Consumer Satisfaction Survey results, once accessible, will be sent to the full council once received.

New Business:

Todd Stephens provided a description for NFB Newslines and encouraged the council to spread the word and share the information. He provided his email to the council if they have referrals.

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

Next Meeting Date:
July 25th, 2022